



Louis XIII.

Louis XIII (1601-1643)

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Louis XIII, King of France from 1610 to 1643, ultimately ruled over the dominant European power of the seventeenth century. While there is no reliable evidence that he practiced same-sex sexual relations, his most intense emotional ties were with a series of handsome men.

The son of Henry IV (1553-1610; reigned 1589-1610) and Marie de Medici (1573-1642), Louis XIII was born on September 26, 1601. He inherited the throne at the age of nine, when his father was assassinated on May 14, 1610.

Historians know a great deal about Louis's childhood thanks to the journal of his doctor, Jean Hérouard (1551-1628). Servants and courtiers fondled the young boy's genitals, joked about his future sexual prowess, and encouraged him to simulate intercourse. The licentiousness and sexual banter surrounding the child contrast sharply with the prudishness and even discomfort with sex that the king later manifested as an adolescent and adult.

Louis was particularly ill at ease with women. He married a Spanish princess, Anne of Austria, on November 28, 1615, but their wedding night was a disaster, and the marriage remained unconsummated until 1619. He thereafter occasionally managed to sleep with the queen, but only from a sense of duty.

After four miscarriages, the queen finally gave him two sons and heirs, Louis-Dieudonné (the future Louis XIV) in 1638 and Philippe, Duke of Anjou (and future Duke of Orléans) in 1640.

Louis had two female favorites during his reign, Marie de Hautefort, from 1630 to 1639, and Angélique de La Fayette from 1635 to 1637, but these relationships were entirely chaste and platonic.

On the other hand, the intense emotional ties that Louis developed with a series of handsome men clearly indicate his homosexual tendencies. However, there is no evidence (apart from unreliable anecdotes) that he ever engaged in homosexual acts with these favorites.

The first of these men was Charles d'Albert de Luynes (1578-1621), who entered the young king's service in 1611 and rapidly became the boy's closest friend and adviser, despite the 23-year age difference. Luynes helped engineer the assassination of Concino Concini (1575-1617), Marie de Médicis's favorite, on April 24, 1617, thereby putting an end to the queen mother's authority (she governed France as Regent until 1614, then as head of the Royal Council) and instituting the king's personal rule.

The last of the king's favorites was the much younger Henri d'Effiat de Cinq-Mars (1620-1642), on whom Louis doted for three years (1639-1642). Louis put royal authority ahead of love when he had Cinq-Mars executed for conspiring with the Spanish enemy in time of war.

Louis XIII's reign is remembered principally for the activity of his longtime prime minister, Armand Jean du Plessis, Cardinal de Richelieu (1585-1642), who enjoyed the king's confidence and support from April 1624

until his death in December 1642.

Richelieu strengthened royal authority at home and ultimately made France the dominant European power by entering the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) in order to undermine the power of the Hapsburg dynasty, which reigned over Spain and Austria.

Louis XIII survived Richelieu by only five months, dying on May 14, 1643.

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