

Memoirs of Madame de Montespan — Volume 6 eBook

Memoirs of Madame de Montespan — Volume 6

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Being the Historic Memoirs of the Court of Louis XIV.

BOOK 6.

CHAPTER XIX.

The Court Travels in Picardy and Flanders.—The Boudoir Navy.—Madame de Montespan Is Not Invited.—The King Relates to Her the Delights of the Journey.—Reflections of the Marquise.

The King, consoled as he was for the death of the Duchesse de Fontanges, did not, on that account, return to that sweet and agreeable intimacy which had united us for the space of eleven or twelve years. He approached me as one comes to see a person of one's acquaintance, and it was more than obvious that his only bond with me was his children.

Being a man who loved pomp and show, he resolved upon a journey in Flanders,—a journey destined to furnish him, as well as his Court, with numerous and agreeable distractions, and to give fresh alarm to his neighbours.

Those "Chambers of Reunion," as they were called, established at Metz and at Brisach, competed with each other in despoiling roundly a host of great proprietors, under the pretext that their possessions had formerly belonged to Alsace, and that this Alsace had been ceded to us by the last treaties. The Prince Palatine of the Rhine saw himself stripped, on this occasion, of the greater part of the land which he had inherited from his ancestors, and when he would present a memoir on this subject to the ministers, M. de Croissy-Colbert answered politely that he was in despair at being unable to decide the matter himself; but that the Chambers of Metz and Brisach having been instituted to take cognisance of it, it was before these solemn tribunals that he must proceed.

The Palatine lost, amongst other things, the entire county of Veldentz, which was joined to the church of the Chapter of Verdun.

The King, followed by the Queen and all his Court,—by Monsieur le Dauphin, Madame la Dauphine and the legitimate princes, whom their households accompanied as well, —set out for Flanders in the month of July. Madame de Maintenon, as lady in waiting, went on this journey; and of me, superintendent of the Queen's Council, they did not even speak.

The first town at which this considerable Court stopped was at Boulogne, in Picardy, the fortifications of which were being repaired. On the next day the King went on horseback to visit the port of Ambleteuse; thence he set out for Calais, following the line of the



coast, while the ladies took the same course more rapidly. He inspected the harbours and diverted himself by taking a sail in a wherry. He then betook himself to Dunkirk, where the Marquis de Seignelay—son of Colbert—had made ready a very fine man-of-war with which to regale their Majesties. The Chevalier de Ury, who commanded her, showed them all the handling of it, which was for those ladies, and for the Court,



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a spectacle as pleasant as it was novel. The whole crew was very smart, and the vessel magnificently equipped. There was a sham fight, and then the vessel was boarded. The King took as much pleasure in this sight as if Fontanges had been the heroine of the fete, and our ladies, to please him, made their hands sore in applauding. This naval fight terminated in a great feast, which left nothing to be desired in the matter of sumptuousness and delicacy.

On the following day, there was a more formal fight between two frigates, which had also been prepared for this amusement.

The King was in a galley as spectator; the Queen was in another. The Chevalier de Lery took the helm of that of the King; the Capitaine de Selingue steered that of the Queen. The sea was calm, and there was just enough wind to set the two frigates in motion. They cannonaded one another briskly for an hour, getting the weather gauge in turn; after this, the combat came to an end, and they returned to the town to the sound of instruments and the noise of cannon.

The King gave large bounties to the crew, as a token of his satisfaction.

The prince was on board his first vessel, when the Earl of Oxford, and the Colonel, afterwards the Duke of Marlborough, despatched by the King of England, came to pay him a visit of compliment on behalf of that sovereign.

The Duke of Villa-Hermosa, Spanish Governor of the Low Countries, paid him the same compliment in the name of his master.

Both parties were given audience on this magnificent vessel, where M. de Seignelay had raised a sort of throne of immense height.

(All this time Mademoiselle de Fontanges lay in her coffin, recovering from her confinement.)

From Dunkirk the Court moved to Ypres, visiting all the places on the way, and arrived at Lille in Flanders on the 1st of August. From Lille, where the diversions lasted five or six days, they moved to Valenciennes, thence to Condo, meeting everywhere with the same honours, the same tokens of gladness. They returned to Sedan by Le Quenoy, Bouchain, Cambrai; and the end of the month of August found the Court once more at Versailles.

I profited by this absence to go and breathe a little at my chateau of Petit-Bourg, where I was accompanied by Mademoiselle de Blois, and the young Comte de Toulouse; after which I betook myself to the mineral waters of Bourbonne, for which I have a predilection.



On my return, the King related to me all these frivolous diversions of frigates and vessels that I have just mentioned; but with as much fire as if he had been but eighteen years old, and with the same cordiality as if I might have taken part in amusements from which he had excluded me.

How is it that a clever man can forget the proprieties to such a degree, and expose himself to the secret judgments which must be formed of him, in spite of himself and however reluctantly?



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CHAPTER XX.

The Duchesse d'Orleans.—The Duchesse de Richelieu.—An Epigram of Madame de Maintenon.—An Epigram of the King to His Brother.

Madame la Dauphine brought into the world a son, christened Louis at the font, to whom the King a few moments afterwards gave the title of the Duke of Burgundy. We had become accustomed, little by little, to the face of this Dauphine, who (thanks to the counsels and instruction of her lady in waiting) adopted French manners promptly enough, succeeded in doing her hair in a satisfactory manner, and in making an appearance which met with general approval. Madame de Maintenon, for all her politeness and forethought, never succeeded in pleasing her; and these two women, obliged to see each other often from their relative positions, suffered martyrdom when they met.

The King, who had noticed it, began by resenting it from his daughter-in-law. The latter, proud and haughty, like all these petty German royalties, thought herself too great a lady to give way.

Madame de Maintenon had, near the person of the young Bavarian, two intermediaries of importance, who did not sing her praises from morn till eve. The one was that Charlotte Elizabeth of Bavaria, whom I have already described to the life, who, furious at her personal monstrosity, could not as a rule forgive pretty women. The other was the Duchesse de Richelieu, maid of honour to the Princess of Bavaria, once the protector of Madame Scarron, and now her antagonist, probably out of jealousy.

These two acid tongues had taken possession of the Dauphine,—a character naturally prone to jealousy,—and they permitted themselves against the lady in waiting all the mockery and all the depreciation that one can permit oneself against the absent.

Insinuations and abuse produced their effect so thoroughly that Madame de Maintenon grew disgusted with the duties of her office, and with the consent of the monarch she no longer appeared at the house of his daughter-in-law, except on state and gala occasions. Madame de Richelieu related to me one day the annoyance and mortification of the new Marquise.

“Madame d'Orleans came in one day,” said she to me, “to Madame la Dauphine, where Madame de Maintenon was. The Princess of the Palais Royal, who does not put herself about, as every one knows, greeted only the Dauphine and me. She spoke of her health, which is neither good nor bad, and pretended that her gowns were growing too large for her, in proof that she was going thin. ‘I do not know,’ she added, brusquely, ‘what Madame Scarron does; she is always the same.’”



“The lady in waiting answered on the spot: ‘Madame, no one finds you changed, either, and it is always the same thing.’

“The half-polite, half-bantering tone of Madame de Maintenon nonplussed the Palatine for the moment; she wished to demand an explanation from the lady in waiting. She took up her muff, without making a courtesy, and retired very swiftly.”



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“I am scarcely, fond of Madame de Maintenon,” said I to Madame de Richelieu, “but I like her answer exceedingly. Madame is one of those great hermaphrodite bodies which the two sexes recognise and repulse at the same time. She is an aggressive personage, whom her hideous face makes one associate naturally, with mastiffs; she is surly, like them, and, like them, she exposes herself to the blows of a stick. It makes very little difference to me if she hears from you the portrait I have just made of her; you can tell her, and I shall certainly not give you the lie.”

Monsieur, having come some days afterwards to the King, complained of Madame de Maintenon, who, he said, had given offence to his wife.

“You have just made a great mistake,” said the King; “you who pride yourself on speaking your tongue so well, and I am going to put you right. This is how you ought rather to have expressed yourself: ‘I complain of Madame de Maintenon, who, by ambiguous words, has given offence, or wished to give offence to my wife.’”

Monsieur made up his mind to laugh, and said no more of it.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Marquis de Lauzun at Liberty.—His Conduct to His Wife.—Recovery of Mademoiselle.

Mademoiselle, having by means of her donations to the Duc du Maine obtained, at first, the release, and subsequently the entire liberty of Lauzun, wished to go to meet him and to receive him in a superb carriage with six horses. The King had her informed secretly that she should manage matters with more moderation; and the King only spoke so because he was better informed than any one of the ungrateful aversion of Lauzun to Mademoiselle. No one wished to open her eyes, for she had refused to see; time itself had to instruct her, and time, which wears wings, arrived at that result quickly enough.

M. de Lauzun was, beyond gainsaying, a man of feeling and courage, but he nourished in his heart a limitless ambition, and his head, subject to whims and caprices, would not suffer him to follow methodically a fixed plan of conduct. The King had just pardoned him as a favour to his cousin; but, knowing him well, he was not at all fond of him. They had disposed of his office of Captain of the Guards and of the other command of the ‘Beccs de Corbins’. It was decided that Lauzun should not return to his employment; but his Majesty charged Monsieur Colbert to make good to him the amount and to add to it the arrears.

These different sums, added together, formed a capital of nine hundred and eighty thousand francs, which was paid at once in notes on the treasury, which were equal in



value to ready cash. On news of this, he broke into the most violent rage possible; he was tempted to throw these notes into the fire. It was his offices which he wanted, and not these sums, with which he could do nothing.

The King received him with an easy, kind air; he, always a flatterer with his lips, cast himself ten times on his knees before the prince, and gained nothing by all these demonstrations. He went to rejoin Mademoiselle on the following day at Choisy, and dared to scold her for having constructed and even bought this pretty pleasure-house.



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“This must have cost treasures,” said he. “Had you not parks and chateaus enough? It would have been better to keep all these sums and give them to me now.”

After this exordium, he set himself to criticise the coiffure of the Queen, on account of the coloured knots that he had remarked in it.

“But you mean, then, to satirise me personally,” said the Princess to him, “since you see my hair dressed in the same fashion, and I am older than my cousin!

“What became of you on leaving the King?” she asked him. “I waited for you till two hours after midnight.”

“I went,” said he, “to visit M. de Louvois, who is not my friend, and who requires humouring; then to visit M. Colbert, who favours me.”

“You ought to have seen Madame de Maintenon, I gave you that advice before leaving you,” she said; “it is to her, above all, that you owe your liberty.”

“But your Madame de Maintenon,” he resumed, “is she, too, one of the powers? Ah, my God! what a new geography since I left these regions ten years ago!”

To avoid tete-a-tete, M. de Lauzun was always in a surly humour; he put his left arm into a sling; he never ceased talking of his rheumatism and his pains.

Mademoiselle learned, now from one person, now from another, that he was dining to-day with one fair lady, to-morrow with another, and the next day with a third. She finally understood that she was despised and tricked; she showed one last generosity (out of pride) towards her former friend,—solicited for him the title of Duke, and begged him, for the future, to arrange his life to please himself, and to let her alone.

The Marquis de Lauzun took her at her word, and never forgave her for the cession of the principalities of Dombes and Eu to M. le Duc du Maine; he wanted them for himself.

CHAPTER XXII.

Progress of Madame de Maintenon.—The Anonymous Letter.

Since the birth of Mademoiselle de Blois, and the death of Mademoiselle de Fontanges, the King hardly ever saw me except a few minutes ceremoniously,—a few minutes before and after supper. He showed himself always assiduous with Madame de Maintenon, who, by her animated and unflagging talk, had the very profitable secret of keeping him amused. Although equally clever, I venture to flatter myself, in the art of manipulating speech, I could not stoop to such condescensions. You cannot easily



divert when you have a heart and are sincere—a man who deserts you, who does not even take the trouble to acknowledge it and excuse himself.

The Marquise sailed, then, on the open sea, with all sail set; whilst my little barque did little more than tack about near the shore. One day I received the following letter; it was in a pleasant and careful handwriting, and orthography was observed with complete regularity, which suggested that a man had been its writer, or its editor:



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The person who writes these lines, Madame la Marquise, sees you but rarely, but is none the less attached to you. The advice which he is going to give you in writing he would have made it a duty to come and give you himself; he has been deterred by the fear either of appearing to you indiscreet, or of finding you too deeply engrossed with occupations, or with visitors, as is so often the case, in your own apartments.

These visitors, this former affluence of greedy and interested hearts, you will soon see revealed and diminishing; probably your eyes, which are so alert, have already remarked this diminution. The monarch no longer loves you; coolness and inconstancy are maladies of the human heart. In the midst of the most splendid health, our King has for some time past experienced this malady.

In your place, I should not wait to see myself repudiated. By whatever outward respect such an injunction be accompanied, the bottom of the cup is always the same, and the honey at the edge is but a weak palliative. Being no ordinary woman by birth, do not terminate like an ordinary actress your splendid and magnificent role on this great stage. Know how to leave before the audience is weary; while they can say, when they miss you from the scene, "She was still fine in her role. It is a pity!"

Since a new taste or new caprice of the monarch has led his affections away, know how to endure a fantasy which you have not the power to remove. Despatch yourself with a good grace; and let the world believe that sober reflections have come to you, and that you return, of your own free will, into the paths of independence, of true glory, and of honour.

