

ling with fragrance or lovely hues holding on to the skirts of delicate odours.

[“Illusion makes the better part of life.”]

This is true along the whole line. Even religions have been builded with metaphors and the pious in all ages and most creeds have climbed on similes to heaven. This new politeness spread to the provinces and the petty German courts; dominated Europe; swayed the English court, not always there any more than elsewhere to the advantage of a severe morality.

Louis' force of character made itself felt on all sides. He at once adopted the authority which had been stored up by Richelieu and Mazarin. His ministers became his clerks; kings from the Thames to the sands of Brandenburg his pensioners. Order was established throughout France; justice penetrated everywhere. Commerce, industry, the arts flourished. France became rich; her monarchy the most splendid, her court the most brilliant in Europe. What wonder if the authors like the rest were dazzled? Led by admiration and impelled by interest they gravitated towards this great centre. The King invited them to court: gave them a definite rank in the social hierarchy; secured them liberty by removing them from the fear of passionate nobles quick to take offense and the lawless violence which had been until recently only too common in Paris. But for such protection we should have had no Molière and without Molière, no Regnard, no Le Sage, no Beaumarchais in France; nor in England the school for scandal and its kindred comedy; the European Comedy of six generations. It was the King himself who overcame the disinclination to admire Racine; Madame de Sevigne's letter on the occasion of the first representation Bajazet shows the struggle. “I send you a Bajazet” she writes “if I could send you Champmesle,” (the beautiful and accomplished actress who played the principal role) “you would find the piece good; but without her it loses half its charm” and then she breaks into raptures over Corneille “*Je suis folle de Corneille*,” as well she might be, Racine she said did not write for the future “*Vive donc notre vieil ami Corneille*.” Had not the royal aegis been over him Boileau would not have dared to write the Satires.

“*C'est en verite un grand avantage.*” says madame de Sevigne, “*que d'être du premier ordre*”. By causing men of letters to mix with courtiers and to live in the polite world he rid them of bourgeois self-sufficiency and brushed away the rust of pedantry. Frequenting the society of well-bred people, of statesmen and women of fashion, they acquired not only manners, but mental qualities which are not met with in back parlors or even in the drawing-rooms of the merely rich. Under all these influences French literature became natural and national and rose to the highest excellence of art. Look at the names rising like