

majority of Lewis the fourteenth, withdrew the attention of both prince and people from their commercial interests to those of parties in religion and government. The politics of the house of Valois, though France perhaps was never governed by princes of so ingenious and refined a turn, were wholly of the Machiavilian kind. They tended to distract, to unsettle, to try dangerous schemes, and to raise storms, only to display a skill in pilotage. The parties then in France solely contended what power could be given to or taken from the king, without considering what could make their country a great kingdom. Therefore, which way soever the balance inclined, whether to the king or to the nobles, to the catholics or to the protestants, it was pretty indifferent to the real happiness of that nation. The parties only gamed out of a common stock. Neither could be enriched. But their dissensions made all of them poor and weak. The time of cardinal Richlieu must be considered as the true æra of French policy. This great man, pacifying all at home, exalting the royal authority upon the ruins of the power of the nobility, and modelling that great system of general policy in external affairs, which has raised France to such a pitch of greatness; amongst so many, and such extensive cares, did not forget those of commerce, and, what serves most effectually
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