Memoirs of Madame de Montespan — Complete eBook

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BOOK 1.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

Historians have, on the whole, dealt somewhat harshly with the fascinating Madame de Montespan, perhaps taking their impressions from the judgments, often narrow and malicious, of her contemporaries. To help us to get a fairer estimate, her own "Memoirs," written by herself, and now first given to readers in an English dress, should surely serve. Avowedly compiled in a vague, desultory way, with no particular regard to chronological sequence, these random recollections should interest us, in the first place, as a piece of unconscious self-portraiture. The cynical Court lady, whose beauty bewitched a great King, and whose ruthless sarcasm made Duchesses quail, is here drawn for us in vivid fashion by her own hand, and while concerned with depicting other figures she really portrays her own. Certainly, in these Memoirs she is generally content to keep herself in the background, while giving us a faithful picture of the brilliant Court at which she was for long the most lustrous ornament. It is only by stray touches, a casual remark, a chance phrase, that we, as it were, gauge her temperament in all its wiliness, its egoism, its love of supremacy, and its shallow worldly wisdom. Yet it could

have been no ordinary woman that held the handsome Louis so long her captive. The fair Marquise was more than a mere leader of wit and fashion. If she set the mode in the shape of a petticoat, or devised the sumptuous splendours of a garden fete, her talent was not merely devoted to things frivolous and trivial. She had the proverbial 'esprit des Mortemart'. Armed with beauty and sarcasm, she won a leading place for herself at Court, and held it in the teeth of all detractors.

Her beauty was for the King, her sarcasm for his courtiers. Perhaps little of this latter quality appears in the pages bequeathed to us, written, as they are, in a somewhat cold, formal style, and we may assume that her much-dreaded irony resided in her tongue rather than in her pen. Yet we are glad to possess these pages, if only as a reliable record of Court life during the brightest period of the reign of Louis Quatorze.

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As we have hinted, they are more, indeed, than this. For if we look closer we shall perceive, as in a glass, darkly, the contour of a subtle, even a perplexing, personality.

P. E. P.

HISTORIC COURT MEMOIRS.

Madame de Montespan.

CHAPTER I.

The Reason for Writing These Memoirs.—Gabrielle d'Estrees.

The reign of the King who now so happily and so gloriously rules over France will one day exercise the talent of the most skilful historians. But these men of genius, deprived of the advantage of seeing the great monarch whose portrait they fain would draw, will search everywhere among the souvenirs of contemporaries and base their judgments upon our testimony. It is this great consideration which has made me determined to devote some of my hours of leisure to narrating, in these accurate and truthful Memoirs, the events of which I myself am witness.

Naturally enough, the position which I fill at the great theatre of the Court has made me the object of much false admiration, and much real satire. Many men who owed to me their elevation or their success have defamed me; many women have belittled my position after vain efforts to secure the King's regard. In what I now write, scant notice will be taken of all such ingratitude. Before my establishment at Court I had met with hypocrisy of this sort in the world; and a man must, indeed, be reckless of expense who daily entertains at his board a score of insolent detractors.

I have too much wit to be blind to the fact that I am not precisely in my proper place. But, all things considered, I flatter myself that posterity will let certain weighty circumstances tell in my favour. An accomplished monarch, to greet whom the Queen of Sheba would have come from the uttermost ends of the earth, has deemed me worthy of his entertainment, and has found amusement in my society. He has told me of the esteem which the French have for Gabrielle d'Estrees, and, like that of Gabrielle, my heart has let itself be captured, not by a great king, but by the most honest man of his realm.

To France, Gabrielle gave the Vendome, to-day our support. The princes, my sons, give promise of virtues as excellent, and will be worthy to aspire to destinies as noble. It is my desire and my duty to give no thought to my private griefs begotten of an ill-assorted marriage. May the King ever be adored by his people; may my children ever be beloved and cherished by the King; I am happy, and I desire to be so.

CHAPTER II.

That Which Often It is Best to Ignore.—A Marriage Such as One Constantly Sees.—It is Too Late.

My sisters thought it of extreme importance to possess positive knowledge as to their future condition and the events which fate held in store for them. They managed to be secretly taken to a woman famed for her talent in casting the horoscope. But on seeing how overwhelmed by chagrin they both were after consulting the oracle, I felt fearful as regarded myself, and determined to let my star take its own course, heedless of its existence, and allowing it complete liberty.

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My mother occasionally took me out into society after the marriage of my sister, De Thianges; and I was not slow to perceive that there was in my person something slightly superior to the average intelligence,—certain qualities of distinction which drew upon me the attention and the sympathy of men of taste. Had any liberty been granted to it, my heart would have made a choice worthy alike of my family and of myself. They were eager to impose the Marquis de Montespan upon me as a husband; and albeit he was far from possessing those mental perfections and that cultured charm which alone make an indefinite period of companionship endurable, I was not slow to reconcile myself to a temperament which, fortunately, was very variable, and which thus served to console me on the morrow for what had troubled me to-day.

Hardly had my marriage been arranged and celebrated than a score of the most brilliant suitors expressed, in prose and in verse, their regret at having lost beyond recall Mademoiselle de Tonnai-Charente. Such elegiac effusions seemed to me unspeakably ridiculous; they should have explained matters earlier, while the lists were still open. For persons of this sort I conceived aversion, who were actually so clumsy as to dare to tell me that they had forgotten to ask my hand in marriage!

CHAPTER III.

Madame de Montespan at the Palace.—M. de Montespan.—His Indiscreet Language.—His Absence.—Specimen of His Way of Writing.—A Refractory Cousin.—The King Interferes.—M. de Montespan a Widower.—Amusement of the King.—Clemency of Madame de Montespan.

The Duc and Duchesse de Navailles had long been friends of my father's and of my family. When the Queen-mother proceeded to form the new household of her niece and daughter-in-law, the Infanta, the Duchesse de Navailles, chief of the ladies-in-waiting, bethought herself of me, and soon the Court and Paris learnt that I was one of the six ladies in attendance on the young Queen.

This princess, who while yet at the Escurial had been made familiar with the notable names of the French monarchy, honoured me during the journey by alluding in terms of regard to the Mortemarts and Rochechouarts,—kinsmen of mine. She was even careful to quote matters of history concerning my ancestors. By such marks of good sense and good will I perceived that she would not be out of place at a Court where politeness of spirit and politeness of heart ever go side by side, or, to put it better, where these qualities are fused and united.

M. le Marquis de Montespan, scion of the old house of Pardaillan de Gondrin, had preferred what he styled "my grace and beauty" to the most wealthy partis of France. He was himself possessed of wealth, and his fortune gave him every facility for maintaining at Court a position of advantage and distinction.

At first the honour which both Queens were graciously pleased to confer upon me gave my husband intense satisfaction. He affectionately thanked the Duc and Duchesse de Navailles, and expressed his most humble gratitude to the two Queens and to the King. But it was not long before I perceived that he had altered his opinion.

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The love-affair between Mademoiselle de la Valliere and the King having now become public, M. de Montespan condemned this attachment in terms of such vehemence that I perforce felt afraid of the consequences of such censure. He talked openly about the matter in society, airing his views thereanent. Impetuously and with positive hardihood, he expressed his disapproval in unstinted terms, criticising and condemning the prince's conduct. Once, at the ballet, when within two feet of the Queen, it was with the utmost difficulty that he could be prevented from discussing so obviously unfitting a question, or from sententiously moralising upon the subject.

All at once the news of an inheritance in the country served to occupy his attention. He did all that he could to make me accompany him on this journey. He pointed out to me that it behoved no young wife to be anywhere without her husband. I, for my part, represented to him all that in my official capacity I owed to the Queen. And as at that time I still loved him heartily (M. de Montespan, I mean), and was sincerely attached to him, I advised him to sell off the whole of the newly inherited estate to some worthy member of his own family, so that he might remain with us in the vast arena wherein I desired and hoped to achieve his rapid advance.

Never was there man more obstinate or more selfwilled than the Marquis. Despite all my friendly persuasion, he was determined to go. And when once settled at the other end of France, he launched out into all sorts of agricultural schemes and enterprises, without even knowing why he did so. He constructed roads, built windmills, bridged over a large torrent, completed the pavilions of his castle, replanted coppices and vineyards, and, besides all this, hunted the chamois, bears, and boars of the Nebouzan and the Pyrenees. Four or five months after his departure I received a letter from him of so singular a kind that I kept it in spite of myself, and in the Memoirs it will not prove out of place. Far better than any words of mine, it will depict the sort of mind, the logic, and the curious character of the man who was my husband.

Montespan,—May 15, 1667.

I count more than ever, madame, upon your journey to the Pyrenees. If you love me, as all your letters assure me, you should promptly take a good coach and come. We are possessed of considerable property here, which of late years my family have much neglected. These domains require my presence, and my presence requires yours. Enough is yours of wit or of good sense to understand that.

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The Court is, no doubt, a fine country,—finer than ever under the present reign. The more magnificent the Court is, the more uneasy do I become. Wealth and opulence are needed there; and to your family I never figured as a Croesus. By dint of order and thrift, we shall ere long have satisfactorily settled our affairs; and I promise you that our stay in the Provinces shall last no longer than is necessary to achieve that desirable result. Three, four, five,—let us say, six years. Well, that is not an eternity! By the time we come back we shall both of us still be young. Come, then, my dearest Athenais, come, and make closer acquaintance with these imposing Pyrenees, every ravine of which is a landscape and every valley an Eden. To all these beauties, yours is missing; you shall be here, like Dian, the goddess of these noble forests. All our gentlefolk await you, admiring your picture on the sweetmeat-box. They are minded to hold many pleasant festivals in your honour; you may count upon having a veritable Court. Here it is that you will meet the old Warnais nobility that followed Henri IV. and placed the sceptre in his hand. Messieurs de Grammont and de Biron are our neighbours; their grim castles dominate the whole district, so that they seem like kings.

Our Chateau de Montespan will offer you something less severe; the additions made for my mother twenty years ago are infinitely better than anything that you will leave behind you in Paris. We have here the finest fruits that ever grew in any earthly paradise. Our huge, luscious peaches are composed of sugar, violets, carnations, amber, and jessamine; strawberries and raspberries grow everywhere; and naught may vie with the excellence of the water, the vegetables, and the milk.

You are fond of scenery and of sketching from nature; there are half a dozen landscapes here for you that leave Claude Lorrain far behind. I mean to take you to see a waterfall, twelve hundred and seventy feet in height, neither more nor less. What are your fountains at Saint Germain and Chambord compared with such marvellous things as these?

Now, madame, I am really tired of coaxing and flattering you, as I have done in this letter and in preceding ones. Do you want me, or do you not? Your position as Court lady, so you say, keeps you near the monarch; ask, then, or let me ask, for leave of absence. After having been for four consecutive years Lady of the Palace, consent to become Lady of the Castle, since your duties towards your spouse require it. The young King, favourite as he is with the ladies, will soon find ten others to replace you. And I, dearest Athenais, find it hard even to think of replacing you, in spite of your cruel absence, which at once annoys and grieves me. I am—no, I shall be—always and ever yours, when you are always and ever mine.

Montespan.

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I hastened to tell my husband in reply that his impatience and ill-humour made me most unhappy; that as, through sickness or leave of absence, five or six of the Court ladies were away, I could not possibly absent myself just then; that I believed that I sufficiently merited his confidence to let me count upon his attachment and esteem, whether far or near. And I gave him my word of honour that I would join him after the Court moved to Fontainebleau, that is to say, in the autumn.

My answer, far from soothing or calming him, produced quite a contrary effect. I received the following letter, which greatly alarmed and agitated me:

Your allegations are only vain pretexts, your pretexts mask your falsehoods, your falsehoods confirm all my suspicions; you are deceiving me, madame, and it is your intention to dishonour me. My cousin, who saw through you better than I did before my wretched marriage,—my cousin, whom you dislike and who is no whit afraid of you,—-informs me that, under the pretext of going to keep Madame de la Valliere company, you never stir from her apartments during the time allotted to her by the King, that is to say, three whole hours every evening. There you pose as sovereign arbiter; as oracle, uttering a thousand divers decisions; as supreme purveyor of news and gossip; the scourge of all who are absent; the complacent promoter of scandal; the soul and the leader of sparkling conversation.

One only of these ladies became ill, owing to an extremely favourable confinement, from which she recovered a week ago. At the outset, the King fought shy of your raillery, but in a thousand discreditable ways you set your cap at him and forced him to pay you attention. If all the letters written to me (all of them in the same strain) are not preconcerted, if your misconduct is such as I am told it is, if you have dishonoured and disgraced your husband, then, madame, expect all that your excessive imprudence deserves. At this distance of two hundred and fifty leagues I shall not trouble you with complaints and vain reproaches; I shall collect all necessary information and documentary evidence at headquarters; and, cost me what it may, I shall bring action against you, before your parents, before a court of law, in the face of public opinion, and before your protector, the King. I charge you instantly to deliver up to me my child. My unfortunate son comes of a race which never yet has had cause to blush for disgrace such as this. What would he gain, except bad example, by staying with a mother who has no virtue and no husband? Give him up to me, and at once let Dupre, my valet, have charge of him until my return. This latter will occur sooner than you think; and I shall shut you up in a convent, unless you shut me up in the Bastille.

