

govern; but he gave the reins to the Great Cardinal. Louis XV. abandoned them to a frivolous mistress, content that she should rule on condition of amusing him. It was a hard task; yet Madame de Pompadour accomplished it by methods infamous to him and to her. She gained and long kept the power that she coveted: filled the Bastille with her enemies; made and unmade ministers; appointed and removed generals. Great questions of policy were at the mercy of her caprices. Through her frivolous vanity, her personal likes and dislikes, all the great departments of government — army, navy, war, foreign affairs, justice, finance — changed from hand to hand incessantly, and this at a time of crisis when the kingdom needed the steadiest and surest guidance. Few of the officers of state, except, perhaps, D'Argenson, could venture to disregard her. She turned out Orry, the comptroller-general, put her favorite, Machault, into his place, then made him keeper of the seals, and at last minister of marine. The Marquis de Puysieux, in the ministry of foreign affairs, and the Comte de St.-Florentin, charged with the affairs of the clergy, took their cue from her. The King stinted her in nothing. First and last, she is reckoned to have cost him thirty-six million francs, — answering now to more than as many dollars.

The prestige of the monarchy was declining with the ideas that had given it life and strength. A growing disrespect for king, ministry, and clergy was beginning to prepare the catastrophe that was