

RICHELIEU.

HIS (the Duc d'Aumale's) picture of Richelieu reflects the hostility with which the grand seigneurs of the generation of Louis XIII. opposed the measures of the great cardinal; and though he does not conceal the immense services of the most illustrious of French statesmen, he has not given them sufficient prominence. We are somewhat surprised to perceive this tendency in a work instinct with true patriotism. Granting all that can fairly be urged against Richelieu, it is not now, surely, that French writers should underrate the merits of the renowned minister who raised their country out of a state of impotence, gave it the double blessing of strength and order, changed the monarchy into a national government supreme over all kinds of anarchy, and, if despotic, in one sense popular, and, steadily carrying out, despite appalling obstacles, a policy of extraordinary wisdom and grandeur, placed France at the head of the powers of Europe, and secured to her a frontier which, after a possession of two stormy centuries—so enduring and deep-laid was his work—she has lost, only as it were yesterday, through her own folly and that of her rulers.

In the spring of 1624 Richelieu had become minister, and his powerful hand and far-seeing eye soon made themselves felt at the helm of the State. The successor of Henry IV. and Sully, he had already entered upon their labours, and he had begun the great work which was to raise France out of weak disorder to a proud eminence. Abroad he had laid down the lines of the policy which was to lessen the preponderance of the House of Austria; at home he had perceived that the "Huguenot liberties," which made the Reformers' cities independent commonwealths, were incompatible with the unity of France. His first measures, however, had been chiefly aimed at reducing the power of the great nobles, which had been a source of peril to the State ever since the days of the League and the Guises, and which had spread confusion throughout the kingdom, and exposed the monarchy to general contempt under the feeble rule of Concini and Luynes. A noble himself, he knew well how valuable was a noble order to France, and yet how ruinous was the anarchy of the noblesse, and he had steadily addressed himself to the task of breaking down the great feudal seigneurie, and yet of employing the ennobled classes in their proper sphere, the service of the Crown. Despite resistance of every kind, he had made some steps to attain this result, and the demolition of many a lordly chateau and the punishment of more than one lordly plotter had proved how determined he was in his purpose.

Richelieu was earnestly pursuing his foreign policy, when the intrigues of Buckingham and the growing influence of the Puritans in the councils of England led to the last and most dangerous of the Huguenot risings. The signal of insurrection was given by La Rochelle—the citadel of the Protestantism of France on the sea—and the southern provinces were soon up in arms under Henri de Rohan, their renowned leader, assisted, perhaps, by the gold of Spain. The cardinal took decisive steps to crush the rebellion, and to put an end for ever to a state of things destructive to France, and while he organised the fleet, set on foot armies, and made great preparations to besiege La Rochelle, he placed Condé in supreme command in the south. The cardinal, in the hour of triumph, as is well known, showed his wonted forethought: he deprived the Huguenot towns of rights which had made them really independent of the State, but he confirmed their purely municipal franchises, and he secured them complete religious liberty. This settlement, marked by profound wisdom, promoted the growing national unity, assured to France the devoted services of a long roll of illustrious names, and preserved for the nation its most precious elements; and its abrogation in a subsequent age was not the least of the many causes of the decline of France in the eighteenth century.

The power of France was slowly advancing, and she had nearly 200,000 men in the field; but her armies were not as yet a match for the veteran legions of Spain and Austria, with their great traditions of Parma and Wallenstein; and the chief elements, perhaps, of her military strength were to be found in the old bands of the King of Sweden, or in Saxe-Weimar's well-trying levies, both her allies in the gigantic contest. Yet Richelieu was gradually attaining his ends; he had already obtained a footing on the Rhine, had rolled back the invaders of 1636, and had planted the standards of France in Artois; and though still a mark for intrigues at home, and for the vengeance of the unforgiving noblesse, he had become recognised in the councils of Europe as the champion of the true rights of nations against the domination of one arrogant house and the Catholic reaction in its worst aspects. The newly-created navy of France, besides, had made its influence felt in the struggle; it had avenged the Spanish descent on Provence, and it had more than once defeated the proud squad-

rons—imposing, massive, but ill ordered—which still retraced the memories of the long-lost Armada.

At his death the great minister had not attained old age, but he had gloriously done his allotted work, though the Treaty of Westphalia and that of the Pyrenees do not bear his illustrious name. He had given a death-blow to French feudalism, with its lawless disorder and selfish tyranny; and though the great nobles were to stir again, the monarchy was steadily growing in strength, and was becoming the symbol and the assurance of the unity and the grandeur of France. He had caused the religious wars to cease; the Huguenots had become the best of subjects, and France had been saved from the frightful troubles which had covered Germany with blood and ashes, and which checked her progress for two centuries. More than all, he had contrived to associate the policy of France with the moral forces becoming dominant throughout Europe; he had made her influence supreme on the Continent; and if her armies had suffered defeats, she was steadily and surely extending her borders, and was advancing to what the national sentiment has recognised as her natural frontiers. If, in the furtherance of these great designs, Richelieu had committed questionable acts, nay, if perhaps he had done lasting injury to his country's interests in one direction by the suppression of local rights and privileges, still his immense services outweigh these many acts of cruelty and even of crime. Let it be added, too, that this consummate statesman showed wonderful skill in raising to eminence whatever France possessed of genius and worth; he crushed the insolence of the great nobles, but he drew from the order into the service of the State a number of men of high merit; and if he made government an oppressive burden, he gave a strong stimulus to the French intellect. The middle and the close of the seventeenth century is the period when France enjoyed a triple supremacy in arms, in letters, and in diplomacy.—*Edinburgh Review* on the Duc d'Aumale's *Princes of the House of Condé*.

SHEMUEL.

SHEMUEL, the Bethlehemite,
Watched a fevered guest at night;
All his fellows fared afield,
Saw the angel host revealed;
He nor caught the mystic story,
Heard the song, nor saw the glory.

Through the night they gazing stood,
Heard the holy multitude;
Back they came in wonder home,
Knew the Christmas kingdom come,
Eyes aflame and hearts elated;
Shemuel sat alone, and waited.

Works of mercy now, as then,
Hide the angel host from men;
Hearts atune to earthly love
Miss the angel notes above;
Deeds, at which the world rejoices,
Quench the sound of angel voices.

So they thought, nor deemed from whence
His celestial recompense.
Shemuel by the fever bed,
Touched by beckoning hands that led,
Died, and saw the Uncreated;
All his fellows lived, and waited.

EDWARD D. BOWEN: *Harrow Songs and other Verses*.

"FOR many years I enjoyed the pleasure of acquaintance with the late Giuseppe Mario, and frequently met him in society, both here and in London. Sitting next him at a dinner party in this city on the evening before his final departure from Ireland, and chatting over the times of his operatic triumphs at the Royal, I reminded him of an occurrence which took place there one night during the performance of *Rigoletto*. The engagement being an expensive one, the prices had been raised; and for admission to the upper gallery an additional charge of sixpence was made, the usual price being a shilling. The charming tenor had just finished his exquisite rendering of 'La donna é mobile,' the concluding words of which are 'e di pensier,' when a facetious occupant of the Olympian region exclaimed, 'Yes: it's eighteenpence here, and should be only a bob.' Mario was quite at a loss to understand what provoked the laughter which ensued upon this utterance from the upper gallery; but, when the cause was explained to him at the conclusion of the act, he thoroughly appreciated and heartily enjoyed the joke."—*Dr. Tisdall, of Dublin*.