Your unfortunate husband, *Montespan*.

The officious cousin to whom he alluded in this threatening letter had been so bold as to sue for my hand, although possessed of no property. Ever since that time he remained, as I knew, my enemy, though I did not know, nor ever suspected, that such a man would

find pleasure in spying upon my actions and in effecting the irrevocable estrangement of a husband and a wife, who until then had been mutually attached to each other.

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The King, whose glance, though very sweet, is very searching, said to me that evening, “Something troubles you; what is it?” He felt my pulse, and perceived my great agitation. I showed him the letter just transcribed, and his Majesty changed colour.

“It is a matter requiring caution and tact,” added the prince after brief meditation. “At any rate we can prevent his showing you any disrespect. Give up the Marquis d’Antin to him,” continued the King, after another pause. “He is useless, perhaps an inconvenience, to you; and if deprived of his child he might be driven to commit some desperate act.”

“I would rather die!” I exclaimed, bursting into tears.

The King affectionately took hold of both my hands, and gently said:

“Very well, then, keep him yourself, and don’t give him up.”

As God is my witness, M. de Montespan had already neglected me for some time before he left for the Pyrenees; and to me this sudden access of fervour seemed singularly strange. But I am not easily hoodwinked; I understood him far better and far quicker than he expected. The Marquis is one of those vulgar-minded men who do not look upon a woman as a friend, a companion, a frank, free associate, but as a piece of property or of furniture, useful to his house, and which he has procured for that purpose only.

I am told that in England a man is the absolute proprietor of his wife, and that if he took her to the public market with a cord round her neck and exhibited her for sale, such sale is perfectly valid in the eyes of the law. Laws such as these inspire horror. Yet they should hardly surprise one among a semibarbarous nation, which does nothing like other peoples, and which deems itself authorised to place the censer in the hands of its monarch, and its monarch in the hands of the headsman.

M. de Montespan came to Paris and instituted proceedings against me before the Chatelet authorities. To the King he sent a letter full of provocations and insults. To the Pope he sent a formal complaint, accompanied by a most carefully prepared list of opinions which no lawyer was willing to sign. For three whole months he tormented the Pope, in order to induce him to annul our marriage. Of a truth, our Sovereign Pontiff could have done nothing better, but in Rome justice and religion always rank second to politics. The cardinals feared to offend a great prince, and so they suffered me to remain the wife of my husband. When he saw that on every side his voice was lost in the desert, and that the King, being calmer and more prudent than he, did not deign to pick up the glove, his folly reached its utmost limit. He went into the deepest mourning ever seen. He draped his horses and carriages with black. He gave orders for a funeral service to be held in his parish, which the whole town and its suburbs were invited to attend. He declared, verbally and in writing, that he no longer possessed a

wife; that Madame de Montespan had died of an attack of coquetry and ambition; and he talked of marrying again when the year of mourning and of widowhood should be over.

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His first outbursts of wrath were the source of much amusement to the King, who naturally was on the side of decorum and averse to hostile opinion. Pranks such as these seemed to him more a matter for mirth than fear, and, on hearing the story of the catafalque, he laughingly said to me, “Now that he has buried you, it is to be hoped that he will let you repose in peace.” But hearing each day of fresh absurdities, his Majesty grew at last impatient. Luckily, M. de Montespan, perceiving that every house had closed its doors to him, decided to close his own altogether and travel abroad.

Not being of a vindictive disposition, I never would allow M. de Louvois to shut him up in the Bastille. On the contrary I privately paid more than fifty thousand crowns to defray his debts, being glad to render him some good service in exchange for all the evil that he spoke of me.

I reflected that he had been my husband, my confidant, my friend; that his only faults were bad temper, love of sport, and love of wine; that he belonged to one of the very first families of France; and that, despite all that was said, my son D’Antin certainly was nothing to the King, and that the Marquis was his father.

CHAPTER IV.

Mademoiselle de la Valliere Jealous.—The King Wishes All to Enjoy Themselves.—The Futility of Fighting against Fate.—What is Dead is Dead.

Mademoiselle de la Valliere was tall, shapely, and extremely pretty, with as sweet and even a temper as one could possibly imagine, which eminently fitted her for dreamy, contemplative love-making, such as one reads of in idyls and romances. She would willingly have spent her life in. contemplating the King,—in loving and adoring him without ever opening her mouth; and to her, the sweet silence of a tete-a-tete seemed preferable to any conversation enlivened by wit.

The King’s character was totally different. His imagination was vivid, and mere love-making, however pleasant, bored him at last if the charm of ready speech and ready wit were wanting.

I do not profess to be a prodigy, but those who know me do me the justice to admit that where I am it is very difficult for boredom to find ever so small a footing.

Mademoiselle de la Valliere, after having begged me, and begged me often, to come and help her to entertain the King, grew suddenly suspicious and uneasy. She is candour itself, and one day, bursting into tears, she said to me, in that voice peculiar to her alone, “For Heaven’s sake, my good friend, do not steal away the King’s heart from me!” When mademoiselle said this to me, I vow and declare in all honesty that her fears were unfounded, and that (for my part at least) I had only just a natural desire to gain

the good-will of a great prince. My friendship for La Valliere was so sincere, so thorough, that I often used to superintend little details of her toilet and give her various little hints as to attentive conduct of the sort which cements and revives attachments. I even furnished her with news and gossip, composing for her a little repertoire, of which, when needful, she made use.

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But her star had set, and she had to show the world the touching spectacle of love as true, as tender, and as disinterested as any that has ever been in this world, followed by a repentance and an expiation far superior to the sin, if sin it was.

Moreover, Mademoiselle de la Valliere never broke with me. She shed tears in abundance, and wounded my heart a thousand times by the sight of her grief and her distress. For her sake I was often fain to bid farewell to her fickle lover, proud monarch though he was. But by breaking with him I should not have reestablished La Valliere. The prince's violent passion had changed to mere friendship, blended with esteem. To try and resuscitate attachments of this sort is as if one should try to open the grave and give life to the dead. God alone can work miracles such as these.

CHAPTER V.

The Marquis de Bragelonne, Officer of the Guards.—His Baleful Love.—His Journey.—-His Death.

The Marquis de Bragelonne was born for Mademoiselle de la Valliere. It was this young officer, endowed with all perfections imaginable, whom Heaven had designed for her, to complete her happiness. Despite his sincere, incomparable attachment for her, she disdained him, preferring a king, who soon afterwards wearied of her.

The Marquis de Bragelonne conceived a passion for the little La Valliere as soon as he saw her at the Tuileries with Madame Henrietta of England, whose maid of honour at first she was. Having made proof and declaration of his tender love, Bragelonne was so bold as to ask her hand of the princess. Madame caused her relatives to be apprised of this, and the Marquise de Saint-Remy, her stepmother, after all necessary inquiries had been made, replied that the fortune of this young man was as yet too slender to permit him to think of having an establishment.

Grieved at this answer, but nothing daunted, Bragelonne conferred privately with his lady-love, and told her of his hazardous project. This project instantly to realise all property coming to him from his father, and furnished with this capital, to go out, and seek his fortune in India [West Indies. D.W.]

"You will wait for me, dearest one, will you not?" quoth he. "Heaven, that is witness how ardently I long to make you happy, will protect me on my journey and guard my ship. Promise me to keep off all suitors, the number of whom will increase with your beauty. This promise, for which I desire no other guarantee but your candour, shall sustain me in exile, and make me count as nought my privations and my hardships."

Mademoiselle de la Beaume-le-Blanc allowed the Marquis to hope all that he wished from her beautiful soul, and he departed, never imagining that one could forget or set at nought so tender a love which had prompted so hazardous an enterprise.

His journey proved thoroughly successful. He brought back with him treasures from the New World; but of all his treasures the most precious had disappeared. Restored once more to family and friends, he hastened to the capital. Madame d'Orleans no longer resided at the Tuileries, which was being enlarged by the King.

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Bragelonne, in his impatience, asks everywhere for La Valliere. They tell him that she has a charming house between Saint Germain, Lucienne, and Versailles. He goes thither, laden with coral and pearls from the Indies. He asks to have sight of his love. A tall Swiss repulses him, saying that, in order to speak with Madame la Duchesse, it was absolutely necessary to make an appointment.

At the same moment one of his friends rides past the gateway. They greet each other, and in reply to his questioning, this friend informs him that Mademoiselle de la Valliere is a duchess, that she is a mother, that she is lapped in grandeur and luxury, and that she has as lover a king.

At this news, Bragelonne finds nothing further for him to do in this world. He grasps his friend's hand, retires to a neighbouring wood, and there, drawing his sword, plunges it into his heart,—a sad requital for love so noble!

CHAPTER VI.

M. Fouquet.—His Mistake.—A Woman's Indiscretion May Cause the Loss of a Great Minister.—The Castle of Vaux.—Fairy-land.—A Fearful Awakening.—Clemency of the King.

On going out into society, I heard everybody talking everywhere about M. Fouquet. They praised his good-nature, his affability, his talents, his magnificence, his wit. His post as Surintendant-General, envied by a thousand, provoked indeed a certain amount of spite; yet all such vain efforts on the part of mediocrity to slander him troubled him but little. My lord the Cardinal (Mazarin. D.W.) was his support, and so long as the main column stood firm, M. Fouquet, lavish of gifts to his protector, had really nothing to fear.

This minister also largely profited by the species of fame to be derived from men of letters. He knew their venality and their needs. His sumptuous, well-appointed table was placed in grandiose fashion at their disposal. Moreover, he made sure of their attachment and esteem by fees and enormous pensions. The worthy La Fontaine nibbled like others at the bait, and at any rate paid his share of the reckoning by the most profuse gratitude. M. Fouquet had one great defect: he took it into his head that every woman is devoid of will-power and of resistance if only one dazzle her eyes with gold. Another prejudice of his was to believe, as an article of faith, that, if possessed of gold and jewels, the most ordinary of men can inspire affection.

Making this twofold error his starting-point as a principle that was incontestable, he was wont to look upon every beautiful woman who happened to appear on the horizon as his property acquired in advance.

At Madame's, he saw Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and instantly sent her his vows of homage and his proposals.

To his extreme astonishment, this young beauty declined to understand such language. Couched in other terms, he renewed his suit, yet apparently was no whit less obscure than on the first occasion. Such a scandal as this well-nigh put him to the blush, and he was obliged to admit that this modest maiden either affected to be, or really was, utterly extraordinary.

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Perhaps Mademoiselle de la Valliere ought to have had the generosity not to divulge the proposals made to her; but she spoke about them, so everybody said, and the King took a dislike to his minister.

Whatever the cause or the real motives for Fouquet's disgrace, it was never considered unjust, and this leads me to tell the tale of his mad folly at Vaux.

The two palaces built by Cardinal Mazarin and the castles built by Cardinal Richelieu served as fine examples for M. Fouquet. He knew that handsome edifices embellished the country, and that Maecenas has always been held in high renown, because Maecenas built a good deal in his day.

He had just built, at great expense, in the neighbourhood of Melun, a castle of such superb and elegant proportions that the fame of it had even reached foreign parts. All that Fouquet lived for was show and pomp. To have a fine edifice and not show it off was as if one only possessed a kennel.

He spoke of the Castle of Vaux in the Queen's large drawing-room, and begged their Majesties to honour by their presence a grand fete that he was preparing for them.

To invite the royal family was but a trifling matter,—he required spectators proportionate to the scale of decorations and on a par with the whole spectacle; so he took upon himself to invite the entire Court to Vaux.

On reaching Vaux-le-Vicomte, how great and general was our amazement! It was not the well-appointed residence of a minister, it was not a human habitation that presented itself to our view,—it was a veritable fairy palace. All in this brilliant dwelling was stamped with the mark of opulence and of exquisite taste in art. Marbles, balustrades, vast staircases, columns, statues, groups, bas-reliefs, vases, and pictures were scattered here and there in rich profusion, besides cascades and fountains innumerable. The large salon, octagonal in shape, had a high, vaulted ceiling, and its flooring of mosaic looked like a rich carpet embellished with birds, butterflies, arabesques, fruits, and flowers.

On either side of the main edifice, and somewhat in the rear, the architect had placed smaller buildings, yet all of them ornamented in the same sumptuous fashion; and these served to throw the chateau itself into relief. In these adjoining pavilions there were baths, a theatre, a 'paume' ground, swings, a chapel, billiard-rooms, and other salons.

One noticed magnificent gilt roulette tables and sedan-chairs of the very best make. There were elegant stalls at which trinkets were distributed to the guests,—note-books, pocket-mirrors, gloves, knives, scissors, purses, fans, sweetmeats, scents, pastilles, and perfumes of all kinds.

