

and though he sent Buckingham with a fleet to their aid, the duke soon retreated when he found that the wily cardinal had built a huge wall across the mouth of the harbour, so that no ships could enter.

Meanwhile the royal army surrounded the city on the land side, and lay there for a year and a half waiting for the inmates to give in. They held out steadily, however, for their governor, Guiton, had promised to shoot the first man who spoke of surrender. But after living on grass and shell-fish for many months, they received news that their English sympathizers were making an alliance with the cardinal. Then in despair they opened their gates, and remembering the former treatment of their people, expected a fierce religious persecution. But Richelieu calmly assured them that he had no intention whatever of interfering with their religion. All he insisted upon was that they should demolish their fortified walls, and submit to the royal authority. Thus he ended a religious warfare that had kept France in a state of unrest for nearly a hundred years.

Much on the same lines was his treatment of the nobles. Their strong castles were destroyed, their power lessened in every way, and any one who opposed his will became the enemy of France. He kept a prison for such as these in his own house, and within its gloomy depths were wont to disappear any who seemed likely to give trouble. For the cardinal,