Your position of superintendent with the Queen has been from the very first almost a sinecure. Give up to Madame de Maintenon, or to any one else, a dignity which is of no use to you, for which you will be paid now its full value; which, later, is likely to cause you a sensible disappointment; for that is always sold at a loss which must be sold at a given moment.

Nature, so prodigal to you, Madame la Marquise, has not yet deflowered, nor recalled in the least degree, those graces and attractions which were lavished on you. Retire with the honours of war.

Annoyance, vexation, irritation, do not make your veins flow with milk and honey; you would lose upon the field of battle all those treasures which it is in your power to save.

Adieu, madame.

This communication, though anonymous, is none the less benevolent. I desire your peace and your happiness.



CHAPTER XXIII.

Madame de Maintenon at Loggerheads with Madame de Thianges.—The Mint of the D'Aubigne Family.—Creme de Negresse, the Elixir of Long Life.—Ninon's Secret for Beauty.—The King Would Remain Young or Become So.—Good-will of Madame de Maintenon.



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This letter was not, in my eyes, a masterpiece, but neither was it from a vulgar hand. For a moment I suspected Madame de Maintenon. She was named in it, it is true, as though by the way, but her interest in it was easy to discover, since the writer dared to try to induce me to sell her, to give up to her, my superintendence. I communicated my suspicions to the Marquise de Thianges. She said to me: "We must see her,—her face expresses her emotions very clearly; she is not good at lying; we shall easily extract her secret, and make her blush for her stratagem."

Ibrahim, faithful to his old friendship for me, had recently sent me stuffs of Asia and essences of the seraglio, under the pretence of politeness and as a remembrance. I wrote two lines to the Marquise, engaging her to come and sacrifice half an hour to me to admire with me these curiosities. Suspecting nothing, she came to my apartments, when she accepted some perfumes, and found all these stuffs divine. My sister, Madame de Thianges, said to her:

"Madame, I do not wish to be the last to congratulate you on that boundless confidence and friendship that our Queen accords you. Assuredly, no one deserves more than you this feeling of preference; it appears that the princess is developing, and that, at last, she is taking a liking for choice conversation and for wit."

"Madame," answered the lady in waiting, "her Majesty does not prefer me to any one here. You are badly informed. She has the goodness to accord to me a little confidence; and since she finds in me some facility in the Spanish tongue, of which she wishes to remain the idolater all her life, she loves to speak that tongue with me, catching me up when I go wrong either in the pronunciation or the grammar, as she desires to be corrected herself when she commits some offence against our French."

"You were born," added Madame de Thianges, "to work at the education of kings. It is true that few governesses or tutors are as amiable. There is a sound in your voice which goes straight to the heart; and what others teach rudely or monotonously, you teach musically and almost singing. Since the Queen loves your French and your Spanish, everything has been said; you are indispensable to her. Things being so, I dare to propose to you, Madame, a third occupation, which will suit you better than anything else in the world, and which will complete the happiness of her Majesty.

"Here is Madame de Montespan, who is growing disgusted with grandeur, after having recognised its emptiness, who is enthusiastically desiring to go and enjoy her House of Saint Joseph, and wishes to get rid of her superintendence forthwith, at any cost."

"What!" said Madame de Maintenon. Then to me, "You wish to sell your office without having first assured yourself whether it be pleasing to the King? It appears to me that you are not acting on this occasion with the caution with which you are generally credited."



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“What need has she of so many preliminary cautions,” added the Marquise, “if it is to you that she desires to sell it? Her choice guarantees the consent of the princess; your name will make everything easy.”

“I reason quite otherwise, Madame la Marquise,” replied the former governess of the princes; “the Queen may have her ideas. It is right and fitting to find out first her intention and wishes.”

“Madame, madame,” said my sister then, “everything has been sufficiently considered, and even approved of. You will be the purchaser; you desire to buy, it is to you that one desires to sell.”

Madame de Maintenon began to laugh, and besought the Marquise to believe that she had neither the desire nor the money for that object.

“Money,” answered my sister, “will cause you no trouble on this occasion. Money has been coined in your family.”

[Constant d’Aubigne, father of Madame de Maintenon, in his wild youth, was said to have taken refuge in a den of comers.—Ed. Note]

Madame de Maintenon, profoundly moved, said to the Marquise:

“I thought, madame, that I had come to see Madame de Montespan, to look at her stuffs from the seraglio, and not to receive insults. All your teasing affects me, because up to to-day I believed in your kindly feeling. It has been made clear to me now that I must put up with this loss; but, whatever be your injustice towards me, I will not depart from my customs or from my element. The superintendence of the Queen’s Council is for sale, or it is not; either way, it is all the same to me. I have never made any claim to this office, and I never shall.”

These words, of which I perceived the sincerity, touched me. I made some trifling excuses to the lady in waiting, and, tired of all these insignificant mysteries, I went and took the anonymous letter from my bureau and showed it to the governess.

She read it thoughtfully. After having read it, she assured me that this script was a riddle to her.

Madame de Maintenon, on leaving us, made quite a deep courtesy to my sister, which caused me pain, preserving an icy gravity and exaggerating her salutation and her courtesy.

When we were alone, I confessed to the Marquise de Thianges that her words had passed all bounds, and that she could have reached her end by other means.



“I cannot endure that woman,” she answered. “She knows that you have made her, that without you she would be languishing still in her little apartment in the Maree; and when for more than a year she sees you neglected by the King and almost deserted, she abandons you to your destiny, and does not condescend to offer you any consolation. I have mortified her; I do not repent of it in the least, and every time that I come across her I shall permit myself that gratification.

“What is she thinking of at her age; with her pretensions to a fine figure, an ethereal carriage, and beauty? And yet it must be admitted that her complexion is not made up. She has the sheen of the lily mingled with that of the rose, and her eyes exhibit a smiling vivacity which leaves our great coquettes of the day far behind!”



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“She is nature unadorned as far as her complexion goes, believe me,” said I to my sister. “During my constant journeys she has always slept at my side, and her face at waking has always been as at noon and all day long. She related to us once at the Marechale d’Albret’s, where I knew her, that at Martinique—that distant country which was her cradle—an ancient negress, well preserved and robust, had been kind enough to take her into her dwelling. This woman led her one day into the woods. She stripped of its bark some shrub, after having sought it a long time. She grated this bark and mixed it with the juice of chosen herbs. She wrapped up all this concoction in half a banana skin, and gave the specific to the little D’Aubigne.

“This mess having no nasty taste, the little girl consented to return fifteen or twenty times into the grove, where her negress carefully composed and served up to her the same feast.

“‘Why do you care to give me this green paste?’ the young creole asked her one day.

“The old woman said: ‘My dear child, I cannot wait till you have enough sense to learn to understand these plants, for I love you as if you were my own daughter, and I want to leave you a secret which will cause you to live a long time. Though I look as I do, I am 138 years old already. I am the oldest person in the colony, and this paste that I make for you has preserved my strength and my freshness. It will produce the same effect on my dear little girl, and will keep her young and pretty too for a long time.’

“This negress, unhappily, fell asleep one day under a wild pear-tree in the Savannah, and a crocodile came out of the river hard by and devoured her.”

“I have heard tell,” replied my sister, “that Mademoiselle d’Aubigne, after the death of her mother, or husband, was bound by the ties of a close friendship with Ninon de l’Enclos, whose beauty made such a sensation among the gallants, and still occupies them.

“One was assured, you know, that Ninon possesses a potion, and that in her generosity to her friend, the fair Indian, she lent her her phial of elixir.”

“No, no,” said I to the Marquise, “that piece of gallantry of Ninon is only a myth; it is the composition of Martinique, or of the negress, which is the real recipe of Madame de Maintenon. She talked of it one day, when I was present, in the King’s carriage. His Majesty said to her: ‘I am astonished that, with your natural intelligence, you have not kept in your mind the nature of this Indian shrub and herbs; with such a secret you would be able to-day to make many happy, and there are some kings, who, to grow young again, would give you half their empire.’

“‘I am not a worshipper of riches,’ said this mistress of talk; ‘bad kings might offer me all the treasures and crowns they liked, and I would not make them young again.’

“And me, madame,’ said the prince, ‘would you consent to make me young again?’



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“You will not need it for a long time,” she replied, cleverly, with a smile; “but when the moment comes, or is near, I should set about it with zeal.”

“The whole carriage applauded this reply, and the King took the hand of the Marquise and insisted on kissing it.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Casket of M. de Lauzun.—His Historical Gallery.—He Makes Some Nuns.—M. de Lauzun in the Lottery.—The Loser Wins.—Queen out of Pique.—Letter from the Queen of Portugal.—The Ingratitude of M. de Lauzun.

Twice during the captivity of M. de Lauzun the Queen of Portugal had charged her ambassador to carry to the King that young sovereign’s solicitations in favour of the disgraced gentleman. Each time the negotiators had been answered with vague and ambiguous words; with those promises which potentates are not chary of, even between themselves, and which we poor mortals of the second rank call Court holy water. These exertions of the Court of Lisbon were speedily discovered, and it then became known how many women of high degree M. de Peguilain had the honour of fluttering. The officer of D’Artagnan, who had the task of seizing his papers when he was arrested to be taken to Pignerol, was obliged, in the course of his duty, to open a rather large casket, where he found the portraits of more than sixty women, of whom the greater number lived almost in the odour of sanctity. There were descriptive or biographical notes upon all these heroines, and correspondence to match. His Majesty had cognisance of it, and forbade the publication of the names. But the Marquis d’Artagnan and his subordinate officer committed some almost inevitable indiscretions, and all these ladies found their names public property. Several of them, who were either widows or young ladies, retired into convents, not daring to show their faces in the light of day.

The Queen of Portugal, before this scandal, had passionately loved the Marquis de Lauzun. She was then called Mademoiselle d’Aumale, and her sister who was soon afterwards Duchess of Savoy was called at Paris Mademoiselle de Nemours. These two princesses, after having exchanged confidences and confessions, were astonished and grieved to find themselves antagonists and rivals. Happily they had a saving wit, both of them, and made a treaty of peace, by which it was recognised and agreed that, since their patrimony was small, it should be neither divided nor drawn upon, in order that it might make of M. de Lauzun, when he came to marry, a rich man and a great lord. The two rivals, in the excess of their love, stipulated that this indivisible inheritance should be drawn for by lot, that the victorious number should have M. de Lauzun thrown in, and that the losing number should go and bury herself in a convent.



Mademoiselle d'Aumale—that is to say, the pretty blonde—won M. de Lauzun; but he, being bizarre in his tastes, and who only had a fancy for the brunette (the less charming of the two), went and besought the King to refuse his consent.



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Mademoiselle d'Aumale thought of dying of grief and pique, and, as a consequence of her despair, listened to the proposals of the King of Portugal, and consented to take a crown.

The disgrace and imprisonment of her old friend having reached her ear, this princess gave him the honour of her tears, although she had two husbands alive. Twice she had solicited his liberty, which was certainly not granted in answer to her prayers.

When she learned of the release of the prisoner, she showed her joy publicly at it, in the middle of her Court; wrote her congratulations upon it to Mademoiselle, apparently to annoy her, and, a few days afterwards, indited with her own hand the letter you are going to read, addressed to the King, which was variously criticised.

To his majesty the king of France.

Brother:—Kings owe one another no account of their motives of action, especially when their authority falls heavily upon the officers of their own palace, till then invested with their confidence and overwhelmed with the tokens of their kindness. The disgrace of the Marquis de Lauzun can only appear in my eyes an act of justice, coming as it does from the justest of sovereigns. So I confined myself in the past to soliciting for this lord—gifted with all the talents, with bravery and merit—your Majesty's pity and indulgence. He owed later the end of his suffering, not to my instances, but to your magnanimity. I rejoice at the change in his destiny, and I have charged my ambassador at your Court to express my sincere participation in it. To-day, Sire, I beg you to accept my thanks. M. de Lauzun, so they assure me, has not been restored to his offices, and though still young, does not obtain employment in his country, where men of feeling and of talent are innumerable. Allow us, Sire, to summon this exceptional gentleman to my State, where French officers win easily the kindly feelings of my nobles, accustomed as they are to cherish all that is born in your illustrious Empire. I will give M. de Lauzun a command worthy of him, worthy of me,—a command that will enable him to render lasting and essential services to my Crown and to yours. Do not refuse me this favour, which does not at all impoverish your armies, and which may be of use to a kingdom of which you are the protector and the friend. Accept, Sire, *etc.*

I did not see the answer which was vouchsafed to this singular letter; the King did not judge me worthy to enjoy such confidence that he had made no difficulty in granting to me formerly; but he confided in Madame de Maintenon, and even charged her to obtain the opinion of Mademoiselle touching this matter, and Mademoiselle, who never hid aught from me, brought the details of it to my country-house.

This Princess, now enlightened as to the falseness of Monsieur de Lauzun, entreated the King to give up this gentleman to the blond Queen, or to give him a command himself.



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The Marquis de Lauzun, having learnt the steps taken by the Queen of Portugal, whom he had never been able to endure, grew violently angry, and said in twenty houses that he had not come out of one prison to throw himself into another.

These were all the thanks the Queen got for her efforts; and, like Mademoiselle de Montpensier, she detested, with all her soul, the man she had loved with all her heart.

The Marquis de Lauzun was one of the handsomest men in the world; but his character spoiled everything.

CHAPTER XXV.

