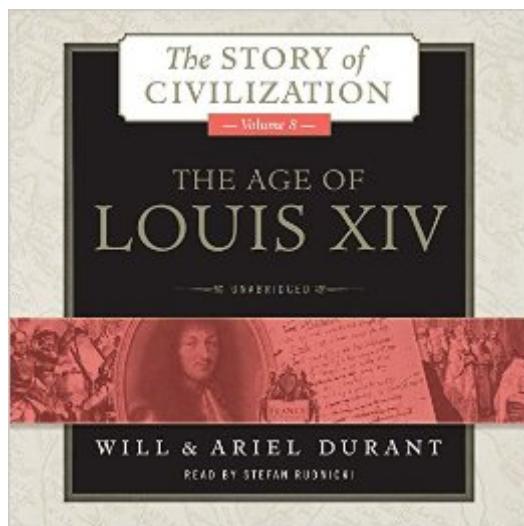


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The Age Of Louis XIV: A History Of European Civilization In The Period Of Pascal, Moliere, Cromwell, Milton, Peter The Great, Newton, And Spinoza, ... Book 8) (Story Of Civilization (Audio))



Synopsis

[Read by Stefan Rudnicki] An engrossing volume on European civilization by Pulitzer Prize-winning historians Will and Ariel Durant The eighth volume of Will Durant's acclaimed "Story of Civilization" series, The Age of Louis XIV chronicles the history of European civilization from 1648 to 1715. In this masterful work, listeners will encounter the tumultuous rule of the Louis XIV, who ruled France for over seventy years; the artists and leaders of England, including Milton, Jonathan Swift, and the Merry Monarch, Charles II; the tragic heroism of Sweden's Charles XII and Peter the Great's reign in Russia; the persecution of Jews across Europe; and the intellectual adventure of the European mind from superstition and intolerance to science and philosophy. This volume ends with the death of Louis XIV, who left his people both destitute and disillusioned.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Over the past year I have read extensively about the 17th century. "The Age of Louis XIV" is the best book which I have found on the period. Volume VII of Will and Ariel Durant's multi-volume "Story of Civilization", this book documents more detail of the era than any others which I have read. The book begins with sections on France and England. The next section is "The Periphery" dealing with Russia, Poland, Scandinavia, Germany, Italy, and Iberia. After the geographically oriented sections, the reader is treated to sections organized along intellectual topics, such as science, philosophy, and faith and reason, which contain chapters dealing with specific philosophers or scientists. The conclusion wraps it all up with the denouement of Louis XIV. This book makes the

17th century understandable. The premier character of the era was Louis XIV, the Sun King of France. During his reign, the policies of he and his ministers established France's day in the sun. Absolute ruler of the most populous and powerful kingdom in Western Europe, Louis made France the center of Western Civilization. On these pages we learn about the Fronde, the revolt by the nobility at the rising of his Sun, from which Louis acquired his life long aversion to Paris, Louis' aggressive support of Catholicism, while at the same time maintaining illicit personal relationships, and his generous support for the arts. This era, rich in French literature and theatre, as represented in Moliere, is revealed. The forces threatening to rend the Catholic Church further asunder, as well as the relationship between King and Pope, are dealt with in detail.

The Durants succeed again in encapsulating the 17th century in Europe. They label it as the landmark century intellectually and scientifically and there is much truth to their assessment: the 18th Century, the "Enlightenment" and "Aufklarung" usually takes pride of place given the American and French Revolutions that dominated them and the general retreat of superstition and obscurantism that marred both Catholicism and Protestantism in the previous centuries. The Durants clearly show that all the 18th century did was develop themes initially sounded and expounded by 17th century thinkers such as Hobbes, Locke, Newton, Leibniz, Spinoza and the English Deists. These writers, and others, laid the bedrock for the various revolutions that shook Europe in the 1700 and 1800s and which have culminated in our own day: The Industrial, Political and Scientific. Thematically, the book is erected upon the scaffolding of the Le Roi Soleil's life. They present his wars, mistresses, patronage of art, political autocracy as well as murderous bigotry. In my opinion, in their conclusion they let Louis off far too lightly. He was a man who countenanced, nay, actually encouraged and gloried not only in wars to dominate Europe--a common enough failing amongst the crowned--but in the Persecution of the Huguenots he left a blot on his record that, in light of the deadly century we just left and the religious fanaticism of 11 September, should sink his record in the humanitarian sense. His vanity and thirst for "la glorie" (which he admitted himself to have been his worst failing) bankrupted France and left the Peasants in a savage and degrading poverty they hadn't experienced since the calamities of the 14th century.

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