



Cardinal Richelieu

Richard Lodge

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THE death of Concini and the fall of Mary de Medici seemed at first to effect a complete revolution. The rebellion of the nobles was at an end; in fact, they were received at court as if they had been fighting the king's battles against his enemies. But they soon discovered that the change of policy was not so complete as it appeared at first. They were jealously excluded from the royal council. Condé, on whose release they had confidently reckoned, was removed from the Bastille to Vincennes, but his prison doors were as securely guarded as ever. The nobles realised that the ascendancy of the king's favourite was as intolerable as that of Concini. Nothing had happened to reconcile the hostile interests of the monarchy and the aristocracy.

The new government, though it had lost the opportunity of annihilating the power of the princes, was in other respects not wanting in energy and decision. Luynes, who took the chief conduct of affairs into his own hands, was a far abler man than Concini. He was determined to avoid the reproach of subservience to Spain which had been cast upon the rule of the queen-mother. French assistance was sent to the duke of Savoy, which compelled the Spaniards to withdraw their troops from Piedmont and to conclude the treaty of Pavia. But at the same time a resolute attitude was adopted towards the Huguenots. An anomalous state of things existed in Béarn, which was ruled by the French king without being united with France. Henry IV., after his conversion, had restored Roman Catholicism in his little Protestant kingdom; but he had left the church lands in the hands of the Huguenots, while the Catholic clergy received their stipends from the royal revenue. The French clergy had never ceased to demand that the Church of Béarn should be restored to its lawful possessions, and in June 1617 a royal edict was issued to gratify this demand. The Huguenots met at Orthez to protest, and the Parliament of Pau refused to register the edict. The struggle about its enforcement marks the beginning of the civil war, which ended in the loss by the Huguenots of their political independence.

Meanwhile Richelieu, with the permission of the king, had followed Mary de Medici into exile at Blois, where he was appointed president of her council. But he had many enemies at court, who persuaded the king that it was dangerous to allow him to remain in his mother's service. On June 15 he received a royal letter ordering him to reside within his diocese. He employed his compulsory solitude at the Priory of Coussay in composing a controversial work against the Huguenots. This took the form of an answer to four ministers of Charenton, who had replied to a hostile sermon preached before the king by Father Arnoux. The book itself is of slight merit, and its chief object was to keep the author prominently before men's eyes. It contains more vehement denunciations than arguments, and its intolerant tone is in marked contrast to Richelieu's own actions during his ministry...

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