It was as if some evil fairy had prompted the imprudent minister to act in this way, who, eager and impatient for his own ruin, had summoned his King to witness his appalling system of plunder in its entirety, and had invited chastisement.

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When the King went out on to the balcony of his apartment to make a general survey of the gardens and the perspective, he found everything well arranged and most alluring; but a certain vista seemed to him spoiled by whitish-looking clearings that gave too barren an aspect to the general coup d'oeil.

His host readily shared this opinion. He at once gave the requisite instructions, which that very night were executed by torchlight with the utmost secrecy by all the workmen of the locality whose services at such an hour it was possible to secure.

When next day the monarch stepped out on to his balcony, he saw a beautiful green wood in place of the clearings with which on the previous evening he had found fault.

Service more prompt or tasteful than this it was surely impossible to have; but kings only desire to be obeyed when they command.

Fouquet, with airy presumption, expected thanks and praise. This, however, was what he had to hear: "I am shocked at such expense!"

Soon afterwards the Court moved to Nantes; the ministers followed; M. Fouquet was arrested.

His trial at the Paris Arsenal lasted several months. Proofs of his defalcations were numberless. His family and proteges made frantic yet futile efforts to save so great a culprit. The Commission sentenced him to death, and ordered the confiscation of all his property.

The King, content to have made this memorable and salutary example, commuted the death penalty, and M. Fouquet learned with gratitude that he would have to end his days in prison.

Nor did the King insist upon the confiscation of his property, which went to the culprit's widow and children, all that was retained being the enormous sums which he had embezzled.

CHAPTER VII.

Close of the Queen-mother's Illness.—The Archbishop of Auch.—The Patient's Resignation.—The Sacrament.—Court Ceremony for its Reception.—Sage Distinction of Mademoiselle de Montpensier.—Her Prudence at the Funeral.

As the Queen-mother's malady grew worse, the Court left Saint Germain to be nearer the experts and the Val-de-Grace, where the princess frequently practised her devotions with members of the religious sisterhood that she had founded.

Suddenly the cancer dried up, and the head physician declared that the Queen was lost.

The Archbishop of Auch said to the King, “Sire, there is not an instant to be lost; the Queen may die at any moment; she should be informed of her condition, so that she may prepare herself to receive the Sacrament.”

The King was troubled, for he dearly loved his mother. “Monsieur,” he replied, with emotion, “it is impossible for me to sanction your request. My mother is resting calmly, and perhaps thinks that she is out of danger. We might give her her death-blow.”

The prelate, a man of firm, religious character, insisted, albeit reverently, while the prince continued to object. Then the Archbishop retorted, “It is not with nature or the world that we have here to deal. We have to save a soul. I have done my duty, and filial tenderness will at any rate bear the blame.”

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The King thereupon acceded to the churchman's wishes, who lost no time in acquainting the patient with her doom.

Anne of Austria was grievously shocked at so terrible an announcement, but she soon recovered her resignation and her courage; and M. d' Auch made noble use of his eloquence when exhorting her to prepare for the change that she dreaded.

A portable altar was put up in the room, and the Archbishop, assisted by other clerics, went to fetch the Holy Sacrament from the church of Saint Germain de l'Auxerrois in the Louvre parish.

The princes and princesses hereupon began to argue in the little closet as to the proper ceremony to be observed on such occasions. Madame de Motteville, lady-in-waiting to the Queen, being asked to give an opinion, replied that, for the late King, the nobles had gone out to meet the Holy Sacrament as far as the outer gate of the palace, and that it would be wise to do this on the present occasion.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier interrupted the lady-in-waiting and those who shared her opinion. "I cannot bring myself to establish such a precedent," she said, in her usual haughty tone. "It is I who have to walk first, and I shall only go half-way across the courtyard of the Louvre. It's quite far enough for the Holy Wafer-box; what's the use of walking any further for the Holy Sacrament?"

The princes and princesses were of her way of thinking, and the procession advanced only to the limits aforesaid.

When the time came for taking the Sacred Heart to Val-de-Grace with the funeral procession, Mademoiselle, in a long mourning cloak, said to the Archbishop before everybody, "Pray, monsieur, put the Sacred Heart in the best place, and sit you close beside it. I yield my rank up to you on the present occasion." And, as the prelate protested, she added, "I shall be very willing to ride in front on account of the malady from which she died." And, without altering her resolution, she actually took her seat in front.

CHAPTER VIII.

Cardinal Mazarin.—Regency of Anne of Austria.—Her Perseverance in Retaining Her Minister.—Mazarin Gives His Nieces in Marriage.—M. de la Meilleraye.—The Cardinal's Festivities.—Madame de Montespan's Luck at a Lottery.

Before taking holy orders, Cardinal Mazarin had served as an officer in the Spanish army, where he had even won distinction.

Coming to France in the train of a Roman cardinal, he took service with Richelieu, who, remarking in him all the qualities of a supple, insinuating, artificial nature,—that is to say, the nature of a good politician,—appointed him his private secretary, and entrusted him with all his secrets, as if he had singled him out as his successor.

Upon the death of Richelieu, Mazarin did not scruple to avow that the great Armand's sceptre had been a tyrant's sceptre and of bronze. By such an admission he crept into the good graces of Louis XIII., who, himself almost moribund, had shown how pleased he was to see his chief minister go before him to the grave.

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Louis XIII. being dead, his widow, Anne of Austria, in open Parliament cancelled the monarch's testamentary depositions and constituted herself Regent with absolute authority. Mazarin was her Richelieu.

In France, where men affect to be so gallant and so courteous, how is it that when women rule their reign is always stormy and troublous? Anne of Austria—comely, amiable, and gracious as she was—met with the same brutal discourtesy which her sister-in-law, Marie de Medici, had been obliged to bear. But gifted with greater force of intellect than that queen, she never yielded aught of her just rights; and it was her strong will which more than once astounded her enemies and saved the crown for the young King.

They lampooned her, hissed her, and burlesqued her publicly at the theatres, cruelly defaming her intentions and her private life. Strong in the knowledge of her own rectitude, she faced the tempest without flinching; yet inwardly her soul was torn to pieces. The barricading of Paris, the insolence of M. le Prince, the bravado and treachery of Cardinal de Retz, burnt up the very blood in her veins, and brought on her fatal malady, which took the form of a hideous cancer.

Our nobility (who are only too glad to go and reign in Naples, Portugal, or Poland) openly declared that no foreigner ought to hold the post of minister in Paris. Despite his Roman purple, Mazarin was condemned to be hanged.

The motive for this was some trifling tax which he had ordered to be collected before this had been ratified by the magistrates and registered in the usual way.

But the Queen knew how to win over the nobles. Her cardinal was recalled, and the apathy of the Parisians put an end to these dissensions, from which, one must admit, the people and the bourgeoisie got all the ills and the nobility all the profits.

As comptroller of the list of benefices, M. le Cardinal allotted the wealthiest abbeys of the realm to himself.

Having made himself an absolute master of finance, like M. Fouquet, he amassed great wealth. He built a magnificent palace in Rome, and an equally brilliant one in Paris, conferring upon himself the wealthy governorships of various towns or provinces. He had a guard of honour attached to his person, and a captain of the guard in attendance, just as Richelieu had.

He married one of his nieces to the Prince of Mantua, another to the Prince de Conti, a third to the Comte de Soissons, a fourth to the Constable Colonna (an Italian prince), a fifth to the Duc de Mercoeur (a blood relation of Henri IV.), and a sixth to the Duc de Bouillon. As to Hortense, the youngest, loveliest of them all,—Hortense, the beauteous-eyed, his charming favourite,—he appointed her his sole heiress, and having given her

jewelry and innumerable other presents, he married her to the agreeable Duc de la Meilleraye, son of the marshal of that name.

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Society was much astonished when it came out that M. le Cardinal had disinherited his own nephew,

[De Mancini, Duc de Nevers, a relative of the last Duc de Nivernois. He married, soon after, Madame de Montespan's niece.—Editor's Note]

a man of merit, handing over his name, his fortune, and his arms to a stranger. This was an error; in taking the name and arms of Mazarin, young De la Meilleraye was giving up those which he ought to have given up, and assuming those which it behove him to assume.

Nor did he retain the great possessions of the La Meilleraye family. Herein, certainly, he did not consult his devotion; since the secret and fatherly avowal of M. le Cardinal he had no right whatever to the estates of this family.

Beneath the waving folds of his large scarlet robe, the Cardinal showed such ease and certainty of address, that he never put one in mind of a cardinal and a bishop. To such manners, however, one was accustomed; in a leading statesman they were not unpleasant.

He often gave magnificent balls, at which he displayed all the accomplishments of his nieces and the sumptuous splendour of his furniture. At such entertainments, always followed by a grand banquet, he was wont to show a liberality worthy of crowned heads. One day, after the feast, he announced that a lottery would be held in his palace.

Accordingly, all the guests repaired to his superb gallery, which had just been brilliantly decorated with paintings by Romanelli, and here, spread out upon countless tables, we saw pieces of rare porcelain, scent-bottles of foreign make, watches of every size and shape, chains of pearls or of coral, diamond buckles and rings, gold boxes adorned by portraits set in pearls or in emeralds, fans of matchless elegance,—in a word, all the rarest and most costly things that luxury and fashion could invent.

The Queens distributed the tickets with every appearance of honesty and good faith. But I had reason to remark, by what happened to myself, that the tickets had been registered beforehand. The young Queen, who felt her garter slipping off, came to me in order to tighten it. She handed me her ticket to hold for a moment, and when she had fastened her garter, I gave her back my ticket instead of her own. When the Cardinal from his dais read out the numbers in succession, my number won a portrait of the King set in brilliants, much to the surprise of the Queen-mother and his Eminence; they could not get over it.

To me this lottery of the Rue Neuve-des-Petits-Changes

[The gallery to which the Marquise alludes is to-day called the Manuscript Gallery. It belongs to the Royal Library in the Rue de Richelieu. Mazarin's house is now the Treasury.]

I brought good luck, and we often talked about it afterwards with the King, regarding it as a sort of prediction or horoscope.

CHAPTER IX.

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Marriage of Monsieur, the King's Brother.—His Hope of Mounting a Throne.—His High-heeled Shoes.—His Dead Child.—Saint Denis.

Monsieur would seem to have been created in order to set off his brother, the King, and to give him the advantage of such relief. He is small in stature and in character, being ceaselessly busied about trifles, details, nothings. To his toilet and his mirror, he devotes far more time than a pretty woman; he covers himself with scents, with laces, with diamonds.

He is passionately fond of fetes, large assemblies, and spectacular displays. It was in order to figure as the hero of some such entertainment that he suddenly resolved to get married.

Mademoiselle—the Grande Mademoiselle—Mademoiselle d'Eu, Mademoiselle de Dombes, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Mademoiselle de Saint-Fargeau, Mademoiselle de la Roche-sur-Yon, Mademoiselle d'Orleans—had come into the world twelve or thirteen years before he had, and they could not abide each other. Despite such trifling differences, however, he proposed marriage to her. The princess, than whom no one more determined exists, answered, "You ought to have some respect for me; I refused two crowned husbands the very day you were born."

So the Prince begged the Queen of England to give him her charming daughter Henrietta, who, having come to France during her unfortunate father's captivity, had been educated in Paris.

The Princess possessed an admirable admixture of grace and beauty, wit being allied to great affability and good-nature; to all these natural gifts she added a capacity and intelligence such as one might desire sovereigns to possess. Her coquetry was mere amiability; of that I am convinced. Being naturally vain, the Prince, her husband, made great use at first of his consort's royal coat-of-arms. It was displayed on his equipages and stamped all over his furniture.

"Do you know, madame," quoth he gallantly, one day, "what made me absolutely desire to marry you? It was because you are a daughter and a sister of the Kings of England. In your country women succeed to the throne, and if Charles the Second and my cousin York were to die without children (which is very likely), you would be Queen and I should be King."

"Oh, Sire, how wrong of you to imagine such a thing!" replied his wife; "it brings tears to my eyes. I love my brothers more than I do myself. I trust that they may have issue, as they desire, and that I may not have to go back and live with those cruel English who slew my father-in-law."

The Prince sought to persuade her that a sceptre and a crown are always nice things to have. “Yes,” replied Henrietta slyly, “but one must know how to wear them.”

Soon after this, he again talked of his expectations, saying every minute, “If ever I am King, I shall do so; if ever I am King, I shall order this; if ever I am King,” *etc*., *etc*.

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“Let us hope, my good friend,” replied the Princess, “that you won’t be King in England, where your gewgaws would make people call out after you; nor yet in France, where they would think you too little, after the King.”

At this last snub, Monsieur was much mortified. The very next day he summoned his old bootmaker, Lambertin, and ordered him to put extra heels two inches high to his shoes. Madame having told this piece of childish folly to the King, he was greatly amused, and with a view to perplex his brother, he had his own shoe-heels heightened, so that, beside his Majesty, Monsieur still looked quite a little man.