The Nephews, the Nieces, the Cousins and the Brother of Madame de Maintenon.—
The King's Debut.—The Marshal's Silver Staff.

The family of Madame de Maintenon had not only neglected but despised her when she was poor and living on her pension of two thousand francs. Since my protection and favour had brought her into contact with the sun that gives life to all things, and this radiant star had shed on her his own proper rays and light, all her relatives in the direct, oblique, and collateral line had remembered her, and one saw no one but them in her antechambers, in her chamber, and at Court.

Some of them were not examples of deportment and good breeding; they were gentlemen who had spent all their lives in little castles in Angoumois and Poitou, a kind of noble ploughmen, who had only their silver swords to distinguish them from their vine-growers and herds. Others, to be just, honoured the new position of the Marquise; and amongst those I must place first the Marquis de Langallerie and the two sons of the Marquis de Villette, his cousin, german. The Abbe d'Aubigne, whom she had discovered obscurely hidden among the priests of Saint Sulpice, she had herself presented to the King, who had discovered in him the air of an apostle, and then to Pere de la Chaise, who had hastened to make him Archbishop of Rouen, reserving for him 'in petto' the cardinal's hat, if the favour of the lady in waiting was maintained.

Among her lady relatives who had come from the provinces at the rumour of this favour, the Marquise distinguished and exhibited with satisfaction the three Mademoiselles de Sainte Hermine, the daughters of a Villette, if I am not mistaken, and pretty and graceful all three of them. She had also brought to her Court, and more particularly attached to her person, a very pretty child, only daughter of the Marquis de Villette, and sister, consequently, of the Comte and of the Chevalier de Villette, whom I have previously mentioned. This swarm of nephews, cousins, and nieces garnished the armchairs and sofas of her chamber. They served as comrades and playfellows to the legitimate princes and as pages of honour to my daughter; and when the carriage of the Marquise



came into the country for her drives, the whole of this pretty colony formed a train and court for her,—a proof of her credit.



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The Marquise had a brother, her elder by four or five years, to whom she was greatly attached, judging from what we heard her say, and to promote whom we saw her work from the very first. This brother, who was called Le Comte d'Aubigne, lacked neither charm nor grace. He even assumed, when he wished, an excellent manner; but this cavalier, his own master from his childhood, knew no other law but his own pleasures and desires. He had made people talk about him in his earliest youth; he awoke the same buzz of scandal now that he was fifty. Madame de Maintenon, hoping to reform him, and wishing to constrain him to beget them an heir, made him consent to the bonds of marriage. She had just discovered a very pretty heiress of very good family, when he married secretly the daughter of a mere 'procureur du roi'. The lady in waiting, being unable to undo what had been done, submitted to this unequal alliance; and as her sister-in-law, ennobled by her husband, was none the less a countess, she, too, was presented.

The young person, aged fifteen at the most, was naturally very bashful. When she found herself in this vast hall, between a double row of persons of importance, whose fixed gaze never left her, she forgot all the bows, all the elaborate courtesies,—in fine, all the difficult procedure of a formal presentation, that her sister-in-law and dancing-masters had been making her rehearse for twenty days past.

The child lost her head, and burst into tears. The King took compassion on her, and despatched the Comtesse de Merinville to go and act as her guide or mistress. Supported by this guardian angel, Madame d'Aubigne gained heart; she went through her pausing, her interrupted courtesies, to the end, and came in fairly good countenance to the King's chair, who smiled encouragement upon her. While these things were taking place in the gallery, Madame de Maintenon, in despair, her eyes full of tears, had to make an effort not to weep. With that wit of which she is so proud, she should have been the first to laugh at this piece of childishness, which was not particularly new. The embarrassment, the torture in which I saw her, filled me with a strong desire to laugh. It was noticed; it was held a crime; and his Majesty himself was kind enough to scold me for it.

"I felt the same embarrassment," he said to us, "the first time Monsieur le Cardinal desired to put me forward. It was a question of receiving an ambassador, and of making a short reply to his ceremonial address. I knew my reply by heart; it was not more than eight or ten lines at the most. I was repeating it every minute while at play, for five or six days. When it was necessary to perform in person before this throng, my childish memory was confused. All my part was forgotten in my fear, and I could only utter these words: 'Your address, Monsieur Ambassadeur,—Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, your address.' My mother, the Queen, grew very red, and was as confused as I was. But my godfather, the Cardinal, finished this reply for me, which he had composed himself, and was pleased to see me out of the difficulty."



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This anecdote, evidently related to console the Marquise, filled her with gratitude. They spoke of nothing else at Versailles for two days; after which, Madame la Comtesse d'Aubigne became, in her turn, a woman of experience, who judged the new debutantes severely, perhaps, every time that the occasion arose.

The Comte d'Aubigne passed from an inferior government to a government of some importance. He made himself beloved by endorsing a thousand petitions destined for his sister, the monarch's friend; but his immoderate expenditure caused him to contract debts that his sister would only pay five or six times.

The Duc de Vivonne, my brother, laughed at him in society; he unceasingly outraged by his clumsiness his sister's sense of discretion. One day, in a gaming-house, seeing the table covered with gold, the Marshal exclaimed at the door: "I will wager that D'Aubigne is here, and makes all this display; it is a magnificence worthy of him."

"Yes, truly," said the brother of the favourite; "I have received my silver staff, you see!" That was an uncouth impertinence, for assuredly M. de Vivonne had not owed this dignity to my favour. The siege of Candia, and a thousand other distinguished actions, in which he had immortalised himself, called him to this exalted position, which I dare to say he has even rendered illustrious.

The Comte d'Aubigne's saying was no less successful on that account, and his sister, who did not approve at all of this scandalous scene, had the good sense to condemn her most ridiculous gamester, and to make excuses for him to my brother and me.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Political Intrigue in Hungary.—Dignity of the King of the Romans.—The Good Appearance of a German Prince.—The Turks at Vienna.—The Duc de Lorraine.—The King of Rome.

Whatever the conduct of the King may have been towards me, I do not write out of resentment or to avenge myself. But in the midst of the peace which the leisure that he has given me leaves me, I feel some satisfaction in inditing the memoirs of my life, which was attached to his so closely, and wish to relate with sincerity the things I have seen. What would be the use of memoirs from which sincerity were absent? Whom could they inspire with a desire of reading them?

The King was born profoundly ambitious. All the actions of his public life bore witness to it. It would be useless for him to rebut the charge; all his aims, all his political work, all his sieges, all his battles, all his bloody exploits prove it. He had robbed the Emperor of an immense quantity of towns and territories in succession. The greatness of the House of Austria irritated him. He had begun by weakening it in order to dominate it;

and, in bringing it under his sway, he hoped to draw to himself the respect and submission of the Germanic Electoral body, and cause the Imperial Crown to pass to his house, as soon as the occasion should present itself.

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We had often heard him say: “Monseigneur has all the good appearance of a German prince.” This singular compliment, this praise, was not without motive. The King wished that this opinion and this portrait should go straight into Germany, and create there a kind of naturalisation and adoption for his son.

He had resolved to have him elected and proclaimed King of the Romans, a dignity which opens, as one knows, the road to the imperial greatness. To attain this result, his Majesty, seconded perfectly by his minister, Louvois, employed the following means.

By his order M. de Louvois sent the Comte de Nointel to Vienna, at the moment when that Power was working to extend the twenty years’ truce concluded by Hungary with the Sultan. The French envoy promised secretly his adhesion to the Turks; and the latter, delighted at the intervention of the French, became so overbearing towards the Imperial Crown that that Power was reduced to refusing too severe conditions.

Sustained by the insinuations and the promises of France, the Sultan demanded that Hungary should be left in the state in which it was in 1655; that henceforward that kingdom should pay him an annual tribute of fifty thousand florins; that the fortifications of Leopoldstadt and Gratz should be destroyed; that the chief of the revolted towns—Nitria, Eckof, the Island of Schutt, and the fort of Murann, at Tekelai—should be ceded; that there should be a general amnesty and restitution of their estates, dignities, offices, and privileges without restriction.

By this the infidels would have found themselves masters of the whole of Hungary, and would have been able to come to the very gates of Vienna, without fear of military commanders or of the Emperor. It was obvious that they were only seeking a pretext for a quarrel, and that at the suggestion of France, which was quite disposed to profit by the occasion.

The Sultan knew very little of our King. The latter had his army ready; his plan was to enter, or rather to fall upon, the imperial territories, when the consternation and the danger in them should be at their height; and then he counted on turning to his advantage the good-will of the German princes, who, to be extricated from their difficulty, would not fail to offer to himself, as liberator, the Imperial Crown, or, at least, the dignity of King of the Romans and Vicar of the Empire to his son, Monseigneur le Dauphin.

In effect, hostilities had hardly commenced on the part of the Turks, hardly had their first successes, struck terror into the heart of the German Empire, when the King, the real political author of these disasters, proposed to the German Emperor to intervene suddenly, as auxiliary, and even to restore Lorraine to him, and his new conquests, on condition that the dignity of the King of the Romans should be bestowed on his son. France, this election once proclaimed, engaged herself to bring an army of 60,000 men, nominally

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of the King of the Romans, into Hungary, to drive out utterly the common enemy. German officers would be admitted, like French, into this Roman army; and more, the King of France and the new King of the Romans engaged themselves to set back the imperial frontiers on that side as far as Belgrade, or Weissembourg in Greece. A powerful fleet was to appear in the Mediterranean to support these operations; and the King, wishing to crown his generosity, offered to renounce forever the ancient possessions, and all the rights of Charlemagne, his acknowledged forefather or ancestor.

Whilst these dreams of ambition were being seriously presented to the unhappy Imperial Court of Vienna, the Turks, to the number of 300,000 men, had swept across Hungary like a torrent. They arrived before the capital of the Empire of Germany just at the moment when the Court had left it. They immediately invested this panic-stricken town, and the inhabitants of Vienna believed themselves lost. But the young Duc de Lorraine, our King's implacable enemy, had left the capital in the best condition and pitched outside Vienna, in a position from which he could severely harass the besieging Turks.

He tormented them, he raided them, while he waited for the saving reinforcements which were to be brought up by the King of Poland, and the natural allies of the Empire. This succour arrived at last, and after four or five combats, well directed and most bloody, they threw the Ottomans into disorder. The Duc de Lorraine immortalised himself during this brilliant campaign, which he finished by annihilating the Turks near Barkan.

France had remained in a state of inaction in the midst of all these great events. I saw the discomfiture of our ministers and the King when the success of the Imperialists reached them. But the time had passed when my affections and those of my master were akin. Free from henceforth to follow the impulses of my conscience and of my sense of justice, I rejoiced sincerely at the great qualities of the poor Duc de Lorraine, and at the humiliation of the cruel Turks, who had been so misled.

The elective princes of the Germanic Empire once more rallied round their august head, and disavowed almost all their secret communications with the Cabinet of Versailles. The Emperor, having escaped from these great perils, addressed some noble and touching complaints to our monarch; and Monseigneur was not elected King of the Romans,—a disappointment which he hardly noticed, and by which he was very little disturbed.



CHAPTER XXVII.

The Prince of Orange.—The Orange Coach.—The Bowls of Oranges.—The Orange Blossoms.—The Town of Orange.—Jesuits of Orange.—Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.



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The King, by the last peace, signed at Nimegue, had engaged to restore the Principality of Orange to William, Stadtholder and Generalissimo of the Dutch. This article was one of those which he had found most repugnant to him, for nothing can be compared with the profound aversion which the mere name inspired in the monarch. He pushed this hatred so far that, having one day noticed from the heights of his balcony a superb new equipage, of which the body was painted with orange-coloured varnish, he sent and asked the name of the owner; and, on their reporting to him that this coach belonged to a provincial intendant, a relative of the Chancellor, his Majesty said, the same evening, to the magistrate-minister: "Your relative ought to show more discretion in the choice of the colours he displays."

This coach appeared no more, and the silk and cloth mercers had their stuffs redyed.

Another day, at the high table, the King, seeing four bowls of big oranges brought in, said aloud before the public: "Take away that fruit, which has nothing in its favour but its look. There is nothing more dangerous or unhealthy."

On the morrow these words spread through the capital, and the courtiers dared eat oranges only privately and in secret.

As for me, with my love for the scent of orange blossoms, the monarch's petulance once more affected me extremely. I was obliged for some time to give it up, like the others, and take to amber, the favourite scent of my master, which my nerves could not endure.

Before surrendering the town of Orange to the commissioners of the kinglet of the Dutch, the King of France had the walls thrown down, all the fortifications razed, and the public buildings, certain convents, and the library of the town stripped of their works of art. These measures irritated Prince William, who, on that account alone, wished to recommence the war; but the Emperor and the allies heard his complaints with little attention. They even besought him to leave things as they were. M. d'Orange is a real firebrand; he could not endure the severities of the King without reprisals, and no sooner was he once more in possession of his little isolated sovereignty than he annoyed the Catholics in it, caused all possible alarms to the sisters of mercy and nuns, imposed enormous taxes on the monks, and drove out the Jesuits with unheard-of insults.

The King received hospitably all these humiliated or persecuted folk; and as he was given to understand that the Orange Protestants were secretly sowing discontent amongst his Calvinists and French Lutherans, he prepared the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, the famous political measure the abrogation of which took place a short time afterwards.



