

gallic dispute which was the weedy outcome of that which was in itself a noble movement started by Richelieu.

The licentiousness of French literature at the opening of the seventeenth century may be described but not sampled. The *Précieuses*, doomed to Molière's jibes by and by, rendered a great service by frowning down grossness and pedantry. That incomparable lady Madame de Rambouillet and the gracious women who followed her, like the nymphs in Diana's train, would not permit the naked image to be thrust on their attention. Neither in conversation nor books was this allowed. Literary polish follows social politeness. To act more nobly, more delicately, with more refinement than others became a cult. The effect was immediate on literary taste. The way was paved for Corneille—the greatest man who has ever in France written for the play house and who claimed with just pride, that his earliest achievement was to establish the reign of decency and morality on the stage.

Richelieu a great statesman, was also a literary man and had indeed aspired to success in the drama. Large in all his schemes he conceived the idea, first, let it be admitted, in the interest of his politics, then in the interest of literature,—to make this contribute to the homogeneousness and unity of France. He wanted a united French state,—living, organized; he wished a like unity, life and organization in literature. Hence the French Academy established to bind up the destinies of literature with those of France—to bring this great social force in touch with the central authority—to nationalize it. Such an institution could only be useful when controlled by a great mind and to-day it is of doubtful value. What is intended to unify once unity has been accomplished, is no longer needed.

Richelieu's work in this regard was interrupted by his death, by the Fronde, by the rule of a Spanish Queen and an Italian minister, and by Fouquet who so far as he had any aim, outside pleasure and generous appreciation, sought to inspire personal attachment. The death of Mazarin emancipating him, the king showed that he was conscious of his kingship. Young, gallant, addicted to ostentatious splendour, there was in the early period nothing formal, solemn, or pompous about his court. In a perpetual round of refined pleasures there arose a new politeness of which the monarch gave an example; a politeness less studied, freer, less ceremonious, than that of the court of Anne of Austria, but watchful and of perfect grace. Manners became at once more elegant and natural; language more refined; sentiments more subtle; the nuances of passion more entrancing than passion itself; so that lives were controlled and given under a complex spell; beautiful feeling and loyalty towards women or men, themselves sometimes not wholly worthy if not indeed wholly worthless, like a rose blooming on a dung heap—a lily in a stagnant pool; refinement's unseizable by sane ordinary mortals, like light ming-