The Princess gave premature birth to a child that was scarcely recognisable; it had been dead in its mother’s womb for at least ten days, so the doctors averred. Monsieur le Duc d’Orleans, however, insisted upon having this species of monstrosity baptised.

My sister, De Thianges, who is raillery personified, seeing how embarrassed was the cure of Saint Cloud by the Prince’s repeated requests for baptism, gravely said to the cleric in an irresistibly comic fashion, “Do you know, sir, that your refusal is contrary to all good sense and good breeding, and that to infants of such quality baptism is never denied?”

When this species of miscarriage had to be buried, as there was urgent need to get rid of it, Monsieur uttered loud cries, and said that he had written to his brother so that there might be a grand funeral service at Saint Denis.

Of so absurd a proposal as this no notice was taken, which served to amaze Monsieur for one whole month.

CHAPTER X.

M. Colbert.—His Origin.—He Unveils and Displays Mazarin’s Wealth.—The Monarch’s Liberality.—Resentment of the Cardinal’s Heirs.

A few moments before he died, Cardinal Mazarin, through strategy, not through repentance, besought the King to accept a deed of gift whereby he was appointed his universal legatee. Touched by so noble a resolve, the King gave back the deed to his Eminence, who shed tears of emotion.

“Sire, I owe all to you,” said the dying man to the young prince, “but I believe that I shall pay off my debt by giving Colbert, my secretary, to your Majesty. Faithful as he has been to me, so will he be to you; and while he keeps watch, you may sleep. He comes from the noble family of Coodber, of Scottish origin, and his sentiments are worthy of his ancestors.”

A few moments later the death-agony began, and M. Colbert begged the King to listen to him in an embrasure. There, taking a pencil, he made out a list of all the millions which the Cardinal had hidden away in various places. The monarch bewailed his minister, his tutor, his friend, but so astounding a revelation dried his tears. He affectionately thanked M. Colbert, and from that day forward gave him his entire consideration and esteem.

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M. Colbert was diligent enough to seize upon the millions hidden at Vincennes, the millions secreted in the old Louvre, at Courbevoie and the other country seats. But the millions in gold, hidden in the bastions of La Fere, fell into the hands of heirs, who, a few moments after the commencement of the Cardinal's death-agony, sent off a valet post-haste.

The Cardinal's family pretended to know nothing of this affair; but they could never bear M. Colbert nor any of his kinsfolk. The King, being of a generous nature, distributed all this wealth in the best and most liberal manner possible. M. Colbert told him to what use Mazarin meant to put all these riches; he hoped to have prevailed upon the Conclave to elect him Pope, with the concurrence of Spain, France, and the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER XI.

The Young Queen.—Her Portrait.—Her Whims.—Her Love for the King.—Her Chagrin.

Maria Theresa, the King's new consort, was the daughter of the King of Spain and Elizabeth of France, daughter of Henri IV. At the time of her marriage she had lost her mother, and it was King Philip, Anne of Austria's brother, who himself presented her to us at Saint Jean de Luz, where he signed the peace-contract. The Spanish monarch admired his nephew, the King, whose stalwart figure, comely face, and polished manners, were, indeed, well calculated to excite surprise.

Anne of Austria had said to him, "My brother, my one fear during your journey was lest your ailments and the hardships of travel should hinder you from getting back here again."

"Was such your thought, sister?" replied the good man. "I would willingly have come on foot, so as to behold with my own eyes the superb cavalier that you and I are going to give to my daughter."

After the oath of peace had been sworn upon the Gospels, there was a general presentation before the two Kings. Cantocarrero, the Castilian secretary of state, presented the Spanish notabilities, while Cardinal Mazarin, in his pontifical robes, presented the French. As he announced M. de Turenne, the old King looked at him repeatedly. "There's one," quoth he, "who has given me many a sleepless night."

M. de Turenne bowed respectfully, and both courts could perceive in his simple bearing his unaffected modesty.

On leaving Spain and the King, young princess was moved to tears. Next day she thought nothing of it at all. She was wholly engrossed by the possession of such a King, nor was she at any pains to hide her glee from us.

Of all her Court ladies I was the most youthful and, perhaps, the most conspicuous. At the outset the Queen showed a wish to take me into her confidence but it was the lady-in-waiting who would never consent to this.

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When, at that lottery of the Cardinal's, I won the King's portrait, the Queen-mother called me into her closet and desired to know how such a thing could possibly have happened. I replied that, during the garter-incident, the two tickets had got mixed. "Ah, in that case," said the princess, "the occurrence was quite a natural one. So keep this portrait, since it has fallen into your hands; but, for God's sake, don't try and make yourself pleasant to my son; for you're only too fascinating as it is. Look at that little La Valliere, what a mess she has got into, and what chagrin she has caused my poor Maria Theresa!"

I replied to her Majesty that I would rather let myself be buried alive than ever imitate La Valliere, and I said so then because that was really what I thought.

The Queen-mother softened, and gave me her hand to kiss, now addressing me as "madame," and anon as "my daughter." A few days afterwards she wished to walk in the gallery with me, and said to me, "If God suffers me to live, I will make you lady-in-waiting; be sure of that."

Anne of Austria was a tall, fine, dark woman, with brown eyes, like those of the King. The Infanta, her niece, is a very pretty blonde, blue-eyed, but short in stature.

To her slightest words the Queen-mother gives sense and wit; her daughter-in-law's speeches and actions are of the simplest, most commonplace kind. Were it not for the King, she would pass her life in a dressing-gown, night-cap, and slippers. At Court ceremonies and on gala-days, she never appears to be in a good humour; everything seems to weigh her down, notably her diamonds.

However, she has no remarkable defect, and one may say that she is devoid of goodness, just as she is devoid of badness. When coming among us, she contrived to bring with her Molina, the daughter of her nurse, a sort of comedy confidante, who soon gave herself Court airs, and who managed to form a regular little Court of her own. Without her sanction nothing can be obtained of the Queen. My lady Molina is the great, the small, and the unique counsellor of the princess, and the King, like the others, remains submissive to her decisions and her inspection.

French cookery, by common consent, is held to be well-nigh perfect in its excellence; yet the Infanta could never get used to our dishes. The Senora Molina, well furnished with silver kitchen utensils, has a sort of private kitchen or scullery reserved for her own use, and there it is that the manufacture takes place of clove-scented chocolate, brown soups and gravies, stews redolent with garlic, capsicums, and nutmeg, and all that nauseous pastry in which the young Infanta revels.

Ever since La Valliere's lasting triumph, the Queen seems to have got it into her head that she is despised; and at table I have often heard her say, "They will help themselves to everything, and won't leave me anything."

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I am not unjust, and I admit that a husband's public attachments are not exactly calculated to fill his legitimate consort with joy. But, fortunately for the Infanta, the King abounds in rectitude and good-nature. This very good-nature it is which prompts him to use all the consideration of which a noble nature is capable, and the more his amours give the Queen just cause for anxiety, the more does he redouble his kindness and consideration towards her. Of this she is sensible. Thus she acquiesces, and, as much through tenderness as social tact, she never reproaches or upbraids him with anything. Nor does the King scruple to admit that, to secure so good-natured a partner, it is well worth the trouble of going to fetch her from the other end of the world.

CHAPTER XII.

Madame de la Valliere Becomes Duchess.—Her Family is Resigned.—Her Children Recognised by the King.—Madame Colbert Their Governess.—The King's Passion Grows More Serious.—Love and Friendship.

Out of affection and respect for the Queen-mother, the King had until then sought to conceal the ardour of his attachment for Mademoiselle de la Valliere. It was after the six months of mourning that he shook off all restraint, showing that, like any private person, he felt himself master of his actions and his inclinations.

He gave the Vaujours estate to his mistress, after formally constituting it a duchy, and, owing to the two children of his duchy, Mademoiselle de la Valliere assumed the title of Duchess. What a fuss she made at this time! All that was styled disinterestedness, modesty. Not a bit of it. It was pusillanimity and a sense of servile fear. La Valliere would have liked to enjoy her handsome lover in the shade and security of mystery, without exposing herself to the satire of courtiers and of the public, and, above all, to the reproaches of her family and relatives, who nearly all were very devout.

On this head, however, she soon saw that such fears were exaggerated. The Marquise de Saint-Remy was but slightly scandalised at what was going on. She and the Marquis de Saint-Remy, her second husband, strictly proper though they were, came to greet their daughter when proclaimed duchess. And when, a few days afterwards, the King declared the rank of the two children to the whole of assembled Parliament, the two families of Saint-Remy and La Valliere offered congratulations to the Duchess, and received those of all Paris.

M. Colbert, who owed everything to the King, entrusted Madame Colbert with the education of the new prince and princess; they were brought up under the eyes of this statesman, who for everything found time and obligingness. The girl, lovely as love itself, took the name of Mademoiselle de Blois, while to her little brother was given the title of Comte de Vermandois.

It was just about this time that I noticed the beginning of the monarch's serious attachment for me. Till then it had been only playful badinage, good-humoured teasing, a sort of society play, in which the King was rehearsing his part as a lover. I was at length bound to admit that chaff of this sort might end in something serious, and his Majesty begged me to let him have La Valliere for some time longer.

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I have already said that, while becoming her rival, I still remained her friend. Of this she had countless proofs, and when, at long intervals, I saw her again in her dismal retreat, her good-nature, unchanging as this was, caused her to receive and welcome me as one welcomes those one loves.

CHAPTER XIII.

First Vocation of Mademoiselle de la Valliere.—The King Surprises His Mistress.—She is Forced to Retire to a Convent.—The King Hastens to Take Her Back.—She Was Not Made for Court Life.—Her Farewell to the King.—Sacrifice.—The Abbe de Bossuet.

What I am now about to relate, I have from her own lips, nor am I the only one to whom she made such recitals and avowals.

Her father died when she was quite young, and, when dying, foresaw that his widow, being without fortune or constancy, would ere long marry again. To little Louise he was devotedly attached. Ardently embracing her, he addressed her thus:

“In losing me, my poor little Louise, you lose all. What little there is of my inheritance ought, undoubtedly, to belong to you; but I know your mother; she will dispose of it. If my relatives do not show the interest in you which your fatherless state should inspire, renounce this world soon, where, separated from your father, there exists for you but danger and misfortune. Two of my ancestors left their property to the nuns of Saint Bernard at Gomer-Fontaines, as they are perfectly well aware. Go to them in all confidence; they will receive you without a dowry even; it is their duty to do so. If, disregarding my last counsel, you go astray in the world, from the eternal abodes on high I will watch over you; I will appear to you, if God empower me to do so; and, at any rate, from time to time I will knock at the door of your heart to rouse you from your baleful slumber and draw your attention to the sweet paths of light that lead to God.”

This speech of a dying father was graven upon the heart of a young girl both timid and sensitive. She never forgot it; and it needed the fierce, inexplicable passion which took possession of her soul to captivate her and carry her away so far.

Before becoming attached to the King, she opened out her heart to me with natural candour; and whenever in the country she observed the turrets or the spire of a monastery, she sighed, and I saw her beautiful blue eyes fill with tears.

She was maid of honour to the Princess Henrietta of England, and I filled a like office. Our two companions, being the most quick-witted, durst not talk about their love-affairs before Louise, so convinced were we of her modesty, and almost of her piety.

In spite of that, as she was gentle, intelligent, and well-bred, the Princess plainly preferred her to the other three. In temperament they suited each other to perfection.

The King frequently came to the Palais Royal, where the bright, pleasant conversation of his sister-in-law made amends for the inevitable boredom which one suffered when with the Queen.

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Being brought in such close contact with the King, who in private life is irresistibly attractive, Mademoiselle de la Valliere conceived a violent passion for him; yet, owing to modesty or natural timidity, it was plain that she carefully sought to hide her secret. One fine night she and two young persons of her own age were seated under a large oak-tree in the grounds of Saint Germain. The Marquis de Wringhen, seeing them in the moonlight, said to the King, who was walking with him, “Let us turn aside, Sire, in this direction; yonder there are three solitary nymphs, who seem waiting for fairies or lovers.” Then they noiselessly approached the tree that I have mentioned, and lost not a word of all the talk in which the fair ladies were engaged.

They were discussing the last ball at the chateau. One extolled the charms of the Marquis d’Alincour, son of Villeroi; the second mentioned another young nobleman; while the third frankly expressed herself in these terms:

“The Marquis d’Alincour and the Prince de Marcillac are most charming, no doubt, but, in all conscience, who could be interested in their merits when once the King appeared in their midst?

“Oh, oh!” cried the two others, laughing, “it’s strange to hear you talk like that; so, one has to be a king in order to merit your attention?”

“His rank as king,” replied Mademoiselle de la Valliere, “is not the astonishing part about him; I should have recognised it even in the simple dress of a herdsman.”

The three chatterers then rose and went back to the chateau. Next day, the King, wholly occupied with what he had overheard on the previous evening, sat musing on a sofa at his sister-in-law’s, when all at once the voice of Mademoiselle de la Beaume-le-Blanc smote his ear and brought trouble to his heart. He saw her, noticed her melancholy look, thought her lovelier than the loveliest, and at once fell passionately in love.