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I saw, in the hands of the King, a document of sixty pages, printed at Orange, after its restitution, in which it was clearly specified that Hugh Capet had set himself on the throne irregularly, and in which the author went to the point of saying that the Catholic religion was only an idolatry, and that the peoples would only be happy and free after the general introduction of the Reformation. The Marechal de Vivonne came and told me, in strict confidence, that the Jesuits, out of resentment, had forged this document, and printed the pamphlet themselves; but M. de Louvois, who, through his father, the Chancellor, and his brother, the Archbishop of Rheims, was associated with them, maintained that the incendiary libel was really the work of the Protestants.

My residence at the Court having opened my eyes sufficiently to the wickedness of men, I will not give my opinion, amid these angry charges and recriminations. I confine myself to relating what I have seen.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Sickness.—Death of the Queen.—Her Last Words.—The King's Affliction.—His Saying.—Second Anonymous Letter.—Conversation with La Dauphine.—Madame de Maintenon Intervenes.

While the Turks and the Imperialists were fighting in the plains of Hungary, the King, followed by all his Court, had made his way towards the frontiers of Alsace. He reviewed countless battalions, he made promotions, and gave brilliant repasts and fetes.

The season was a little trying, and the Queen, though born in Spain, did not accommodate herself to the June heat. As soon as business permitted they took the road to the capital, and returned to Versailles with some speed.

Scarcely had they arrived, when the Queen fell ill; it did not deserve the name of sickness. It was only an indisposition, pure and simple,—an abscess in the armpit; that was all. Fagon, the boldest and most audacious of all who ever exercised the art of AEsculapius, decided that, to lessen the running, it was necessary to draw the blood to another quarter. In spite of the opinion of his colleagues, he ordered her to be bled, and all her blood rushed to her heart. In a short time the princess grew worse in an alarming fashion, and in a few moments we heard that she was in her death-agony; in a few moments more we heard of her death.

The King wept bitterly at first, as we had seen him weep for Marie de Mancini, Louise de la Valliere, Henrietta of England, and the Duchesse de Fontanges,—dead of his excesses. He set out at once for the Chateau of Saint Cloud, which belonged to his brother; and Monsieur, wishing to leave the field clear for him, went away to the Palais Royal with his disagreeable wife and their numerous children.

His Majesty returned two days afterwards to the Chateau of Versailles, where he, his son, and all the family sprinkled holy water over the deceased; and this little ceremony being finished, they regained in silence the Chateau of Saint Cloud.

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The aspect of that gloomy Salon of Peace, converted into a catafalque; the sight of that small bier, on which a beautiful, good, and indulgent wife was reposing; those silent images, so full of speech, awoke the just remorse of the King. His tears began once more to flow abundantly, and he was heard to say these words:

“Dear, kind friend, this is the first grief you have caused me in twenty years!”

The Infanta, as I have already related, had granted in these latter days her entire confidence and affection to her daughter-in-law’s lady in waiting. Finding herself sick and in danger, she summoned Madame de Maintenon; and understanding soon that those famous Court physicians did not know how ill she was, and that she was drawing near her last hour, she begged this woman, so ready in all things, to leave her no more, and to be good enough to prepare her for death.

The Marquise wept bitterly, and perhaps even sincerely; for being unable to foresee, at that period, all that was to befall her in the issue, she probably entertained the hope of attaching herself for good to this excellent princess. In losing her, she foresaw, or feared, if not adversity, at least a decline.

The King was courting her, it is true, and favouring her already with marked respect; but Françoise d’Aubigne,—thoughtful and meditative as I knew her to be, could certainly not have failed to appreciate the voluptuous and inconstant character of the monarch. She had seen several notorious friendships collapse in succession; and it is not at the age of forty-six or forty-seven that one can build castles in Spain to dwell in with young love.

The Queen, before the beginning of her death agony, herself drew a splendid ring from her finger, and would pass it over the finger of the Marquise, to whom, some months before, she had already given her portrait. It was asserted that her last words were these: “Adieu, my dearest Marquise; to you I recommend and confide the King.”

In accordance with a recommendation so binding and so precise, Madame de Maintenon followed the monarch to Saint Cloud; and as great afflictions are fain to be understood and shared, these two desolate hearts shut themselves up in one room, in order to groan in concert.

The Queen having been taken to Saint Denis, the King, Madame de Maintenon, and the Court returned to Versailles, where the royal family went into mourning for the period prescribed by law and custom.

The Queen’s large and small apartments, so handsome, new, splendid, and magnificent, became the habitation of Madame la Dauphine; so that the lady in waiting, in virtue of her office, returned in the most natural manner to those apartments where she had held authority.



The Queen, without having the genius of conversation and discussion, lacked neither aplomb nor a taste for the proprieties; she knew how to support, or, at least, to preside over a circle. The young Dauphine had neither the desire, nor the patience, nor, the tact.



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The prince charged the lady in waiting to do these things for her. We repaired in full dress to the Princess,—to present our homages to Madame de Maintenon. One must admit she threw her heart into it; that is to say, she drew out, as far as possible, the monarch's daughter-in-law, inspiring into her every moment amiable questions or answers, which she had taken pains to embellish and adorn in her best manner.

The King arrived; I then had the pleasure of seeing him, not two paces from me, before my very eyes, saying witty and agreeable things to the Marquise; while he talked to me only of the rain and the weather, always cursorily.

It was then that I received a second anonymous letter, in the same handwriting, the same style, the same tone as that of which mention has been made. I transcribe it; it is curious.

To madame la marquise de Montespan.

Madame:—You have not followed my former advice. The opportunity has gone by; it is too late. Your superintendence is left with you, and there are four or five hundred thousand livres lying idle; for you will not be able to sell the superintendence of a household, and of a council, which are in a tomb at Saint Denis! Happily you are rich, and what would be a disaster to another fortune is scarcely more than a slight disappointment to you. I take the respectful liberty of talking once more with the prettiest and wittiest woman of her century, in order to submit to her certain ideas, and to offer her a fresh piece of advice, which I believe important.

The Queen, moved by a generosity seldom found in her peers, pardoned you to some degree your theft of her spouse; she pardoned you in order to be agreeable to him, and to prove to him that, being his most sincere friend, she could not bring herself to contest his affections and his pastimes. But this sublime philosophy is at an end; the excellent heart of this Queen is at Val-de-Grace; it will beat no more, neither for her volatile husband, nor for any one whatsoever.

Madame la Dauphine, brought up in German severity, and hardly accustomed to the atmosphere of her new country, neither likes nor respects you, nor has any indulgence for you. She barely suffers the presence of your children, although brothers of her husband. How should she tolerate yours? It appears, it is plain, Madame la Marquise, that your name has found no place or footing on her list, and that she would rather not meet you often in her salons. If one may even speak to you confidentially, she has thus expressed herself; it would be cruel for you to hear of it from any other being but me.

Believe me, believe a man as noted for his good qualities as for his weaknesses. He will never drive you away, for you are the mother of his beloved children, and he has loved you himself tenderly. However, his coldness is going to increase. Will you be

sufficiently light-hearted, or sufficiently imprudent, to await on a counterscarp the rigours of December and January?



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Keep your wit always, Madame la Marquise, and with this wit, which is such a charming resource, do not divest yourself of your noble pride.

I am, always, your respectful and devoted servant,

The unknown of the chateau.

At the time of the first letter, when I had hesitated some time, doubtful between Madame de Maintenon and the King, it occurred to me to suspect the Queen for a moment; but there was no possibility now of imputing to this princess, dead and gone, the unbecoming annoyance that an unknown permitted himself to cause me.

On this occasion I chose my part resolutely; and, not wishing to busy myself any longer with these pretended friendly counsels which my pride forbade me to follow, I took these two insolent letters and burned them. This last letter, after all, spoke very truly. I remarked distinctly, in the looks and manner of the Dauphine, that ridiculous and clumsy animosity which she had taken a fancy to lavish on me.

As she was not, in my eyes, so sublime a personage that a lady of quality might not enter into conversation with her, I approached her armchair with the intention of upsetting her haughtiness and pride by compelling her to speak to me before everybody.

I complimented her on her coiffure, and even thanked her for the honour she did me in imitating me; she reddened, and I entreated her not to put herself about, assuring her that her face looked much better in its habitual pallor. These words redoubled her dissatisfaction, and her redness then became a veritable scarlet flame.

Passing forthwith to another subject, I pronounced in a few words a panegyric on the late Queen; to which I skilfully added that, from the first day, she had been able to understand the French graces and assume them with intelligence and taste.

“Her Spanish accent troubled her for a year or two longer,” added I; “strictly speaking, this accent, derived from the Italian, has nothing disagreeable in it; while the English, Polish, Russian, and German accent is inharmonious in itself, and is lost with great difficulty here.”

Seeing that my reflections irritated her, I stopped short, and made my excuses by saying to her, “Madame, these are only general reflections. Your Highness is an exception, and has struck us all, as you have nothing German left but memories, and, perhaps, regrets.”

She answered me, stammering, that she had not been destined in the first place for the throne of France, and that this want of forethought had injured her education; then, feeling a spark of courage in her heart, she said that the late Queen had more than



once confided to her that the Court of France was disorderly in its fashions, because it was never the princesses who gave it its tone as elsewhere.

Madame de Maintenon perceived quickly the consequences of this saying; for the peace of the Princess, she retorted quickly: "In France, the princesses are so kind and obliging as to follow the fashions; but the good examples and good tone come to us from our princes, and our only merit is to imitate them with ingenuity."



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CHAPTER XXIX.

Judgment Given by the Chatelet.—The Marquis d'Antin Restored to His Father.—The Judgment is Not Executed.—Full Mourning.—Funeral Service.—The Notary of Saint Elig.—The Lettre de Cachet.

The Marquis d'Antin, my son, with the consent of the King, had remained under my control, and had never consented to quit me to rejoin his father. M. de Montespan, at the time of the suit for judicial separation before the Chatelet, had caused his advocate to maintain this barbarous argument, that a son, though brought into the world by his mother, ought to side against her if domestic storms arise, and prefer to everybody and everything the man whose arms and name he bears.

The tribunal of the Chatelet, trampling upon maternal tenderness and humanity, granted his claim in full; and I was advised not to appeal, now that I had obtained the thing essential to me, a separation in body and estate.

M. de Montespan dared not come himself to Paris in order to execute the sentence; he sent for that purpose two officers of artillery, his friends or relatives, who were authorised to see the young Marquis at his college, but not to withdraw him before the close of his humanities and classes. These gentlemen, having sent word to the father that the young D'Antin was my living image, he replied to them, that they were to insist no longer, to abandon their mission, and to abandon a child who would never enjoy his favour since he resembled myself. Owing to this happy circumstance I was able to preserve my son.

Since these unhappy disputes, and the suit which made so much noise, I had heard no more talk of M. de Montespan in society. I only learned from travellers that he was building, a short distance from the Pyrenees, a chateau of a noble and royal appearance, where he had gathered together all that art, joined with good taste, could add to nature; that this chateau of Saint Elix, adorned with the finest orange grove in the world, was ascribed to the liberality of the King. The Marquis, hurt by this mistake of his neighbours, which he called an accusation, published a solemn justification in these ingenuous provinces, and he proved, as a clerk might do to his master, that this enormous expenditure was exclusively his own.

Suddenly the report of his death spread through the capital, and the Marquis d'Antin received without delay an official letter with a great, black seal, which announced to him this most lamentable event. The notary of Saint Elix, in sending him this sad news, took the opportunity of enclosing a certified copy of the will.

This testament, replete with malignity, having been freely published in the capital, I cannot refrain from reproducing it in these writings.



Here are its principal clauses;

In the name of the most blessed Trinity, *etc.*

Since I cannot congratulate myself on a wife, who, diverting herself as much as possible, has caused me to pass my youth and my life in celibacy, I content myself with leaving, her my life-sized portrait, by Bourdon, begging her to place it in her bedchamber, when the King ceases to come there.



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Although the Marquis de Pardailhan d'Antin is prodigiously like his mother (a circumstance of which I have been lamentably sensible!), I do not hesitate to believe him my son. In this quality I give and bequeath to him all my goods, as my eldest son, imposing on him, nevertheless, the following legacies, liberalities and charges:

I leave to their Highnesses, M. le Duc du Maine, M. le Comte de Toulouse, Mademoiselle de Nantes, and Mademoiselle de Blois (born during my marriage with their mother, and consequently my presumptive children), their right of legitimacy on the charge and condition of their bearing in one of their quarterings the Pardailhan-Montespan arms.

I take the respectful liberty of here thanking my King for the extreme kindness which he has shown to my wife, nee De Mortemart, to my son D'Antin, to his brothers and sisters, both dead and living, and also to myself, who have only been dismissed, and kept in exile:

In recognition of which I give and bequeath to his Majesty my vast chateau of Montespan, begging him to create and institute there a community of Repentant Ladies, to wear the habit of Carmelites or of the Daughters of the Conception, on the special charge and condition that he place my wife at the head of the said convent, and appoint her to be first Abbess.

I attach an annuity of sixty thousand livres to this noble institution, hoping that this will make up the deficiency, if there be any.

De Pardailhan de Gondran Montespan, Separated, although inseparable spouse.

