



Cardinal Mazarin

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Richelieu died on the 5th of December 1642; on the following day Louis XIII. announced that he had chosen Mazarin to be First Minister. Giulio Mazarini, or Jules Mazarin, as the French call him, was born on July 14, 1602, at Piscina, a small village in the Abruzzi. His father was a certain Sicilian, by name Pietro Mazarini, his mother was Hortensia Buffalini, who was renowned for her beauty. To the latter the young Giulio owed much of his future success, for it was due to her efforts that he first studied under the Jesuits at the Roman College, and later at the University of Alcalá in Spain. He had early shown signs of uncommon talents, and he was at the age of sixteen remarkable for his handsome face and natural brightness. On his return to Rome about the year 1622, he entered the pontifical army, only to find that his real métier was diplomacy. He had studied civil law and had taken his degree of doctor in utroque jure, and under Cardinals Barberini and Sachetti he plunged into the tangled maze of Italian politics. Service under the Pope gave him an unrivalled opportunity of making himself acquainted with the political state of Europe, and of practising that adroitness and persuasiveness which proved so valuable when he became First Minister in France. Idleness was never one of his faults, and during these years in the service of his master at the Vatican Mazarin showed himself indefatigable, subtle, and successful. By his patience and industry he soon acquired an insight into diplomatic mysteries, and till the end of his life was pre-eminently a diplomatist of the first order. His ability was fully recognised by the Cardinals Barberini and Sachetti, and the war of the Mantuan succession brought him into contact with Richelieu. On March 30, 1630, the French had captured Pinerolo, the fortress commanding the exit of the chief pass from Dauphiné into Italy. The Spaniards and Imperialists offered to negotiate, and Mazarin, who was employed as papal legate, attracted the notice of the French cardinal. The negotiations came to nothing, as Richelieu refused to yield Pinerolo. When, later in the year, Cásale, besieged by Spinola, was hard pressed, Mazarin, in the absence of Richelieu, who had returned to France, arranged a truce at Rivalta on September 4, very much to the advantage of the beleaguered garrison, it is not to be wondered at that Richelieu should have decided to secure the services of the young Mazarin, for whom he procured a cardinal's hat. Richelieu's confidence in his protégé was not misplaced, and on his death-bed he recommended Mazarin to Louis as his successor...

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