They soon got to understand one another, yet for a long while merely communicated by means of notes at fetes, or during the performance of allegorical ballets and operettas, the airs in which sufficiently expressed the nature of such missives.

In order to put the Queen-mother off the scent and screen La Valliere, the King pretended to be in love with Mademoiselle de la Mothe-Houdancour, one of the Queen’s maids of honour. He used to talk across to her out of one of the top-story windows, and even wished her to accept a present of diamonds. But Madame de Navailles, who took charge of the maids of honour, had gratings put over the top-story windows, and La Mothe-Houdancour was so chagrined by the Queen’s icy manner towards her that she withdrew to a convent. As to the Duchesse de Navailles and her husband, they got rid of their charges and retired to their estates, where great wealth and freedom were their recompense after such pompous Court slavery.

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The Queen-mother was still living; unlike her niece, she was not blindfold. The adventure of Mademoiselle de la Mothe-Houdancour seemed to her just what it actually was,—a subterfuge; as she surmised, it could only be La Valliere. Having discovered the name of her confessor, the Queen herself went in disguise to the Theatin Church, flung herself into the confessional where this man officiated, and promised him the sum of thirty thousand francs for their new church if he would help her to save the King.

The Theatin promised to do what the Queen thus earnestly desired, and when his fair penitent came to confess, he ordered her at once to break off her connection with the Court as with the world, and to shut herself up in a convent.

Mademoiselle de la Valliere shed tears, and sought to make certain remarks, but the confessor, a man of inflexible character, threatened her with eternal damnation, and he was obeyed.

Beside herself with grief, La Valliere left by another door, so as to avoid her servants and her coach. She recollected seeing a little convent of hospitalieres at Saint Cloud; she went thither on foot, and was cordially welcomed by these dames.

Next day it was noised abroad in the chateau that she had been carried off by order of the Queen-mother. During vespers the King seemed greatly agitated, and no sooner had the preacher ascended the pulpit than he rose and disappeared.

The confusion of the two Queens was manifest; no one paid any heed to the preacher; he scarcely knew where he was.

Meanwhile the conquering King had started upon his quest. Followed by a page and a carriage and pair, he first went to Chaillot, and then to Saint Cloud, where he rang at the entrance of the modest abode which harboured his friend. The nun at the turnstile answered him harshly, and denied him an audience. It is true, he only told her he was a cousin or a relative.

Seeing that this nun was devoid of sense and of humanity, he bethought himself of endeavouring to persuade the gardener, who lived close to the monastery. He slipped several gold pieces into his hand, and most politely requested him to go and tell the Lady Superior that he had come thither on behalf of the King.

The Lady Superior came down into the parlour, and recognising the King from a superb miniature, besought him of his grandeur to interest himself in this young lady of quality, devoid of means and fatherless, and consented, moreover, to give her up to him, since as King he so commanded.

Louise de la Beaume-le-Blanc obeyed the King, or in other words, the dictates of her own heart, imprudently embarking upon a career of passion, for which a temperament

wholly different from hers was needed. It is not simple-minded maidens that one wants at Court to share the confidence of princes. No doubt natures of that sort—simple, disinterested souls are pleasant and agreeable to them, as therein they find contentment such as they greedily prize; but for these unsullied, romantic natures, disillusion, trickery alone is in store. And if Mademoiselle de la Beaumele-Blanc had listened to me, she might have turned matters to far better account; nor, after yielding up her youth to a monarch, would she have been obliged to end, her days in a prison.

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The King no longer visited her as his mistress, but trusted and esteemed her as a friend and as the mother of his two pretty children.

One day, in the month of April, 1674, his Majesty, while in the gardens, received the following letter, which one of La Valliere's pages proffered him on bended knee:

Sire:—To-day I am leaving forever this palace, whither the cruellest of fatalities summoned my youth and inexperience. Had I not met you, my heart would have loved seclusion, a laborious life, and my kinsfolk. An imperious inclination, which I could not conquer, gave me to you, and, simple, docile as I was by nature, I believed that my passion would always prove to me delicious, and that your love would never die. In this world nothing endures. My fond attachment has ceased to have any charm for you, and my heart is filled with dismay. This trial has come from God; of this my reason and my faith are convinced. God has felt compassion for my unspeakable grief. That which for long past I have suffered is greater than human force can bear; He is going to receive me into His home of mercy. He promises me both healing and peace.

In this theatre of pomp and perfidy I have only stayed until such a moment as my daughter and her youthful brother might more easily do without me. You will cherish them both; of that I have no doubt. Guide them, I beseech you, for the sake of your own glory and their well-being. May your watchful care sustain them, while their mother, humbled and prostrate in a cloister, shall commend them to Him who pardons all.

After my departure, show some kindness to those who were my servants and faithful domestics, and deign to take back the estates and residences which served to support me in my frivolous grandeur, and maintain the celebrity that I deplore.

Adieu, Sire! Think no more about me, lest such a feeling, to which my imagination might but all too readily lend itself, only beget links of sympathy in my heart which conscience and repentance would fain destroy.

If God call me to himself, young though yet I am, He will have granted my prayers; if He ordain me to live for a while longer in this desert of penitence, it will never compensate for the duration of my error, nor for the scandal of which I have been the cause.

Your subject from this time forth, *Louise de la Valliere*.

The King had not been expecting so desperate a resolve as this, nor did he feel inclined to hinder her from making it. He left the Portuguese ambassador, who witnessed his agitation, and hastened to Madame de la Valliere's, who had left her apartments in the castle at daybreak. He shed tears, being kind of heart and convinced that a body so graceful and so delicate would never be able to resist the rigours and hardships of so terrible a life.

The Carmelite nuns of the Rue Saint Jacques loudly proclaimed this conversion, and in their vanity gladly received into their midst so modest and distinguished a victim, driven thither through sheer despair.

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The ceremony which these dames call “taking the dress” attracted the entire Court to their church. The Queen herself desired to be present at so harrowing a spectacle, and by a curious contradiction, of which her capricious nature is capable, she shed floods of tears. La Valliere seemed gentler, lovelier, more modest and more seductive than ever. In the midst of the grief and tears which her courageous sacrifice provoked, she never uttered a single sigh, nor did she change colour once. Hers was a nature made for extremes; like Caesar, she said to herself, “Either Rome or nothing!”

The Abbe de Bossuet, who had been charged to preach the sermon of investiture, showed a good deal of wit by exhibiting none at all. The King must have felt indebted to him for such reserve. Into his discourse he had put mere vague commonplaces, which neither touch nor wound any one; honeyed anathemas such as these may even pass for compliments.

This prelate has won for himself a great name and great wealth by words. A proof of his cleverness exists in his having lived in grandeur, opulence, and worldly happiness, while making people believe that he condemned such things.

CHAPTER XIV.

Story of the Queen-mother’s Marriage with Cardinal Mazarin Published in Holland.

Despite the endeavours made by the ministers concerning the pamphlet or volume about which I am going to speak, neither they nor the King succeeded in quashing a sinister rumour and an opinion which had taken deep root among the people. Ever since this calumny it believes—and will always believe—in the twin brother of Louis XIV., suppressed, one knows not why, by his mother, just as one believes in fairy-tales and novels. This false rumour, invented by far-seeing folk, is that which has most affected the King. I will recount the manner in which it reached him.

Since the disorder and insolence of the Fronde, this prince did not like to reside in the capital; he soon invented pretexts for getting away from it. The chateau of the Tuileries, built by Catherine de Medici at some distance from the Louvre, was, really speaking, only a little country-house and Trianon. The King conceived the plan of uniting this structure with his palace at the Louvre, extending it on the Saint Roch side and also on the side of the river, and this being settled, the Louvre gallery would be carried on as far as the southern angle of the new building, so as to form one whole edifice, as it now appears.

While these alterations were in progress, the Court quitted the Louvre and the capital, and took up its permanent residence at Saint Germain.

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Though ceasing to make a royal residence and home of Paris, his Majesty did not omit to pay occasional visits to the centre of the capital. He came incognito, sometimes on horseback, sometimes in a coach, and usually went about the streets on foot. On these occasions he was dressed carelessly, like any ordinary young man, and the better to ensure a complete disguise, he kept continually changing either the colour of his moustache or the colour and cut of his clothes. One evening, on leaving the opera, just as he was about to open his carriage door, a man approached him with a great air of mystery, and tendering a pamphlet, begged him to buy it. To get rid of the importunate fellow, his Majesty purchased the book, and never glanced at its contents until the following day.

Imagine his surprise and indignation! The following was the title of his purchase:

“Secret and Circumstantial Account of the Marriage of Anne of Austria, Queen of France, with the Abbe Jules Simon Mazarin, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. A new edition, carefully revised. Amsterdam.”

Grave and phlegmatic by nature, the King was always master of his feelings, a sign, this, of the noble-minded. He shut himself up in his apartment, so as to be quite alone, and hastily perused the libellous pamphlet.

According to the author of it, King Louis XIII., being weak and languid, and sapped moreover by secret poison, had not been able to beget any heirs. The Queen, who secretly was Mazarin’s mistress, had had twins by the Abbe, only the prettier of the two being declared legitimate. The other twin had been entrusted to obscure teachers, who, when it was time, would give him up.

The princess, so the writer added, stung by qualms of conscience, had insisted upon having her guilty intimacy purified by the sacrament of marriage, to which the prime minister agreed. Then, mentioning the names of such and such persons as witnesses, the book stated that “this marriage was solemnised on a night in February, 1643, by Cardinal de Sainte-Suzanne, a brother and servile creature of Mazarin’s.”

“This explains,” added the vile print, “the zeal, perseverance, and foolish ardour of the Queen Regent in defending her Italian against the just opposition of the nobles, against the formal charges of the magistrates, against the clamorous outcry, not only of Parisians, but of all France. This explains the indifference, or rather the firm resolve, on Mazarin’s part; never to take orders, but to remain simply ‘tonsure’ or ’minore’,—he who controls at least forty abbeys, as well as a bishopric.

“Look at the young monarch,” it continued, “and consider how closely he resembles his Eminence, the same haughty glance; the same uncontrolled passion for pompous buildings, luxurious dress and equipages; the same deference and devotion to the

Queen-mother; the same independent customs, precepts, and laws; the same aversion for the Parisians; the same resentment against the honest folk of the Fronde."

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This final phrase easily disclosed its origin; nor upon this point had his Majesty the slightest shadow of a doubt.

The same evening he sent full instructions to the lieutenant-general of police, and two days afterwards the nocturnal vendor of pamphlets found himself caught in a trap.

The King wished him to be brought to Saint Germain, so that he might identify him personally; and, as he pretended to be half-witted or an idiot, he was thrown half naked into a dungeon. His allowance of dry bread diminished day by day, at which he complained, and it was decided to make him undergo this grim ordeal.

Under the pressure of hunger and thirst, the prisoner at length made a confession, and mentioned a bookseller of the Quartier Latin, who, under the Fronde, had made his shop a meeting-place for rebels.

The bookseller, having been put in the Bastille, and upon the same diet as his salesman, stated the name of the Dutch printer who had published the pamphlet. They sought to extract more from him, and reduced his diet with such severity that he disclosed the entire secret.

This bookseller, used to a good square meal at home, found it impossible to tolerate the Bastille fare much longer. Bound hand and foot, at his final cross-examination he confessed that the work had emanated from the Cardinal de Retz, or certain of his party.

He was condemned to three years' imprisonment, and was obliged to sell his shop and retire to the provinces.

I once heard M. de Louvois tell this tale, and use it as a means of silencing those who regretted the absence of the exiled Cardinal-archbishop.

As to the libellous pamphlet itself, the clumsy nature of it was only too plain, for the King is no more like Mazarin than he is like the King of Ethiopia. On the contrary, one can easily distinguish in the general effect of his features a very close resemblance to King Louis XIII.

The libellous pamphlet stated that, on the occasion of the Infanta's first confinement, twins were born, and that the prettier of the two had been adopted, another blunder, this, of the grossest kind. A book of this sort could deceive only the working class and the Parisian lower orders, for folk about the Court, and even the bourgeoisie, know that it is impossible for a queen to be brought to bed in secret. Unfortunately for her, she has to comply with the most embarrassing rules of etiquette. She has to bear her final birth-pangs under an open canopy, surrounded at no great distance by all the princes of

the blood; they are summoned thither, and they have this right so as to prevent all frauds, subterfuges, or impositions.

When the King found the seditious book in question, the Queen, his mother, was ill and in pain; every possible precaution was taken to prevent her from hearing the news, and the lieutenant-general of police, having informed the King that two-thirds of the edition had been seized close to the Archbishop's palace, orders were given to burn all these horrible books by night, in the presence of the Marquis de Beringhen, appointed commissioner on this occasion.

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CHAPTER XV.

Monsieur le Duc d'Orleans Wishes to be Governor of a Province.—The King's Reply.—-He Requires a Fauteuil for His Wife.—Another Excellent Answer of the King's.