A family council being held to decide what I must do on this occasion, Madame de Thianges, M. de Vivonne, and M. de Blanville-Colbert decided that I must wear the same full mourning as my son D'Antin. As for this odious will, it was agreed that it should not even be spoken of, and that the notary of Saint Elix should be written to at once, to place it in the hands of a third party, of whom he would be presently notified at the place. The Marquis d'Antin at once had my equipage and his own draped. We hastened to put all our household into mourning from top to toe, and the funeral service, with full ritual, was ordered to be performed at the parish church. The very same day, as the family procession was about to set out on its way to the church, a sort of sergeant, dressed in black, handed a fresh letter to the Marquis d'Antin. It contained these words:

The notary of Saint Elix deserves a canonry in the Chapter of Charenton; it is not the Marquis de Montespan who is dead; they have played a trick on you.



The only truth in all of it is the will, of which the notary of Saint Elix has been in too great a hurry to send a copy. A thousand excuses to M. le Marquis d'Antin and his mother, Madame la Marquise.

It was necessary to send orders at once to the parish church to take away the catafalque and the drapings. The priests and the musicians were paid as if they had done what they ought to do; and my widowhood, which, at another time, might have been of such importance, was, I dare to say, indifferent to me.



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The King was informed of what had just taken place in my family. He spoke of it as an extremely disagreeable affair. I answered him that it was far more disagreeable for me than for any one else. His Majesty added:

“Tell the Marquis d’Antin to go to Saint Elix and pay his respects to his father. This journey will also enable him to learn if such a ridiculous will really exists, and if your husband has reached such a pitch of independence. D’Antin will beg him, on my behalf, to tear up that document, and to earn my favour by doing so.”

My son, after consulting with his Majesty, started indeed for the Pyrenees. His father at first gave him a cold welcome. The next day the Marquis discovered the secret of pleasing him; and M. de Montespan, at this full mourning, this family council, and at the catafalque in the middle of the church, promised to alter the will on condition that his ‘lettre do cachet’ should be revoked and quashed within the next fortnight.

The King agreed to these demands, which did not any longer affect him. I was the only person sacrificed.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Duc du Maine Provided with the Government of Languedoc.—The Young Prince de Conti.—His Piety.—His Apostasy.—The Duc de la Feuillade Burlesqued.—The Watch Set with Diamonds.—The False Robber.—Scene amongst the Servants.

The old Duc de Verneuil, natural son of King Henri IV., died during these incidents, leaving the government of Languedoc vacant. The King summoned M. le Duc du Maine at once, and, embracing him with his usual tenderness, he said to him: “My son, though you are very young, I make you governor of Languedoc. This will make many jealous of you; do not worry about them, I am always here to defend you. Go at once to Mademoiselle’s, who has just arrived at Versailles, and tell her what I have done for her adopted child.”

I went to thank his Majesty for this favour, which seemed to me very great, since my son was not twelve years old. The King said to me: “Here comes the carriage of the Prince de Conti; you may be certain that he comes to ask me for this place.”

In fact, those were the first words of the Prince de Conti.

“The government for which you ask,” said the King, “has been for a long time promised to Madame de Maintenon for her Duc du Maine. I intend something else for you, my dear cousin. Trust in me. In giving you my beloved daughter I charged myself with your fortunes; you are on my list, and in the first rank.”



The young Prince changed colour. He entreated the King to believe him worthy of his confidence and esteem, to which he imprudently added these words: "My wife was born before M. du Maine."

"And you, too," replied his Majesty; "are you any the more sober for that? There are some little youthful extravagances in your conduct which pain me. I leave my daughter in ignorance of them, because I wish her to be at peace. Endeavour to prevent her being informed of them by yourself. Govern yourself as a young man of your birth ought to govern himself; then I will hand a government over to you with pleasure."



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The Prince de Conti appeared to me very much affected by this homily and disappointment. He saluted me, however, with a smile of benevolence and the greatest amenity. We learnt a short time afterwards that his wife had shed many tears, and was somewhat set against my children and myself.

This amiable Princess then was not aware that the government of Languedoc was not granted at my instance, but at the simple desire of Madame de Maintenon; the King had sufficiently explained it.

Just at this moment M. le Prince de Conti had made himself notable by his attachment or his deference towards matters of religion and piety. His superb chariot and his peach-coloured liveries were to be seen, on fete-days, at the doors of the great churches. He suddenly changed his manoeuvres, and refused to subject himself to restraints which led him no whither. He scoffed publicly at the Jesuits, the Sulpicians, and their formal lectures and confraternities; he refused to distribute the blessed bread at his parish church, and heard mass only from his chaplains and in his palace.

This ill-advised behaviour did not improve his position. Madame, his wife, continued to come to Versailles on gala-days, or days of reunion, but he and his brother appeared there less and less frequently. They were exceedingly handsome, both of them; not through their father, whose huge nose had rendered him ridiculous, but through the Princess, their mother, Anna or Felicia de Martinozzi, niece of Cardinal Mazarin. God had surpassed himself in creating that graceful head, and those eyes will never have their match in sweetness and beauty.

Free now to follow his own tastes, which only policy had induced him to dissimulate and constrain, M. de Conti allowed himself all that a young prince, rich and pleasure-loving, could possibly wish in this world. In the midst of these reunions, consecrated to pleasure, and even to debauchery, he loved to signalise his lordly liberality; nothing could stop him, nothing was too extravagant for him. His passion was to remove all obstacles and pay for everybody.

His joyous companions cried out with admiration, and celebrated, in prose and verse, so noble a taste and virtues so rare. The young orphan inhaled this incense with delight; he contracted enormous debts, and soon did not know where to turn to pay them.

The King, well informed of these excesses, commanded M. le Duc de la Feuillade to have the young man followed, and inform himself of all he did.

One day, when M. de la Feuillade himself had followed him too closely, and forced him, for the space of an hour, to scour over all Le Marais in useless and fatiguing zigzags, M. de Conti, who recognised him perfectly, in spite of his disguise, pretended that his watch, set with diamonds, had been stolen. He pointed out this man as the thief to his

ready servingmen, who fell upon M. de la Feuillade, and, stripping him to find the watch, gave the Prince time to escape and reach his place of rendezvous.



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The captain was ill for several days, and even in danger, in consequence of this adventure, which did not improve the credit of M. le Prince de Conti, much as it needed improvement.

His young and beautiful wife excused him in everything, ignoring, and wishing to ignore, the extent of his guilt and frivolity.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A Funeral and Diversions.—Sinister Dream.—Funeral Orations of the Queen.

It remains for me to relate certain rather curious circumstances in relation to the late Queen, after which I shall speak of her no more in these Memoirs.

She was left for ten days, lying in state, in the mortuary chapel of Versailles, where mass was being said by priests at four altars from morning till evening. She was finally removed from this magnificent Palace of Enchantment to Saint Denis. Numerous carriages followed the funeral car, and in all these carriages were the high officials, as well as the ladies, who had belonged to her. But what barbarity! what ingratitude! what a scandal! In all these mournful carriages, people talked and laughed and made themselves agreeable; and the body-guards, as well as the gendarmes and musketeers, took turns to ride their horses into the open plain and shoot at the birds.

Monsieur le Dauphin, after Saint Denis, went to lie at the Tuileries, before betaking himself to the service on the following day at Notre Dame. In the evening, instead of remaining alone and in seclusion in his apartment, as a good son ought to have done, he went to the Palais Royal to see the Princess Palatine and her husband, whom he had had with him all the day; he must have distraction, amusement, and even merry conversations, such as simple bourgeois would not permit themselves on so solemn an occasion, were it only out of decorum.

In the midst of these ridiculous and indefensible conversations, the news arrived that the King had broken his arm. The Marquis de Mosny had started on the instant in order to inform the young Prince of it; and Du Saussoi, equerry of his Majesty, arrived half an hour later, giving the same news with the details.

The King (who was hunting during the obsequies of his wife) had fallen off his horse, which he had not been able to prevent from stumbling into a ditch full of tall grass and foliage. M. Felix, a skilful and prudent surgeon, had just set the arm, which was only put out of joint. The King sent word to the Dauphin not to leave the Tuileries, and to attend the funeral ceremony on the morrow.

The fair of Saint Laurence was being held at this moment, although the city of Paris had manifested an intention of postponing it. They were exhibiting to the curious a little wise



horse which bowed, calculated, guessed, answered questions, and performed marvels. The King had strictly forbidden his family and the people of the Court to let themselves be seen at this fair. Monsieur le Dauphin, none the less, wished to contemplate, with his own eyes, this extraordinary and wonderful little horse. Consequently, he had to be taken to the Chateau des Tuileries, where he took a puerile amusement in a spectacle in itself trivial, and, at such a time, scandalous.



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The poor Queen would have died of grief if the death of her son had preceded hers, against the order of nature; but the hearts of our children are not disposed like ours, and who knows how I shall be treated myself by mine when I am gone?

With regard to the King's arm, Madame d'Orleans, during the service for the Queen, was pleased to relate to the Grande Mademoiselle that, three or four days before, she had seen, in a somewhat troublesome and painful dream, the King's horse run away, and throw him upon the rocks and brambles of a precipice, from which he was rescued with a broken arm. A lady observed that dreams are but vague and uncertain indications.

"Not mine," replied Madame, with ardour; "they are not like others. Five or six days before the Queen fell ill, I told her, in the presence of Madame la Dauphine, that I had a most alarming dream. I had dreamt that I was in a large church all draped in black. I advanced to the sanctuary; a vault was opened at one side of the altar. Some kind of priests went down, and these folk said aloud, as they came up again, that they had found no place at first; that the cavity having seemed to them too long and deep, they had arranged the biers, and had placed there the body of the lady. At that point I awoke, quite startled, and not myself."

Hardly had the Princess finished her story, when the Infanta, turning pale, said to her: "Madame, you will see, the dream of the vault refers to me. At the funeral of the Queen of England I noticed, and remember, that the same difficulty occurred at Saint Denis; they were obliged to push up all the coffins, one against the other."

And, in truth, we knew, a few days afterwards, that for this poor Queen, Maria Theresa, the monks of the abbey had found it necessary to break down a strong barrier of stones in their subterranean church, to remove the first wife of Gaston, mother of Mademoiselle, and find a place for the Spanish Queen who had arrived in those regions.

There were several funeral orations on this occasion. Not a single one of these official discourses deserved to survive the Queen. There was very little to say about her, I admit; but these professional panegyrists, these liars in surplice, in black cassock, or in purple and mitre, are not too scrupulous to borrow facts and material in cases where the dead person has neglected to furnish or bequeath it them.

In my own case I congratulated myself on this sort of indifference or literary penury; an indiscreet person, sustained by zeal or talent, might have wished to mortify me in a romance combined of satire and religion.



CHAPTER XXXII.

Jean Baptiste Colbert.—His Death.—His Great Works.—His Last Advice to the Marquise.



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M. Colbert had been ailing for a long time past. His face bore visible testimony against his health, to which his accumulated and incessant labour had caused the greatest injury. We had just married his son Blainville to my niece, Mademoiselle de Tonny-Charente, heiress of the house of Rochchouart. Since this union—the King's work—M. Colbert had somewhat tended in my favour, and I had reason to count on his good offices and kindness. I said to him one day that my quarrel with him was that he did not look after himself, that he ignored all his own worth, treated himself with no more respect than a mere clerk; that he was the indispensable man, the right hand of the King, his eye of vigilance in everything, and the pillar of his business and his finance.

Without being precisely what one would call a modest man, M. Colbert was calm of mind, and by nature without pose or presumption. He cared sincerely for the King's glory. He held his tongue on the subject of great enterprises, but employed much zeal and ability in promoting the success of good projects and ideas, such as, for instance, our Indies and Pondicherry.

He had known how to procure, without oppressing any one, the incalculable sums that had been necessitated, not only by enormous and almost universal wars, but by all those canals, all those ports in the Mediterranean or the ocean, that vast creation of vessels, arsenals, foundries, military houses and hospitals which we had seen springing up in all parts. He had procured by his application, his careful calculations, the wherewithal to build innumerable fortresses, aqueducts, fountains, bridges, the Observatory of Paris, the Royal Hospital of the Invalides, the chateaus of the Tuileries and of Vincennes, the engine and chateau of Marly, that prodigious chateau of Versailles, with its Trianon of marble, which by itself might have served as a habitation for the richest monarchs of the Orient.

He had founded the wonderful glass factories, and those of the Gobelins; he had raised, as though by a magic ring, the Royal Library over the gardens and galleries of Mazarin; and foreigners asked one another, in their surprise, what they must admire most in that monument, the interior pomp of the edifice or its rich collection of books, coins, and manuscripts.

To all these works, more than sufficient to immortalise twenty ministers, M. Colbert was adding at this moment the huge 'salpetriere' of Paris and the colonnades of the Louvre. Ruthless death came to seize him in the midst of these occupations, so noble, useful, and glorious.

The great Colbert, worn out with fatigue, watching, and constraint, left the King, his wife, his children, his honours, his well-earned riches, and displayed no other anxiety than alarm as to his salvation,—as though so many services rendered to the nation and to his prince were no more, in his eyes, than vain works in relation to eternity.



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Madame de Maintenon, having become a great lady, could, not reasonably continue her office of governess to the King's children. M. Colbert, that man of vigour, that Mount Atlas, capable of supporting all things without a complaint, had been charged with the care of the two new-born princes.

Because of the third Mademoiselle de Blois, and of the little Comte de Toulouse, I saw the minister frequently, and I was one of the first to remark the change in his face and his health.

