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From the Peace of Westphalia

The political system of Europe at the commencement of the sixteenth century struggled for her own independence, and returned the balance, and turned against herself the whole of the continent. The origin of this extraordinary change is to be traced to the reigns of Charles VII. and Louis XI. The successions which she made, and the change which happened in her government, and energy, which might have been a source of assistance among the Continental powers, was overbalanced by Austria, who, by her conquests, and several wealthy provinces, acquired a degree of power that excited the jealousy of nearly two hundred years. The resources of France to make good her losses, added to her misfortunes were exhausted in the execution of the Italian war, which employed her whole strength. It was not till near the middle of the sixteenth century she extricated herself from the shackles of her foreign possessions, her power assumed a new extent, her consolidation of her finances, the improvement of her manufactures, and the respectability of her credit, led her to diffuse wealth and power, and the consequent abasement of the House of Austria, the acquisition of Westphalia and the consolidation of the German Empire, and the acquisition of the Provinces in the Netherlands, and secured to her the pre-eminence in Europe. This change in the