In marrying Monsieur, the King consulted only his well-known generosity, and the richly equipped household which he granted to this prince should assuredly have made him satisfied and content. The Chevalier de Lorraine and the Chevalier de Remecourt, two pleasant and baneful vampires whom Monsieur could refuse nothing, put it into his head that he should make himself feared, so as to lead his Majesty on to greater concessions, which they were perfectly able to turn to their own enjoyment and profit.

Monsieur began by asking for the governorship of a province; in reply he was told that this could not be, seeing that such appointments were never given to French princes, brothers of the King.

Monsieur le Duc d'Orleans hastened to point out that Gaston, son of Henri IV., had had such a post, and that the Duc de Verneuil, natural son of the same Henri, had one at the present time.

"That is true," replied the King, "but from my youth upward you have always heard me condemn such innovations, and you cannot expect me to do the very thing that I have blamed others for doing. If ever you were minded, brother, to rebel against my authority, your first care would, undoubtedly, be to withdraw to your province, where, like Gaston, your uncle, you would have to raise troops and money. Pray do not weary me with indiscretions of this sort; and tell those people who influence you to give you better advice for the future."

Somewhat abashed, the Duc d'Orleans affirmed that what he had said and done was entirely of his own accord.

"Did you speak of your own accord," said the King, "when insisting upon being admitted to the privy council? Such a thing can no longer be allowed. You inconsiderately expressed two different opinions, and since you cannot control your tongue, which is most undoubtedly your own, I have no power over it,—I, to whom it does not want to belong."

Then Monsieur le Duc d'Orleans added that these two refusals would seem less harsh, less painful to him, if the King would grant a seat in his own apartments, and in those of the Queen, to the Princess, his wife, who was a king's daughter.

"No, that cannot be," replied his Majesty, "and pray do not insist upon it. It is not I who have established the present customs; they existed long before you or me. It is in your interest, brother, that the majesty of the throne should not be weakened or altered; and

if, from Duc d'Orleans, you one day become King of France, I know you well enough to believe that you would never be lax in this matter. Before God, you and I are exactly the same as other creatures that live and breathe; before men we are seemingly extraordinary

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beings, greater, more refined, more perfect. The day that people, abandoning this respect and veneration which is the support and mainstay of monarchies,—the day that they regard us as their equals,—all the prestige of our position will be destroyed. Bereft of beings superior to the mass, who act as their leaders and supports, the laws will only be as so many black lines on white paper, and your armless chair and my fauteuil will be two pieces of furniture of the selfsame importance. Personally, I should like to gratify you in every respect, for the same blood flows in our veins, and we have loved each other from the cradle upwards. Ask of me things that are practicable, and you shall see that I will forestall your wishes. Personally, I daresay I care less about honorary distinctions than you do, and in Cabinet matters I am always considered to be simpler and more easy to deal with than such and such a one. One word more, and I have done. I will nominate you to the governorship of any province you choose, if you will now consent in writing to let proceedings be taken against you, just as against any ordinary gentleman, in case there should be sedition in your province, or any kind of disorder during your administration."

Hereupon young Philippe began to smile, and he begged the King to embrace him.

CHAPTER XVI.

Arms and Livery of Madame de Montespan.—Duchess or Princess.—Fresh Scandal Caused by the Marquis.—The Rue Saint Honore Affair.—M. de Ronancour.—-Separation of Body and Estate.

When leaving, despite himself, for the provinces, M. de Montespan wrote me a letter full of bitter insults, in which he ordered me to give up his coat-of-arms, his livery, and even his name.

This letter I showed to the King. For a while he was lost in thought, as usual on such occasions, and then he said to me:

"There's nothing extraordinary about the fellow's livery. Put your servants into pale orange with silver lace. Assume your old crest of Mortemart, and as regards name, I will buy you an estate with a pretty title."

"But I don't like pale orange," I instantly replied; "if I may, I should like to choose dark blue, and gold lace, and as regards crest, I cannot adopt my father's crest, except in lozenge form, which could not seriously be done. As it is your gracious intention to give me the name of an estate, give me (for to you everything is easy) a duchy like La Valliere, or, better still, a principality."

The King smiled, and answered, “It shall be done, madame, as you wish.”

The very, next day I went into Paris to acquaint my, lawyer with my intentions. Several magnificent estates were just then in the market, but only marquisates, counties, or baronies! Nothing illustrious, nothing remarkable! Duhamel assured me that the estate of Chabrillant, belonging to a spendthrift, was up for sale.

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“That,” said he, “is a sonorous name, the brilliant renown of which would only be enhanced by the title of princess.”

Duhamel promised to see all his colleagues in this matter, and to find me what I wanted without delay.

I quitted Paris without having met or recognised anybody, when, about twenty paces at the most beyond the Porte Saint Honor, certain sergeants or officials of some sort roughly stopped my carriage and seized my horses’ bridles “in the King’s name.”

“In the King’s name?” I cried, showing myself at the coach door.

“Insolent fellows! How dare you thus take the King’s name in vain?” At the same time I told my coachman to whip up his horses with the reins and to drive over these vagabonds. At a word from me the three footmen jumped down and did their duty by dealing out lusty thwacks to the sergeants. A crowd collected, and townsfolk and passers-by joined in the fray.

A tall, fine-looking man, wrapped in a dressing-gown, surveyed the tumult like a philosopher from his balcony overhead. I bowed graciously to him and besought him to come down. He came, and in sonorous accents exclaimed:

“Ho, there! serving-men of my lady, stop fighting, will you? And pray, sergeants, what is your business?”

“It is a disgrace,” cried they all, as with one breath. “Madame lets her scoundrelly footmen murder us, despite the name of his Majesty, which we were careful to utter at the outset of things. Madame is a person (as everybody in France now knows) who is in open revolt against her husband; she has deserted him in order to cohabit publicly with some one else. Her husband claims his coach, with his own crest and armorial bearings thereon, and we are here for the purpose of carrying out the order of one of the judges of the High Court.”

“If that be so,” replied the man in the dressing-gown, “I have no objection to offer, and though madame is loveliness itself, she must suffer me to pity her, and I have the honour of saluting her.”

So saying, he made me a bow and left me, without help of any sort, in the midst of this crazy rabble.

I was inconsolable. My coachman, the best fellow in the world, called out to him from the top of his bog, “Monsieur, pray procure help for my mistress,—for Madame la Marquise de Montespan.”

No sooner had he uttered these words than the gentleman came back again, while, among the lookers-on, some hissing was heard. He raised both hands with an air of authority, and speaking with quite incredible vehemence and fire, he successfully harangued the crowd.

“Madame does not refuse to comply with the requirements of justice,” he added firmly; “but madame, a member of the Queen’s household, is returning to Versailles, and cannot go thither on foot, or in some tumbledown vehicle. So I must beg these constables or sergeants (no matter which) to defer their arrest until to-morrow, and to accept me as surety. The French people is the friend of fair ladies; and true Parisians are incapable of harming or of persecuting aught that is gracious and beautiful.”

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All those present, who at first had hissed, replied to this speech by cries of “Bravo!” One of my men, who had been wounded in the scuffle, had his hand all bloody. A young woman brought some lavender-water, and bound up the wound with her white handkerchief, amid loud applause from the crowd, while I bowed my acknowledgments and thanks.

The King listened with interest to the account of the adventure that I have just described, and wished to know the name of the worthy man who had acted as my support and protector. His name was De Tarcy-Ronancour. The King granted him a pension of six thousand francs, and gave the Abbey of Bauvoir to his daughter.

As for me, I kept insisting with might and main for a separation of body and estate, which alone could put an end to all my anxiety. When a decree for such separation was pronounced at the Chatelet, and registered according to the rules, I set about arranging an appanage which, from the very first day, had seemed to me absolutely necessary for my position.

As ill-luck would have it, the judges left me the name of Montespan, which to my husband was so irksome, and to myself also; and the King, despite repeated promises, never relieved me of a name that it was very difficult to bear.

BOOK 2.

CHAPTER XVII.

Monsieur’s Jealousy.—Diplomacy.—Discretion.—The Chevalier de Lorraine’s Revenge.—The King’s Suspicions.—His Indignation.—Public Version of the Matter.—The Funeral Sermon.

After six months of wedlock, Henrietta of England had become so beautiful that the King drew every one’s attention to this change, as if he were not unmindful of the fact that he had given this charming person to his brother instead of reserving her for himself by marrying her.

Between cousins german attentions are permissible. The Court, however, was not slow to notice the attentions paid by the King to this young English princess, and Monsieur, wholly indifferent though he was as regarded his wife, deemed it a point of honour to appear offended thereat. Ever a slave to the laws of good breeding, the King showed much self-sacrifice in curbing this violent infatuation of his. (I was Madame’s maid of honour at the time.) As he contemplated a Dutch expedition, in which the help of England would have counted for much, he resolved to send a negotiator to King Charles. The young Princess was her brother’s pet; it was upon her that the King’s choice fell.

She crossed the Channel under the pretext of paying a flying visit to her native country and her brother, but, in reality, it was to treat of matters of the utmost importance.

Upon her return, Monsieur, the most curious and inquisitive of mortals, importuned her in a thousand ways, seeking to discover her secret; but she was a person both faithful and discreet. Of her interview and journey he got only such news as was already published on the housetops. At such reticence he took umbrage; he grumbled, sulked, and would not speak to his wife.

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The Chevalier de Lorraine, who in that illustrious and luckless household was omnipotent, insulted the Princess in the most outrageous manner. Finding such daily slights and affronts unbearable, Madame complained to the Kings of France and England, who both exiled the Chevalier.

Monsieur de Lorraine d'Armagnac, before leaving, gave instructions to Morel, one of Monsieur's kitchen officials, to poison the Princess, and this monster promptly executed the order by rubbing poison on her silver goblet.

I no longer belonged to Madame's household,—my marriage had caused a change in my duties; but ever feeling deep attachment for this adorable princess, I hastened to Saint Cloud directly news reached me of her illness. To my horror, I saw the sudden change which had come over her countenance; her horrible agony drew tears from the most callous, and approaching her I kissed her hand, in spite of her confessor, who sought to constrain her to be silent. She then repeatedly told me that she was dying from the effects of poison.

This she also told the King, whom she perceived shed tears of consternation and distress.

That evening, at Versailles, the King said to me, "If this crime is my brother's handiwork, his head shall fall on the scaffold."

When the body was opened, proof of poison was obtained, and poison of the most corrosive sort, for the stomach was eaten into in three places, and there was general inflammation.

The King summoned his brother, in order to force him to explain so heinous a crime. On perceiving his mien, Monsieur became pale and confused. Rushing upon him sword in hand, the King was for demolishing him on the spot. The captain of the guard hastened thither, and Monsieur swore by the Holy Ghost that he was guiltless of the death of his dear wife.

Leaving him a prey to remorse, if guilty he were, the King commanded him to withdraw, and then shut himself up in his closet to prepare a consolatory message to the English Court. According to the written statement, which was also published in the newspapers, Madame had been carried off by an attack of bilious colic. Five or six bribed physicians certified to that effect, and a lying set of depositions, made for mere form's sake, bore out their statements in due course.

The Abbe de Bossuet, charged to preach the funeral sermon, was apparently desirous of being as obliging as the doctors. His homily led off with such fulsome praise of Monsieur, that, from that day forward, he lost all his credit, and sensible people

thereafter only looked upon him as a vile sycophant, a mere dealer in flattery and fairy-tales.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Madame Scarron.—Her Petition.—The King's Aversion to Her.—She is Presented to Madame de Montespan.—The Queen of Portugal Thinks of Engaging Her.—Madame de Montespan Keeps Her Back.—The Pension Continued.—The King's Graciousness.—Rage of Mademoiselle d'Aumale.

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As all the pensions granted by the Queen-mother had ceased at her demise, the pensioners began to solicit the ministers anew, and all the petitions, as is customary, were sent direct to the King.

One day his Majesty said to me, “Have you ever met in society a young widow, said to be very pretty, but, at the same time, extremely affected? It is to Madame Scarron that I allude, who, both before and after widowhood, has resided at the Marais.”

I replied that Madame Scarron was an extremely pleasant person, and not at all affected. I had met her at the Richelieus’ or the Albrets’, where her charm of manner and agreeable wit had made her in universal request. I added a few words of recommendation concerning her petition, which, unfortunately, had just been torn up, and the King curtly rejoined, “You surprise me, madame; the portrait I had given to me of her was a totally different one.”

That same evening, when the young Marquis d’Alincour spoke to me about this petition which had never obtained any answer, I requested him to go and see Madame Scarron as soon as possible, and tell her that, in her own interest, I should be pleased to receive her.

She lost no time in paying me a visit. Her black attire served only to heighten the astounding whiteness of her complexion. Effusively thanking me for interesting myself in her most painful case, she added:

“There is, apparently, some obstacle against me. I have presented two petitions and two memoranda; being unsupported, both have been left unanswered, and I have now just made the following resolve, madame, of which you will not disapprove. M. Scarron, apparently well off, had only a life interest in his property. Upon his death, his debts proved in excess of his capital, and I, deeming it my duty to respect his intentions and his memory, paid off everybody, and left myself nothing. To-day, Madame la Princesse de Nemours wishes me to accompany her to Lisbon as her secretary, or rather as her friend.