During his last illness, I visited him more often. One day, of his own accord, he said to me:

"How do you get on with Madame de Maintenon? I have never heard her complain of you; but I make you this confidence out of friendship. His Majesty complains of your attitude towards your former friend. If the frankness of your nature and the impatience of your humour have sometimes led you too far, I exhort you to moderate yourself, in your own interest and in that of your children. Madame de Maintenon is an amiable and witty person, whose society pleases the King. Have this consideration for a hard-working prince, whom intellectual recreation relaxes and diverts, and make a third at those pleasant gatherings where you shone long before this lady, and where you would never be her inferior. Go there, and frequently, instead of keeping at a distance in an attitude of resentment, which, do not doubt, is noticed and viewed unfavourably."

"But, monsieur," I answered M. Colbert, "you are not, then, aware that every time I am a third person at one of these interminable conversations, I always meet with some mark of disapproval, and sometimes with painful mortifications?"

"I have been told so," the sick man replied; "but I have also been told that you imprudently call down on yourself these outbursts of the King. What need have you to quarrel with Madame de Maintenon over a look, a word, a movement or a gesture? You seem to me persuaded that love enters into the King's friendship for the Marquise. Well, suppose you have guessed aright his Majesty's sentiments; will your dissatisfaction and your sarcasms prevent those sentiments from existing, and the prince from indulging them?"

"You know, madame, that he generally gets everything he wants, and M. de Montespan experienced that when he wished to set himself against your joint wills.

"I am nearer my end and my release than my doctors think. In leaving this whirlpool of disappointments, ambitions, errors, and mutual injustice, I should like to see you free, at peace, reconciled to your real interests, and out of reach, forever, of the vicissitudes of fortune. In my eyes, your position is that of a ship-owner whom the ocean has constantly favoured, and who has reaped great riches. With moderation and prudence, it depended on himself to profit by his astonishing success, and at last to enjoy his life;

but ambition and vain desire drive him afresh upon this sea, so fruitful in shipwrecks, and his last venture destroys all his prosperity and all his many labours.



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“Our excellent Queen has gone to rest from her troubles and her journeys; and I, madame, am going to rest not long after her, having worn out my strength on great things that are as nothing.”

The Marquis de Seignelay, eldest son of this minister, counted on succeeding to the principal offices of his father. He made a mistake. The place of secretary of state and controller-general passed to the President Pelletier, who had been chosen by M. Colbert himself; and the superintendence of buildings, gardens, and works went to swell the numerous functions of the Marquis de Louvois, who wished for and counted on it.

Mm. de Blainville and Seignelay had good posts, proportioned to their capacity; the King never ceased to look upon them as the children of his dear M. Colbert.

[It must be remembered that the young Marquis de Seignelay was already Minister of Marine, an office which remained with him.—Ed.]

Before his death, this minister saw his three daughters become duchesses. The King, who had been pleased to make these marriages, had given each of them a dowry of a million in cash.

As for the Abbe Colbert, already promoted to the Bishopric of Montpellier (to which three important abbeys were joined), he had the Archbishopric of Toulouse, with an immense revenue. It is true that he took a pleasure in rebuilding his archiepiscopal palace and cathedral out of a huge and ancient treasure, which he discovered whilst pulling down some old ruin to make a salon.

One might say that there was some force of attraction attached to this family and name of Colbert. Treasures arose from the earth to give themselves up and obey them.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Mesdemoiselles de Mazarin.—The Age of Puberty.—Madame de Beauvais.—Anger of the Queen-mother.—The Cardinal's Policy.—First Love.—Louis de Beauvais.—The Abbe de Rohan-Soubise.—The Emerald's Lying-in.—The Handsome Musketeer.—The Counterfeit of the King.

At the time when the King, still very young, was submitting without impatience to the authority of the Queen, his mother, and his godfather, the Cardinal, his strength underwent a sudden development, and this lad became, all at once, a man. The numerous nieces of Cardinal Mazarin, who were particularly dear to the Queen, were as much at the Louvre as at their own home. Anne of Austria, naturally affable, gladly released them from the etiquette which was imposed upon every one else. These young ladies played and laughed, sang or frolicked, after the manner of their years, and the young King lived frankly and gaily in their midst, as one lives with agreeable sisters,



when one is happy enough to have such. He lived fraternally with these pretty Italian girls, but his intimacy stopped there, since the Cardinal and the governess watched night and day over a young man who was greatly subject to surveillance.



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At the same time, there was amongst the Queen's women a rather pretty waiting-maid, well brought up, who was called Madame de Beauvais. Those brunettes, with black eyes, bright complexions, and graceful plumpness, are almost always wanton and alluring. Madame de Beauvais noticed the sudden development of the monarch, his impassioned reveries which betrayed themselves in his gaze. She thought she had detected intentions on his part, and an imperious need of explaining himself. A word, which was said to her in passing, authorised her, or seemed to authorise her, to make an almost intelligible reply. The young wooer showed himself less undecided, less enigmatic,—and the understanding was completed.

Madame de Beauvais was the recipient of the prince's first emotions, and the clandestine connection lasted for three months. Anne of Austria, informed of what was passing, wished at first to punish her first maid in waiting; but the Cardinal, more circumspect, represented to her that this connection, of which no one knew, was an occupation, not to say a safeguard, for the young King, whose fine constitution and health naturally drew him to the things of life. "Although eighteen years of age," he added, "the prince abandons the whole authority to you; whereas another, in his place, would ardently dispute it. Do not let us quarrel with him about trifles; leave him his Beauvais lady, so that he may make no attempt on my pretty nieces nor on your authority, madame, nor on my important occupations, which are for the good of the State."

Anne of Austria, who was more a Christian and a mother than a diplomatic woman, found it very painful to appreciate these arguments of the Cardinal; but after some reflection she recognised their importance, and things remained as they were.

Madame de Beauvais had a son, whom the husband (whether overconfident or not) saw brought into the world with much delight, and whom, with a wealth of royalist respect, they baptised under the agreeable name of Louis. This child, who had a fine figure and constitution, received a particularly careful education. He has something of the King about him, principally in his glance and smile. He presents, however, only the intellectual habit of his mother, and even a notable absence of grandeur and elevation. He is a very pretty waiting-woman, dressed out as a cavalier; in a word, he is that pliant and indefatigable courtier, whom we see everywhere, and whom town and Court greet by the name of Baron de Beauvais.

His sister is the Duchesse de Richelieu, true daughter of her father, as ugly, or rather as lacking in charm, as he is; but replete with subtilty and intelligence,—with that intelligence which perpetually suggests a humble origin, and which wearies or importunes, because of its ill-nature. At the age of seventeen, her freshness made her pass for being pretty. She accused the young Duc de Richelieu of having seduced her, and made her a mother; and he, in his fear of her indignation and intrigues, and of the reproaches of the Queen, hastened to confess his fault, and to repair everything by marrying her.



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Baron Louis, her brother, to whom the King could hardly refuse anything, made her a lady of honour to the Dauphine. Madame de Richelieu delighted to spread a report in the world that I had procured her this office; she was deceived, and wished to be deceived. I had asked this eminent position for the Marquise de Thianges, in whom I was interested very differently. His Majesty decided that a marquise was inferior to a duchess, even when that duchess was born a De Beauvais. Another son of the monarch, well known at the Court as such, is M. l'Abbe de Rohan-Soubise, to whom the cardinal's hat is already promised. His figure, his carriage, his head, his attitude, his whole person infallibly reveal him; and the Prince de Soubise has so thoroughly recognised and understood the deceit, that he honours the young churchman with all his indifference and his respect. He acts with him as a sort of guardian; and that is the limitation of his role.

The Princesse de Soubise, who had resolved to advance her careless husband, either to the government of Brittany or to some ministry, persuaded herself that it is only by women that men can be advanced; and that in order to advance a husband, it is necessary to advance oneself. Although a little thin, and lacking that of which the King is so fond, we saw in her a very pretty woman. She knew how to persuade his Majesty that she cherished for him the tenderest love. That is, I believe, the one trap that it is possible to set for him. He is credulous on that head; he was speedily caught. And every time that M. de Rohan was away, and there was freedom at the Hotel Soubise, the Princess came in person to Saint Germain or to Versailles, to show her necklace and pendant of emeralds to the King. Such was the agreed signal.

The Abbe de Rohan was born of these emeralds. The King displays conscience in all his actions, except in his wars and conquests. When the little Soubise was grown up, his Majesty signified to the mother that this young man must enter the Church, not wishing to suffer the formation of a parasitical branch amongst the Rohans, which would have participated, without any right, in the legitimate sap. It is asserted that the Abbe de Rohan only submitted with infinite regret to a sentence which neutralised him. The King has promised him all possible consideration; he has even embraced him tenderly, an action which is almost equivalent to a "declaration of degree" made to the Parliament.

The other child alleged to the King is that handsome musketeer, who is so like him. But, judging from the King's character, which respects, and in some fashion almost admires itself, in everything which proceeds from it, I do not venture to believe in this musketeer. The King wished one day to see him close by, and even accosted him by the orange-shrubbery; but this movement seemed to me one of pure curiosity.

The resemblance, I must confess, is the most striking that I have yet seen; for it is complete, even to the tone of the voice. But a look might have operated this miracle. Instance the little negress, the daughter of the poor Queen, that Queen so timid and entirely natural, who, to her happiness, as much as to her glory, has never looked at, approached, or distinguished any one except the King.



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For the rest, we shall see and know well if the King does anything for his musketeer.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

The Young Nobility and the Turks.—Private Correspondence.—The Unlucky Minister and the Page of Strasburg.—The King Judged and Described in All the Documents.—The King Humiliated in His Affections.—Scandal at Court.—Grief of Fathers at Having Given Life to Such Children.—Why Prince Eugene Was Not a Bishop.—Why He Was Not a Colonel of France.—Death of the Prince de Conti.

As France was at peace at the moment when the three hundred thousand Turks swarmed over Hungary and threatened Vienna, our young princes, and a fairly large number of nobles of about the same age, took it into their heads to go and exhibit their bravery in Germany; they asked permission of M. de Louvois to join the Imperialists. This permission was granted to some amongst them, but refused to others. Those whom it was thought fit to restrain took no notice of the words of the minister, and departed as resolutely as though the King had fallen asleep. They were arrested on the road; but his Majesty, having reflected on the matter, saw that these special prohibitions would do harm to the intentions which he had with regard to his deference for Germany, and they were all allowed to go their own way.

A little later, it was discovered that there was a regular and active correspondence between these young people in Germany and others who had remained in Paris or at the Court. The first minister had a certain page, one of the most agile, pursued; he was caught up with at Strasburg; his valise was seized. The Marquis de Louvois, desiring to give the King the pleasure of himself opening these mysterious letters, handed him the budget, the seals intact, and his Majesty thanked him for this attention. These thanks were the last that that powerful minister was destined to receive from his master; his star waned from that hour, never again to recover its lustre; all his credit failed and crashed to the ground. This correspondence—spied on with so much zeal, surprised and carried off with such good fortune—informed the astonished monarch that, in the Louvois family, in his house and circle, his royal character, his manners, his affections, his tastes, his person, his whole life, were derisively censured. The beloved son-in-law of the minister, speaking with an open heart to his friends, who were travelling, and absent, represented the King to them as a sort of country-gentleman, given up now to the domestic and uniform life of the manor-house, more than ever devoted to his dame bourgeoise, and making love ecstatically at the feet of this young nymph of fifty seasons.



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M. de la Roche-Guyon and M. de Liancourt, sons of La Rochefoucauld, who expressed themselves with the same boldness, went so far as to say of their ruler that he was but a stage and tinsel king. The son-in-law of Louvois accused him of being most courageous in his gallery, but of turning pale on the eve, and at the moment, of an action; and D'Alincourt, son of Villeroi, carried his outrages further still. No one knows better than myself how unjust these accusations were, and are. I was sensible of the mortification such a reading must have caused to the most sensitive, the most irritable of princes; but I rejoiced at the humiliation that the lady in waiting felt for her share in this unpardonable correspondence. The annoyance that I read for some days on her handsome face consoled me, for the time being, for her great success at my expense.

Madame la Princesse de Conti, whom the King, up to this time, had not only cherished but adored, found also, in those documents, the term of excessive favour. A letter from her to her husband said: "I have just given myself a maid of honour, wishing to spare Madame de Maintenon the trouble, or the pleasure, of giving me one herself."

She was summoned to Versailles, as she may very well have expected. The King, paying no attention to her tears, said to her: "I believed in your affection; I have done everything to deserve it; it is lamentable to me to be unable to count on it longer. Your cruel letter is in Madame de Maintenon's hands. She will let you read it again before committing it to the fire, and I beg you to inform her what is the harm she has done you."

"Madame," said Madame de Maintenon to her, when she saw her before her, "when your amiable mother left this Court, where the slightest prosperity attracts envy, I promised her to take some care of your childhood, and I have kept my word.

"I have always treated you with gentleness and consideration; whence proceeds your hate against me of to-day? Is your young heart capable of it? I believed you to be a model of gratitude and goodness."

"Madame," replied the young Princess, weeping, "deign to pardon this imprudence of mine and to reconcile me with the King, whom I love so much."

"I have not the credit which you assume me to have," replied the lady in waiting, coldly. "Except for the extreme kindness of the King you would not be where you are, and you take it ill that I should be where I am! I have neither desired nor solicited the arduous rank that I occupy; I need resignation and obedience to support such a burden." Madame de Maintenon resumed her work. The Princess, not daring to interrupt her silence, made the bow that was expected of her and withdrew.

The Marquis de Louvois, when he read what his own son-in-law dared to write of the monarch, grew pale and swooned away with grief. He cast himself several times before the feet of his master, asking now the punishment and now the pardon of a criminal and a madman.



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“I believed myself to be loved by your family,” cried the King. “What must I do, then, to be loved? And, great God! with what a set I am surrounded!”

All these things transpired. Soon we saw the father of the audacious De Liancourt arrive like a man bereft of his wits. He ran to precipitate himself at the feet of the King.

“M. de La Rochefoucauld,” said the prince to him, “I was ignorant, until this day, that I was lacking in what is called martial prowess; but I shall at least have, on this occasion, the courage to despise the slanderous slights of these presumptuous youths. Do not talk to me of the submissions and regrets of your two sons, who are unworthy of you; let them live as far away from me as possible; they do not deserve to approach an honest man, such as their King.”

The Prince de Turenne,

[The Prince de Turenne was in bad odour at Court ever since he had separated Monseigneur from his young wife by exaggerating that Princess’s small failings.—*Madame de Montespan’s Note.*]

son of the Duc de Bouillon, and Prince Eugene of Savoy, third or fourth son of the Comtesse de Soissons (Olympe Mancini), had accompanied their cousins De Conti on this knightly expedition; all these gentlemen returned at the conclusion of the war, except Prince Eugene, a violent enemy of the King.

This young Prince of the second branch, seeing his mother’s disgrace since the great affair of the poison, hated me mortally. He carried his treachery so far as to attribute to me the misfortunes of Olympe, saying, and publishing all over Paris, that I had incited accusers in order to be able to deprive her forcibly of her superintendence. This post, which had been sold to me for four hundred thousand francs, had been paid for long since; that did not prevent Eugene from everywhere affirming the contrary.

Since the flight or exile of his lady mother, he had taken it into his head to dream of the episcopate, and to solicit Pere de la Chaise on the subject. But the King, who does not like frivolous or absurd figures in high offices, decided that a little man with a deformity would repel rather than attract deference at a pinnacle of dignity of the priesthood.

Refused for the episcopate, M. de Soissons thought he might offer himself as a colonel. His Majesty, who did not know the military ways of this abbe, refused him anew, both as an abbe and as a hunchback, and as a public libertine already degraded by his irregularities.

From all these refusals and mortifications there sprung his firm resolve to quit France. He had been born there; he left all his family there except his mother; he declared



himself its undying enemy, and said publicly in Germany that Louis XIV. would shed tears of blood for the injury and the affront which he had offered him.

Mm. de Conti, after the events in Hungary and at Vienna, returned to France covered with laurels. They came to salute the King at Versailles. His Majesty gave them neither a good nor a bad reception. The Princes left the same day for Chantilly, where *M. de Conde*, their paternal uncle, tried to curb their too romantic imaginations and guaranteed their good behaviour in the future.



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This life, sedentary or spent in hunting, began to weary them, when overruling Providence was pleased to send them a diversion of the highest importance. M. le Prince de Conti was seized suddenly with that burning fever which announces the smallpox. Every imaginable care was useless; he died of it and bequeathed, in spite of himself, a most premature and afflicting widowhood to his young and charming spouse, who was not, till long afterwards, let into the secret of his scandalous excesses.

M. de la Roche-sur-Yon, his only brother, was as distressed at his death as though he had nothing to gain by it; he took immediately the name of Conti, and doffed the other, which he had hitherto borne as a borrowed title. The domain and county of La Roche-sur-Yon belongs to the Grande Mademoiselle. She had been asked to make this condescension when the young Prince was born. She agreed with a good grace, for the child, born prematurely, did not seem likely to live.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Ninon at Court.—The King behind the Glass.—Anxiety of the Marquise on the Subject of This Interview.—Visit to Madame de Maintenon.—Her Reply and Her Ambiguous Promise.

Mademoiselle de l'Enclos is universally known in the world for the agreeableness of her superior wit and her charms of face and person. When Madame de Maintenon, after the loss of her father, arrived from Martinique, she had occasion to make her acquaintance; and it seems that it was Ninon who, seeing her debating between the offers of M. Scarron and the cloister, succeeded in persuading her to marry the rich poet, though he was a cripple, rather than to bury herself, so young, in a convent of Ursulines or Bernardines, even were the convent in Paris.

At the death of the poet Scarron (who when he married, and when he died, possessed only a life annuity), Mademoiselle d'Aubigne, once more in poverty, found in Mademoiselle de l'Enclos a generous and persevering friend, who at once offered her her house and table. Mademoiselle d'Aubigne passed eight or ten months in the intimate society of this philosophical woman. But her conscience, or her prudery, not permitting her to tolerate longer a manner of life in which she seemed to detect license, she quitted Ninon, advising her to renounce coquetry, whilst the other was advising her to abandon herself to it.

There, where Madame Scarron found the tune of good society with wit, she looked upon herself as in her proper sphere, as long as no open scandal was brought to her notice. She consented still to remain her friend; but the fear of passing for an approver or an accomplice prevented her from remaining if there were any publicity. It was not exactly through her scruples, it was through her vanity. I have had proof of this on various occasions, and I have made no error.



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The pretended amours of Mademoiselle d'Aubigne and the Marquis de Villarceaux, Ninon's friend, are an invention of malicious envy. I justified Madame Scarron on the matter before the King, when I asked her for the education of the Princes; and having rendered her this justice, from conviction rather than necessity, I shall certainly not charge her with it to-day. Madame de Maintenon possesses a fund of philosophy which she does not reveal nor confess to everybody. She fears God in the manner of Socrates and Plato; and as I have seen her more than once make game, with infinite wit, of the Abbe Gobelin, her confessor, who is a pedant and avaricious, I am persuaded that she knows much more about it than all these proud doctors in theology, and that she would be thoroughly capable of confessing her confessor.

She had remained, then, the friend of Ninon, but at heart and in recollection, without sending her news or seeing her again. Mademoiselle de l'Enclos, rich, disinterested, and proud of her independent position, learned with pleasure the triumph of her former friend, but without writing to her or congratulating her. Ninon, by the consent of all those who have come near her, is good-nature itself. One of her relations, or friends, was a candidate for a vacant post as farmer-general, and besought her to make some useful efforts for him.

"I have no one but Madame de Maintenon," she replied to this relation. And the other said to her:

"Madame de Maintenon? It is as though you had the King himself!"

Mademoiselle de l'Enclos, trimming her pen with her trusty knife, wrote to the lady in waiting an agreeable and polished letter, one of those letters, careful without stiffness, that one writes, indulging oneself a little with the intention of getting oneself read.

The letter of solicitation seemed so pretty to the lady in waiting that she made the King peruse it.

"This is an excellent opportunity for me," said the prince at once, "to see with my own eyes this extraordinary person, of whom I have so long heard talk. I saw her one day at the opera, but just when she was getting into her carriage; and my incognito did not permit me to approach her. She seemed to me small, but well made. Her carriage drove off like a flash."

To meet this curiosity which the King displayed, it was agreed that Madame de Maintenon, on the pretext of having a better consultation, should summon Mademoiselle de l'Enclos to Versailles, and that in one of the alcoves of the chapel she should be given a place which should put her almost in front of his Majesty.

She arrived some minutes before mass. Madame de Maintenon received her with marked attention, mingled with reserve, promised her support with the ministers when

the affair should be discussed, and made her promise to pass the entire day, at Versailles, for the King was obliged to visit the new gardens at Marly.



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The time for mass being come, Madame de Maintenon said to the fair Epicurean, with a smile: "You are one of us, are you not? The music will be delicious in the chapel to-day; you will not have a moment of weariness."

Ninon, meeting this slight reproach with a smile of propriety, replied that she adored and respected everything which the monarch respected.

During the service, the King, tranquilly, secluded in his golden box, could see and examine the lady at his leisure, without compromising himself or embarrassing her by his gaze. As for her, her decent and quite appropriate attitude merited for her the approval of her old friend, of the King, and of the most critical eyes.

The monarch, in effect, departed, not for the Chateau of Marly, but for Trianon; and hardly had he reached there before, in a little, very close carriage, he was brought back to Versailles. He went up to Madame de Maintenon's apartments by the little staircase in the Prince's Court, and stole into the glass closet without being observed, except by a solitary lackey.

The ladies, believing themselves to be alone and at liberty, talked without ceremony or constraint, as though they had been but twenty years old. The King was very much grieved at the things which were said, but he heard, without losing a word, the following dialogue or interview:

Ninon de L'ENCLOS.—It is not my preservation which should surprise you, since from morning to night I breathe that voluptuous air of independence which refreshes the blood, and puts in play its circulation. I am morally the same person whom you came to see in the pretty little house in the Rue de Tournelles. My dressing-gown, as you well know, was my preferred and chosen garb. To-day, as then, Madame la Marquise, I should choose to place on my escutcheon the Latin device of the towns of San Marino and Lucca,—*Libertas*. You have complimented me on my beauty; I congratulate you upon yours, and I am surprised that you have so kept and preserved it in the midst of the constraints and servitude that grandeur and greatness involve.

Madame de Maintenon.—At the commencement, I argued as you argue, and believed that I should never get to the year's end without disgust. Little by little I imposed silence upon my emotions and my regrets. A life of great activity and occupation, by separating us, as it were, from ourselves, extinguishes those exacting niceties, both of our proper sensibility, and of our self-conceit. I remembered my sufferings, my fears, and my privations after the death of that poor man;—[It was so that she commonly spoke of her husband, Scarron.]—and since labour has been the yoke imposed by God on every human being, I submitted with a good grace to the respectable labour of education. Few teachers are attached to their pupils; I attached myself to mine with tenderness, with delight. It is true that it was my privilege to find the King's children amiable and pretty, as few children are.



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Ninon de L'ENCLOS.—From the most handsome and amiable man in the world there could not come mediocre offspring. M. du Maine is your idol; the King has given him his noble bearing, with his intelligence; and you have inoculated him with your wit. Is it true that Madame de Montespan is no longer your friend? That is a rumour which has credit in the capital; and if the thing is true I regret it, and am sorry for you.

Madame de Maintenon.—Madame de Montespan, as all Paris knows, obtained my pension for me after the death of the Queen-mother. This service, comparable with a favour, will always remain in my heart and my memory. I have thanked her a thousand times for it, and I always shall thank her for it. At the time when the young Queen of Portugal charged herself with my fate and fortune, the Marquise, who had known me at the Hotel d'Albret, desired to retain me in France, where she destined for me the children of the King. I did what she desired; I took charge of his numerous children out of respect for my benefactor, and attachment to herself. To-day, when their first education is completed, and his Majesty has recompensed me with the gift of the Maintenon estate, the Marquise pretends that my role is finished, that I was wrong to let myself be made lady in waiting, and that the recognition due to her imposes an obligation on me to obey her in everything, and withdraw from this neighbourhood.

Ninon de L'ENCLOS.—Absolutely

Madame de Maintenon.—Yes, really, I assure you.

Ninon de L'ENCLOS.—A departure? An absolute retreat? Oh, it is too much! Does she wish you, then, to resign your office?

Madame de MAINTINON.—I cannot but think so, mademoiselle.

Ninon de L'ENCLOS.—Speaking personally, and for my private satisfaction, I should be enchanted to see you quit the Court and return to society. Society is your element. You know it by heart; you have shone there, and there you would shine again. On reappearing, you would see yourself instantly surrounded by those delicate and (pardon the expression) sensuous minds who applauded with such delight your agreeable stories, your brilliant and solid conversation. Those pleasant, idle hours were lost to us when you left us, and I shall always remember them. At the Court, where etiquette selects our words, as it rules our attitudes, you cannot be yourself; I must confess that frankly. You do not paint your lovely face, and I am obliged to you for that, madame; but it is impossible for you to refrain from somewhat colouring your discourse, not with the King, perhaps, whose always calm gaze transparently reveals the man of honour, but with those eminences, those grandeurs, those royal and serene highnesses, whose artificial and factitious perfumes already filled your chapel before the incense of the sacrifice had wreathed its clouds round the high altar.



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The King, suddenly showing himself, somewhat to the surprise of the ladies, said: "I have long wished, mademoiselle, this unique and agreeable opportunity for which I am indebted to Madame de Maintenon. Be seated, I pray you, and permit 'my Highness', slightly perfumed though I be, to enjoy for a moment your witty conversation and society. What! The atmosphere does not meet with your approval, and, in order to have madame's society, you desire to disgust her with it herself, and deprive us of her?"

"Sire," answered Ninon, "I have not enough power or authority to render my intentions formidable, and my long regrets will be excused, I hope, since, if madame left Versailles, she would cause the same grief there that she has caused us."

"One has one's detractors in every conceivable locality. If Madame de Maintenon has met with one at Versailles she would not be exempt from them anywhere else. At Paris, you would be without rampart or armour, I like to believe; but deign to grant me this preference,—I can very well protect my friends. I think the town is ill-informed, and that Madame de Montespan has no interest in separating madame from her children, who are also mine.

"You will greatly oblige me, mademoiselle, if you will adopt this opinion and publish it in your society, which is always select, though it is so numerous."