“Being about to acquire supreme power as a sovereign, she intends, by some grand marriage, to keep me there, and then appoint me her lady-in-waiting.”

“And you submit without a murmur to such appalling exile?” I said to Madame Scarron. “Is such a pretty, charming person as yourself fitted for a Court of that kind, and for such an odd sort of climate?”

“Madame, I have sought to shut my eyes to many things, being solely conscious of the horribly forlorn condition in which I find myself in my native country.”

“Have you reckoned the distance? Did the Princess confess that she was going to carry you off to the other end of the world? For her city of Lisbon, surrounded by precipices, is more than three hundred leagues from Paris.”

“At the age of three I voyaged to America, returning hither when I was eleven.”

“I am vexed with Mademoiselle d’Aumale—

[Mademoiselle d’Aumale, daughter of the Duc de Nemours, of the House of Savoy. She was a blonde, pleasant-mannered enough, but short of stature. Her head was too big for her body; and this head of hers was full of conspiracies and coups d’etat. She dethroned her husband in order to marry his brother.—*Editor’s note*.]

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for wanting to rob us of so charming a treasure. But has she any right to act in this way? Do you think her capable of contributing to your pleasure or your happiness? This young Queen of Portugal, under the guise of good-humour, hides a violent and irascible temperament. I believe her to be thoroughly selfish; suppose that she neglects and despises you, after having profited by your company to while away the tedium of her journey? Take my word for it, madame, you had better stay here with us; for there is no real society but in France, no wit but in our great world, no real happiness but in Paris. Draw up another petition as quickly as possible, and send it to me. I will present it myself, and to tell you this is tantamount to a promise that your plea shall succeed."

Mademoiselle d'Aubigne, all flushed with emotion, assured me of her gratitude with the ingenuous eloquence peculiar to herself. We embraced as two friends of the Albret set should do, and three days later, the King received a new petition, not signed with the name of Scarron, but with that of D'Aubigne.

The pension of two thousand francs, granted three years before her death by the Queen-mother, was renewed. Madame Scarron had the honour of making her courtesy to the King, who thought her handsome, but grave in demeanour, and in a loud, clear voice, he said to her, "Madame, I kept you waiting; I was jealous of your friends."

The Queen of Portugal knew that I had deprived her of her secretary, fellow-gossip, reader, Spanish teacher, stewardess, confidante, and lady-in-waiting. She wrote to me complaining about this, and on taking leave of the King to go and reign in Portugal, she said, with rather a forced air of raillery:

"I shall hate you as long as I live, and if ever you do me the honour of paying me a visit some day at Lisbon, I'll have you burned for your pains."

Then she wanted to embrace me, as if we were equals, but this I deprecated as much from aversion as from respect.

CHAPTER XIX.

La Fontaine.—Boileau.—Moliere.—Corneille.—Louis XIV.'s Opinion of Each of Them.

The King's studies with his preceptor, Perefixe, had been of only a superficial sort, as, in accordance with the express order of the Queen-mother, this prelate had been mainly concerned about the health of his pupil, the Queen being, above all, desirous that he should have a good constitution. "The rest comes easily enough, if a prince have but nobility of soul and a sense of duty," as the Queen often used to say. Her words came true.

I came across several Spanish and Italian books in the library of the little apartments. The "Pastor Fido," "Aminta," and the "Gerusalemme " seemed to me, at first, to be the

favourite works. Then came Voiture's letters, the writings of Malherbe and De Balzac, the Fables of La Fontaine, the Satires of Boileau, and the delightful comedies of Moliere. Corneille's tragedies had been read, but not often.

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Until I came to Court, I had always looked upon Corneille as the greatest tragic dramatist in the world, and as the foremost of our poets and men of letters. The King saved me from this error.

Book in hand, he pointed out to me numberless faults of style, incoherent and fantastic imagery, sentiment alike exaggerated and a thousand leagues removed from nature. He considered, and still considers, Pierre Corneille to be a blind enthusiast of the ancients, whom we deem great since we do not know them. In his eyes, this declamatory poet was a republican more by virtue of his head than his heart or his intention,—one of those men more capricious than morose, who cannot reconcile themselves to what exists, and prefer to fall back upon bygone generations, not knowing how to live like friendly folk among their contemporaries.

He liked La Fontaine better, by reason of his extreme naturalness, but his unbecoming conduct at the time of the Fouquet trial proved painful to his Majesty, who considered the following verses passing strange:

". . . . Trust not in kings Their favour is but slippery; worse than that, It costs one dear, and errors such as these Full oft bring shame and scandal in their wake."

"Long live Moliere!" added his Majesty; "there you have talent without artifice, poetry without rhapsody, satire without bitterness, pleasantry that is always apt, great knowledge of the human heart, and perpetual raillery that yet is not devoid of delicacy and compassion. Moliere is a most charming man in every respect; I gave him a few hints for his 'Tartuffe,' and such is his gratitude that he wants to make out that, without me, he would never have written that masterpiece."

"You helped him, Sire, to produce it, and above all things, to carry out his main idea; and Moliere is right in thinking that, without a mind free from error, such as is yours, his masterpiece would never have been created."

"It struck me," continued the King, "that some such thing was indispensable as a counterbalance in the vast machinery of my government, and I shall ever be the friend and supporter, not of Tartuffes, but of the 'Tartuffe,' as long as I live."

"And Boileau, Sire?" I continued; "what place among your favourites does he fill?"

"I like Boileau," replied the prince, "as a necessary scourge, which one can pit against the bad taste of second-rate authors. His satires, of too personal, a nature, and consequently iniquitous, do not please me. He knows it, and, despite himself, he will amend this. He is at work upon an 'Ars Poetica,' after the manner of Horace. The little that he has read to me of this poem leads me to expect that it will be an important work. The French language will continue to perfect itself by the help of literature like this, and

Boileau, cruel though he be, is going to confer a great benefit upon all those who have to do with letters."

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CHAPTER XX.

Birth of the Comte de Vegin.—Madame Scarron as Governess.—The King's Continued Dislike of Her.—Birth of the Duc du Maine.—Marriage of the Nun.

The King became ever more attached to me personally, as also to the peculiarities of my temperament. He had witnessed with satisfaction the birth of Madame de la Valliere's two children, and I thought that he would have the same affection for mine. But I was wrong. It was with feelings of trepidation and alarm that he contemplated my approaching confinement. Had I given birth to a daughter, I am perfectly certain that, in his eyes, I should have been done for.

I gave birth to the first Comte de Vegin, and, grasping my hand affectionately, the King said to me, "Be of good courage, madame; present princes to the Crown, and let those be scandalised who will!" A few moments later he came back, and gave me a million for my expenses.

It was, however, mutually arranged that the newborn Infant should be recognised later on, and that, for the time being, I was to have him brought up in secrecy and mystery.

When dissuading Madame Scarron from undertaking a journey to Lisbon, I had my own private ends in view. I considered her peculiarly fitted to superintend the education of the King's children, and to maintain with success the air of mysterious reserve which for a while was indispensable to me. I deputed my brother, M. de Vivonne, to acquaint her with my proposals,—proposals which came from the King as well,—nor did I doubt for one moment as regarded her consent and complacency, being, as she was, alone in Paris.

"Madame," said M. de Vivonne to her, "the Marquise is overjoyed at being able to offer you an important position of trust, which will change your life once for all."

"The gentle, quiet life which, thanks to the kindness of the King, I now lead, is all that my ambition can desire," replied the widow, concealing her trouble from my brother; "but since the King wishes and commands it, I will renounce the liberty so dear to me, and will not hesitate to obey."

Accordingly she came. The King had a few moments' parley with her, in order to explain to her all his intentions relative to the new life upon which she was about to enter, and M. Bontems—[First Groom of the Chamber, and Keeper of the Privy Purse.]—furnished her with the necessary funds for establishing her household in suitable style.

A month afterwards, I went incognito to her lonely residence, situate amid vast kitchen-gardens between Vaugirard and the Luxembourg. The house was clean, commodious,

thoroughly well appointed, and, not being overlooked by neighbours, the secret could but be safely kept. Madame Scarron's domestics included two nurses, a waiting-maid, a physician, a courier, two footmen, a coachman, a postilion, and two cooks.

Being provided with an excellent coach, she came to Saint Germain every week, to bring me my son, or else news of his welfare.

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Her habitually sad expression somewhat pained the King. As I soon noticed their mutual embarrassment, I used to let Madame Scarron stay in an inner room all the time that his Majesty remained with me.

In the following year, I gave birth to the Duc du Maine. Mademoiselle d'Aubigne, who was waiting in the drawing-room, wrapped the child up carefully, and took it away from Paris with all speed.

On her way she met with an adventure, comic in itself, and which mortified her much. When told of it, I laughed not a little; and, in spite of all my excuses and expressions of regret, she always felt somewhat sore about this; in fact, she never quite got over it.

Between Marly and Ruel, two mounted police officers, in pursuit of a nun who had escaped from a convent, bethought themselves of looking inside Madame Scarron's carriage. Such inquisitiveness surprised her, and she put on her mask, and drew down the blinds. Observing that she was closely followed by these soldiers, she gave a signal to her coachman, who instantly whipped up his horses, and drove at a furious rate.

At Nanterre the gendarmes, being reinforced, cried out to the coachman to stop, and obliged Madame Scarron to get out. She was taken to a tavern close by, where they asked her to remove her mask. She made various excuses for not doing so, but at the mention of the lieutenant-general of police, she had to give in.

"Madame," inquired the brigadier, "have you not been in a nunnery?"

"Pray, monsieur, why do you ask?"

"Be good enough to answer me, madame; repeat my question, and I insist upon a reply. I have received instructions that I shall not hesitate to carry out."

"I have lived with nuns, but that, monsieur, was a long while ago."

"It is not a question of time. What was your motive for leaving these ladies, and who enabled you to do so?"

"I left the convent after my first communion. I left it openly, and of my own free will. Pray be good enough to allow me to continue my journey."

"On leaving the convent, where did you go?"

"First to one of my relatives, then to another, and at last to Paris, where I got married."

"Married? What, madame, are you married? Oh, young lady, what behaviour is this? Your simple, modest mien plainly shows what you were before this marriage. But why did you want to get married?"

As he said this, the little Duc du Maine, suffering, perhaps, from a twinge of colic, began to cry. The brigadier, more amazed than ever, ordered the infant to be shown as well.

Seeing that she could make no defence, Madame Scarron began to shed tears, and the officer, touched to pity, said:

“Madame, I am sorry for your fault, for, as I see, you are a good mother. My orders are to take you to prison, and thence to the convent specified by the archbishop, but I warn you that if we catch the father of your child, he will hang. As for you, who have been seduced, and who belong to a good family, tell me one of your relatives with whom you are on friendly terms, and I will undertake to inform them of your predicament.”

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Madame Scarron, busy in soothing the Duc du Maine, durst not explain for fear of aggravating matters, but begged the brigadier to take her back to Saint Germain.

At this juncture my brother arrived on his way back to Paris. He recognised the carriage, which stood before the inn, with a crowd of peasants round it, and hastened to rescue the governess, for he soon succeeded in persuading these worthy police officers that the sobbing dame was not a runaway nun, and that the new-born infant came of a good stock.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Saint Denis View.—Superstitions, Apparitions.—Projected Enlargement of Versailles.—Fresh Victims for Saint Denis.

One evening I was walking at the far end of the long terrace of Saint Germain. The King soon came thither, and pointing to Saint Denis, said, “That, madame, is a gloomy, funereal view, which makes me displeased and disgusted with this residence, fine though it be.”

“Sire,” I replied, “in no other spot could a more magnificent view be found. Yonder river winding afar through the vast plain, that noble forest divided by hunting roads into squares, that Calvary poised high in air, those bridges placed here and there to add to the attractiveness of the landscape, those flowery meadows set in the foreground as a rest to the eye, the broad stream of the Seine, which seemingly is fain to flow at a slower rate below your palace windows,—I do not think that any more charming combination of objects could be met with elsewhere, unless one went a long way from the capital.”

“The chateau of Saint Germain no longer pleases me,” replied the King. “I shall enlarge Versailles and withdraw thither. What I am going to say may astonish you, perhaps, as it comes from me, who am neither a whimsical female nor a prey to superstition. A few days before the Queen, my mother, had her final seizure, I was walking here alone in this very spot. A reddish light appeared above the monastery of Saint Denis, and a cloud which rose out of the ruddy glare assumed the shape of a hearse bearing the arms of Austria. A few days afterwards my poor mother was removed to Saint Denis. Four or five days before the horrible death of our adorable Henrietta, the arrows of Saint Denis appeared to me in a dream covered in dusky flames, and amid them I saw the spectre of Death, holding in his hand the necklaces and bracelets of a young lady. The appalling death of my cousin followed close upon this presage. Henceforth, the view of Saint Denis spoils all these pleasant landscapes for me. At Versailles fewer objects confront the eye; a park of that sort has its own wealth of natural beauty, which suffices. I shall make Versailles a delightful resort, for which France will be grateful to me, and

which my successors can neither neglect nor destroy without bringing to themselves dishonour.”