Then the King, passing to other subjects, brought up, of his own accord, the place of farmer-general, which happened to be vacant; and he said to Mademoiselle de l'Enclos: "I promise you this favour with pleasure, the first which you have ever solicited of me, and I must beg you to address yourself to Madame de Maintenon on every occasion when your relations or yourself have something to ask from me. You must see clearly, mademoiselle, that it is well to leave madame in this place, as an agent with me for you, and your particular ambassadress."

I learnt all these curious details five or six days later from a young colonel, related to me, to whom Mademoiselle de l'Enclos narrated her admission and interview at Versailles. In reproducing the whole of this scene, I have not altered the sense of a word; I have only sought to make up for the charm which every conversation loses that is reported by a third party who was not actually an eyewitness.

This confidence informed me that prejudices were springing up against me in the mind of the favourite. I went to see her, as though my visit were an ordinary one, and asked her what one was to think of Ninon's interview with the King.

"Yes," she said, "his Majesty has for a long time past had a great desire to see her, as a person of much wit, and of whom he has heard people speak since his youth. He imagined her to have larger eyes, and something a little more virile in her physiognomy. He was greatly, and, I must say, agreeably surprised, to find that he had been deceived. 'One can see eyes of far greater



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size,' his Majesty told me, 'but not more brilliant, more animated or amiable. Her mouth, admirably moulded, is almost as small as Madame de Montespan's. Her pretty, almost round face has something Georgian about it, unless I am mistaken. She says, and lets you understand, everything she likes; she awaits your replies without interruption; her contradictions preserve urbanity; she is respectful without servility; her pleasant voice, although not of silver, is none the less the voice of a nymph. In conclusion, I am charmed with her.'"

"Does she believe me hostile to your prosperity, my dear Marquise?" I said at once to Madame de Maintenon, who seemed slightly confused, and answered: "Mademoiselle de l'Enclos is not personally of that opinion; she had heard certain remarks to that effect in the salons of the town; and I have given her my most explicit assurance that, if you should ever cease to care for me, my inclination and my gratitude would be none the less yours, madame, so long as I should live."

"You owe me those sentiments," I resumed, with a trifle too much fire; "I have a right to count on them. But it is most painful to me, I confess, after having given all my youth to the King, to see him now cool down, even in his courtesy. The hours which he used to pass with me he gives to you, and it is impossible that this innovation should not seem startling here, since all Paris is informed of it, and Mademoiselle de l'Enclos has discussed it with you."

"I owe everything that I am to the goodness of the King," she answered me. "Would you have me, when he comes to me, bid him go elsewhere, to you or somebody else, it matters not?"

"No, but I should be glad if your countenance did not, at such a moment, expand like a sunflower; I should like you, at the risk of somewhat belying yourself, to have the strength to moderate and restrain that vein of talk and conversation of which you have given yourself the supremacy and monopoly; I wish you had the generosity to show, now and again, less wit. This sort of regime and abstinence would not destroy you off-hand, and the worst that could result to you from it would be to pass in his eyes for a woman of a variable and intermittent wit; what a great calamity!"

"Ah, madame, what is it you suggest!" the lady in waiting replied to me, almost taking offence. "I have never been eccentric or singular with any one in the world, and you want me to begin with my King! It cannot be, I assure you! Suggest to me reasonable and possible things, and I will enter into all your views with all my heart and without hesitation."

This reply shocked me to the point of irritation.



“I believed you long to be a simple and disinterested soul,” I said to her, “and it was in this belief that I gave you my cordial affection. Now I read your heart, and all your projects are revealed to me. You are not only greedy of respect and consideration, you are ambitious to the point of madness. The King’s widowhood has awakened all your wild dreams; you confided to me fifteen years ago that the soothsayer of the Marechale d’Albret had predicted for you a sceptre and a crown.”



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At these words, the governess made me a sign to lower my voice, and said to me, with an accent of candour and good faith, which it is impossible for me to forget: "I confided to you at the time that puerility of society, just as the Marechale and the Marshal (without believing it) related it to all France. But this prognostication need not alarm you, madame," she added; "a King like ours is incapable of such an extravagance, and if he were to determine on it, it would not have my countenance nor approval.

"I do not think that thus far I have passed due limits; the granddaughter of a great noble, of a first gentleman of the chamber, I have been able to become a lady in waiting without offending the eyes; but the lady in waiting will never be Queen, and I give you my permission to insult me publicly when I am."

Such was this conversation, to which I have not added a word. We shall see soon how Madame de Maintenon kept her word to me, and if I am not right in owing her a grudge for this promise with a double meaning, with which it was her caprice to decoy me by her shuffling.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Birth of the Duc d'Anjou.—The Present to the Mother.—The Casket of Patience.—Departure of the King for the Army.—The King Turns a Deaf Ear.—How That Concerns Madame de Maintenon.—The Prisoner of the Bastille.—The Danger of Caricatures.—The Administrative Thermometer.—Actors Who Can neither Be Applauded nor Hissed.—Relapse of the Prisoner.—Scarron's Will.—A Fine Subject for Engraving.—Madame de Maintenon's Opinion upon the Jesuits.—The Audience of the Green Salon.—Portions from the Refectory.—Madame de Maintenon's Presence of Mind.—I Will Make You Schoolmaster.

Madame la Dauphine, greatly pleased with her new position, in that she represented the person of the Queen, had already given birth to M. le Duc de Bourgogne; she now brought into the world a second son, who was at once entitled Duc d'Anjou. The King, to thank her for this gift, made her a present of an oriental casket, which could only be opened by a secret spring, and that not before one had essayed it for half an hour. Madame la Dauphine found in it a superb set of pearls and four thousand new louis d'or. As she had no generosity in her heart, she bestowed no bounties on her entourage. The King this year made an expedition to Flanders. Before getting into his carriage he came and passed half an hour or forty minutes with me, and asked me if I should not go and pass the time of his absence at the Petit-Bourg.

"At Petit-Bourg and at Bourbon," I answered, "unless you allow me to accompany you." He feigned not to have heard me, and said: "Lauzun, who, eleven or twelve years ago, refused the baton of a marshal of France, asks to accompany me into Flanders as aide-

de-camp. Purge his mind of such ideas, and give him to understand that his part is played out with me.”



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“What business is it of mine,” I asked with vivacity, “to teach M. de Lauzun how to behave? Let Madame de Maintenon charge herself with these homilies; she is in office, and I am there no longer.”

These words troubled the King; he said to me:

“You will do well to go to Bourbon until my return from Flanders.”

He left on the following day, and the same day I took my departure. I went to spend a week at my little convent of Saint Joseph, where the ladies, who thought I was still in favour, received me with marks of attention and their accustomed respect. On the third day, the prioress, announcing herself by my second waiting-woman, came to present me with a kind of petition or prayer, which, I confess, surprised me greatly, as I had never commissioned any one to practise severity in my name.

A man, detained at the Bastille for the last twelve years, implored me in this document to have compassion on his sufferings, and to give orders which would strike off his chains and irons.

“My intention,” he said, “was not, madame, to offend or harm you. Artists are somewhat feather-headed, and I was then only twenty.” This petition was signed “Hathelin, prisoner of State.” I had my horses put in my carriage at once, and betook myself to the chateau of the Bastille, the Governor of which I knew.

When I set foot in this formidable fortress, in spite of myself I experienced a thrill of terror.

The attentions of public men are a thermometer, which, instead of our own notions, is very capable of letting us know the just degree of our favour. The Governor of the Bastille, some months before, would have saluted me with his artillery; perhaps he still received me with a certain ceremony, but without putting any ardour into his politeness, or drawing too much upon himself. In such circumstances one must see without regarding these insults of meanness, and, by a contrivance of distraction, escape from vile affronts. The object of my expedition being explained, the Governor found on his register that poor Hathelin, aged thirty-two to thirty-four years, was an engraver by profession. The lieutenant-general of police had arrested him long ago for a comic or satirical engraving on the subject of M. le Marquis de Montespan and the King.

I desired to see Hathelin, quite determined to ask his pardon for all his sufferings, with which I was going to occupy myself exclusively until I was successful. The Governor, a man all formality and pride, told me that he had not the necessary authority for this communication; I was obliged to return to my carriage without having tranquillised my poor captive.



The same evening I called upon the lieutenant-general of police, and, after having eloquently pleaded the cause of this forgotten young man, I discovered that there was no 'lettre de cachet' to his prejudice, and procured his liberation.

He came to pay his respects and thanks to me, in my parlour at Saint Joseph, on the very day of his liberation. He seemed to me much younger than his age, which astonished me greatly after his misfortunes. I gave him six thousand francs, in order to indemnify him slightly for that horrible Bastille. At first he hesitated to take them.



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“Let your captivity be a lesson to you,” I said to him; “the affairs of kings do not concern us. When such actors occupy the scene, it is permissible neither to applaud nor to hiss.”

Hathelin promised me to be good, and for the future to concern himself only with his graver and his private business. He wished me a thousand good wishes, with an expansion of heart which caused his tears and mine to flow. But artists are not made like other men; he, for all his good heart, was gifted with one of those ardent imaginations which make themselves critics and judges of notable personages, and, above all, of favourites of fortune. Barely five or six months had elapsed when Hathelin published a new satirical plate, in which Madame de Maintenon was represented as weeping, or pretending to weep, over the sick-bed of M. Scarron. The dying man was holding an open will in his hand, in which one could read these words: “I leave you my permission to marry again—a rich and serious man—more so than I am.”

The print had already been widely distributed when the engraver and his plate were seized. This time Hathelin had not the honour of the Bastille; he was sent to some depot. And although his action was absolutely fresh and unknown to me, all Paris was convinced that I had inspired his unfortunate talent. Madame de Maintenon was convinced of it, and believes it still. The King has done me the honour to assure me lately that he had banished the idea from his mind; but he was so persuaded of it at first that he could not pardon me for so black an intrigue, and, but for the fear of scandal, would have hanged the engraver, Hathelin, in order to provide my gentlemen, the engravers, with a subject for a fine plate.

About the same time, the Jesuits caused Madame de Maintenon a much more acute pain than that of the ridiculous print. She endured this blow with her accustomed courage; nevertheless, she conceived such a profound aversion to the leaders of this ever-restless company, that she has never been seen in their churches, and was at the greatest pains to rob them of the interior of Saint Cyr. “They are men of intrigue,” she said to Madame de Montchevreuil, her friend and confidante. “The name of Jesus is always in their mouths, he is in their solemn device, they have taken him for their banner and namesake; but his candour, his humility are unknown to them. They would like to order everything that exists, and rule even in the palaces of kings. Since they have the privilege and honour of confessing our monarch, they wish to impose the same bondage upon me. Heaven preserve me from it! I do not want rectors of colleges and professors to direct my unimportant conscience. I like a confessor who lets you speak, and not those who put words into your mouth.”

With the intention of mortifying her and then of being able to publish the adventure, they charged one of their instruments to seek her out at Versailles in order to ask an audience of her, not as a Jesuit, but as a plain churchman fallen upon adversity.



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The petition of this man having been admitted, he received a printed form which authorised him to appear before madame at her time of good works, for she had her regular hours for everything. He was introduced into the great green salon, which was destined, as one knows, for this kind of audience. There were many people present, and before all this company this old fox thus unfolded himself:

“Madame, I bless the Sovereign Dispenser of all things for what he has done for you; you have merited his protection from your tenderest youth. When, after your return from Martinique, you came to dwell in the little town of Niort, with your lady mother, I saw you often in our Jesuit church, which was at two paces from your house. Your modesty, your youth, your respectful tenderness towards Madame la Baronne d’Aubigne, your excellent mother, attracted the attention of our community, who saw you every day in the temple with a fresh pleasure, as you can well imagine. Madame la Baronne died; and we learnt that those tremendous lawsuits with the family not having been completed before her death, she left you, and M. Charles, your brother, in the most frightful poverty. At that news, our Fathers (who are so charitable, so compassionate) ordered me to reserve every day, for the two young orphans, two large portions from the refectory, and to bring them to you myself in your little lodging.

“To-day, being no longer, owing to my health, in the congregation of the Jesuit Fathers, I should be glad to obtain a place conformable with my ancient occupations. My good angel has inspired me with the thought, madame, to come and solicit your powerful protection and your good graces.”

Madame de Maintenon, having sustained this attack with fortitude, and it was not without vigour, replied to the petitioner: “I have had the honour of relating to his Majesty, not so very long ago, the painful and afflicting circumstance which you have just recalled to me. Your companions, for one fortnight, were at the pains to send to my little brother and to me a portion of their food. Our relations; who enjoyed all our property, had reduced us to indigence. But, as soon as my position was ameliorated, I sent fifteen hundred francs to the Reverend Father Superior of the Jesuits for his charities. That manner of reimbursement has not acquitted me, and I could not see an unfortunate man begging me for assistance without remembering what your house once did for me. I do not remember your face, monsieur, but I believe your simple assertion. If you are in holy orders I will recommend you to the Archbishop of Rouen, who will find you a place suitable for you. Are you in holy orders?”

“No, madame,” replied the ex-Jesuit; I was merely a lay brother.”

“In that case,” replied the Marquise, “we can offer you a position as schoolmaster; and the Jesuit Fathers, if they have any esteem for you, should have rendered you this service, for they have the power to do that, and more.”



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ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Always sold at a loss which must be sold at a given moment

Permissible neither to applaud nor to hiss

Respectful without servility

She awaits your replies without interruption

These liars in surplice, in black cassock, or in purple

Wish you had the generosity to show, now and again, less wit

You know, madame, that he generally gets everything he wants