I sympathised with the reasons which made Saint Germain disagreeable to his Majesty. Next summer the causes for such aversion became more numerous, as the King had the misfortune to lose the daughters which the Queen bore him, and they were carried to Saint Denis.

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CHAPTER XXII.

M. de Lauzun.—His Pretensions.—Erroneous Ideas of the Public.—The War in Candia.—M. de Lauzun Thinks He Will Secure a Throne for Himself.—The King Does Not Wish This.

The Marquis de Guilain de Lauzun was, and still is, one of the handsomest men at Court. Before my marriage, vanity prompted him to belong to the list of my suitors, but as his reputation in Paris was that of a man who had great success with the ladies, my family requested him either to come to the point or to retire, and he withdrew, though unwilling to break matters off altogether.

When he saw me in the bonds of matrimony, and enjoying its liberty, he recommenced his somewhat equivocal pursuit of me, and managed to get himself talked about at my expense. Society was unjust; M. de Lauzun only dared to pay me homage of an insipid sort. He had success enough in other quarters, and I knew what I owed to some one as well as what I owed to myself.

Ambition is the Marquis's ruling passion. The simple role of a fine gentleman is, in his eyes, but a secondary one; his Magnificency requires a far more exalted platform than that.

When he knew that war in Candia had broken out, and which side the kings of Christendom would necessarily take, his ideas became more exalted still. He bethought himself of the strange fortunes of certain valiant warriors in the time of the Crusades. He saw that the Lorraines, the Bouillons, and the Lusignans had won sceptres and crowns, and he flattered himself that the name of Lauzun might in this vast adventurous career gain glory too.

He begged me to get him a command in this army of Candia, wherein the King had just permitted his own kinsmen to go and win laurels for themselves. He was already a full colonel of dragoons, and one of the captains of the guard. The King, who till then liked him well enough, considered such a proposition indecent, and, gauging or not gauging his intentions, he postponed until a later period these aspirations of Lauzun to the post of prince or sovereign.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The Abbe d'Estrees.—Singular Offers of Service.—Madame de Montespan Declines His Offer of Intercession at the Vatican.—He Revenges Himself upon the King of Portugal.—Difference between a Fair Man and a Dark.

Since the reign of Gabrielle d'Estrees, who died just as she was about to espouse her King, the D'Estrees family were treated at Court more with conventional favour than with esteem. The first of that name was lieutenant-general, destined to wield the baton of a French marshal, on account of his ancestry as well as his own personal merit. The Abbe d'Estrees passed for being in the Church what M. de Lauzun was in society,—a man who always met with success, and who also was madly ambitious.

While still very young, he had been appointed to the bishopric of Laon, which, in conjunction with two splendid abbeys, brought him in a handsome revenue. The Duc and Duchesse de Vendome were as fond of him as one of their own kin, doing nothing without first consulting him, everywhere praising and extolling his abilities, which were worthy of a ministry.

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This prelate desired above all things to be made a cardinal. Under Henri IV. he could easily have had his wish, but at that time he was not yet born. He imagined that on the strength of my credit he could procure the biretta for himself.

As soon as he saw me recognised as a mistress, he paid assiduous court to me, never losing an opportunity of everywhere sounding my praise. One day he said to me: “Madame, every one pities you on account of the vexation and grief which the Marquis de Montespan has caused you. If you will confide in me,—that is, if you will let me represent your interests with the Cardinals and the Holy Father,—I heartily offer you my services as mediator and advocate with regard to the question of nullity. At an early age I studied theology and ecclesiastical law. Your marriage may be considered null and void, according to this or that point of view. You know that upon the death of the Princesse de Nemours, Mademoiselle de Nemours and Mademoiselle d’Aumale, her two daughters, came to reside with Madame de Vendome, my cousin, a relative and a friend of their mother. The eldest I first of all married to Duc Charles de Lorraine, heir to the present Duc de Lorraine. His Majesty did not approve of this marriage, which was contrary to his politics. His Majesty deigned to explain himself and open out to me upon the subject. I at once consulted my books, and found all the means necessary for dissolving such a marriage. So true, indeed is this, that I forthwith remarried Mademoiselle de Nemours to the Duc de Savoie. This took place under your very eyes. Soon afterwards I married her younger sister to the King of Portugal, and accompanied her to Lisbon, where the Portuguese gave her a fairly warm reception. Her young husband is tall and fair, with a pleasant, distinguished face; he loves his wife, and is only moderately beloved in return. Is she wrong or is she right? Now, I will tell you. The monarch is well-made, but a childish infirmity has left one whole side of him somewhat weak, and he limps. Mademoiselle d’Aumale, or to speak more correctly, the Queen of Portugal, writes letter upon letter to me, describing her situation. She believed herself pregnant, and had even announced the news to Madame de Vendome, as well as to Madame de Savoie, her sister. Now it appears that this is not the case. She is vexed and disgusted. I am about to join her at Lisbon. She is inclined to place the crown upon the young brother of the King, requesting the latter to seek the seclusion of a monastery. I can see that this new idea of the youthful Queen’s will necessitate my visiting the Vatican. Allow me, madame, to have charge of your interests. Do not have the slightest fear but that I shall protect them zealously and intelligently, killing thus two birds with one stone.”

“Pray accept my humble thanks,” I replied to the Bishop. “The reigning Sovereign Pontiff has never shown me any favour whatever, and is in nowise one of my friends. What you desire to do for me at Rome deserves some signal mark of gratitude in return, but I cannot get you a cardinal’s hat, for a thousand reasons.

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“Mademoiselle de Nemours, when leaving us, promised to hate me as long as she lived, and to have me burnt at an ‘auto da fe’ whenever she got the chance. Do not let her know that you have any regard for me, or you might lose her affection.

“I hope that the weak side of her husband, the King, may get stronger, and that you will not help to put the young monarch in a convent of monks.

“In any case, my lord Bishop, do not breathe it to a living soul that you have told me of such strange resolutions as these; for my own part, I will safely keep your secret, and pray God to have you in his holy keeping.”

The Bishop of Laon was not a man to be rebuffed by pleasantry such as this. He declared the King of Portugal to be impotent, after what the Queen had expressly stated. The Pope annulled the marriage, and the Queen courageously wedded her husband’s brother, who had no congenital weakness of any sort, and who was, as every one knew, of dark complexion.

At the request of the Queen, the Bishop of Laon was afterwards presented with the hat, and is, today, my lord Cardinal d’Estrees.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Mademoiselle de Valois.—Mademoiselle d’Orleans.—Mademoiselle d’Alencon.—M. de Savoie.—His Love-letters.—His Marriage with Mademoiselle de Valois.—M. de Guise and Mademoiselle d’Alencon.—Their Marriage Ceremony.—Madame de Montespan’s Dog.—Mademoiselle d’Orleans.—Her Marriage with the Duke of Tuscany.—The Bishop de Bonzy.

By his second wife, Marguerite de Lorraine, Gaston de France had three daughters, and being devoid of energy, ability, or greatness of character, they did not object when the King married them to sovereigns of the third-rate order.

Upon these three marriages I should like to make some remarks, on account of certain singular details connected therewith, and because of the joking to which they gave rise.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier had flatly refused the Duc de Savoie, because Madame de Savoie, daughter of Henri IV., was still living, ruling her estate like a woman of authority; and therefore, to this stepmother, a king’s daughter, Mademoiselle had to give way, she being but the daughter of a French prince who died in disgrace and was forgotten.

Being refused by the elder princess, M. de Savoie, still quite young, sought the hand of her sister, Mademoiselle de Valois. He wrote her a letter which, unfortunately, was somewhat singular in style, and which, unfortunately too, fell into the hands of

Mademoiselle de Montpensier. Like her late father, Gaston, she plumed herself upon her wit and eloquence; she caused several copies of the effusion to be printed and circulated at Court. I will include it in these Memoirs, as it cannot but prove entertaining. The heroes of Greece, and even of Troy, possibly delivered their compliments in somewhat better fashion, if we may judge by the version preserved for us by Homer.

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From his royal highness the Duc de Savoie to his most honoured cousin, *mademoiselle de Valois*.

My dear cousin:—As the pen must needs perform the office of the tongue, and as it expresses the feelings of my heart, I doubt not but that I am at great disadvantage, since the depth of these feelings it cannot express, nor rightly convince you that, having given all myself to you, nothing remains either to give or to desire, save to find such affection pleasantly reciprocated. Thus, in these lines, I earnestly beseech you to return my love,—lines which give you the first hints of that fire which your many lovely qualities have lighted in my soul. They create in me an inconceivable impatience closely to contemplate that which now I admire at a distance, and to convince you by various proofs that, with matchless loyalty and passion,

I am, dear Cousin, Your most humble slave and servant, *Emmanuel*.

Gentle as an angel, Mademoiselle de Valois desired just what everybody else did. The youngest of the three princesses was named Mademoiselle d'Alencon. With a trifle more wit and dash, she could have maintained her position at Court, where so charming a face as hers was fitted to make its mark; but her fine dark eyes did but express indifference and vacuity, seemingly unconscious of the pleasure to be got in this world when one is young, good-looking, shapely, a princess of the blood, and cousin german of the King besides.

Marguerite de Lorraine, her mother, married her to the Duc de Guise, their near relative, who, without ambition or pretension, seemed almost astonished to see that the King gave, not a dowry, but a most lovely verdure—[Drawing-room tapestry, much in vogue at that time]—, and an enamelled dinner-service.

The marriage was celebrated at the chateau, without any special ceremonies or preparations; so much so that two cushions, which had been forgotten, had to be hastily fetched. I saw what was the matter, and motioning the two attendants of the royal sacristy, I whispered to them to fetch what was wanted from my own apartment.

Not knowing to what use these cushions were to be put, my 'valet de chambre' brought the flowered velvet ones, on which my dogs were wont to lie. I noticed this just as their Highnesses were about to kneel down, and I felt so irresistibly inclined to laugh that I was obliged to retire to my room to avoid bursting out laughing before everybody.

Fortunately the Guises did not get to know of this little detail until long after, or they might have imagined that it was a planned piece of malicious mockery. However, it is only fair to admit that the marriage was treated in a very off-hand way, and it is that which always happens to people whose modesty and candour hinder them from posing and talking big when they get the chance. A strange delusion, truly!

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Mademoiselle d'Orleans, the eldest child of the second marriage, is considered one of the prettiest and most graceful of blondes. Her endowments were surely all that a princess could need, if one except reserve in speaking, and a general dignity of deportment.

When it was a question of giving her to Prince de Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, she was all the while sincerely attached to handsome Prince Charles de Lorraine, her maternal cousin. But the King, who, in his heart of hearts, wanted to get hold of Lorraine for himself, could not sanction this union; nay, he did more: he opposed it. Accordingly the Princess, being urged to do so by her mother, consented to go to Italy, and as we say at Court, expatriate herself.

The Bishop of Nziers, named De Bonzy, the Tuscan charge d'afaires, came, on behalf of the Medici family, to make formal demand of her hand, and had undertaken to bring her to her husband with all despatch. He had undertaken an all too difficult task.

"Monsieur de Bonzy," said she to the prelate, "as it is you who here play the part of interpreter and cavalier of honour as it is you, moreover, who have to drag me away from my native country, I have to inform you that it is my intention to leave it as slowly as possible, and to contemplate it at my leisure before quitting it forever."

And, indeed, the Princess desired to make a stay more or less long in every town en route. If, on the way, she noticed a convent of any importance, she at once asked to be taken thither, and, in default of other pastime or pretext, she requested them to say complines with full choral accompaniment.

If she saw some castle or other, she inquired the name of its owner, and, though she hardly knew the inmates, was wont to invite herself to dinner and supper.

The Bishop of Beziers grew disconsolate. He wrote letters to the Court, which he sent by special courier, and I said to the King, "Pray, Sire, let her do as she likes; she will surely have time enough to look at her husband later on."

Near Saint Fargeau, when the Princess heard that this estate was her sister's, Mademoiselle sent a gentleman with her compliments, to ask if she would give her shelter for twenty-four hours. Instead of twenty-four hours' stay, she proceeded to take up her abode there; and, provided with a gun and dogs, she wandered all over the fields, always accompanied by the worthy Bishop, at whose utter exhaustion she was highly amused.

At length she left her native land, and joined her husband, who seemed somewhat sulky at all this delay.

“I cannot love you just yet,” quoth she, weeping; “my heart is still another’s, and it is impossible to break off such attachments without much time and much pain. Pray treat me with gentleness, for if you are severe, I shall not do you any harm, but I shall go back to the Luxembourg to my mother.”

CHAPTER XXV.

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Random Recollections.—Madame de Montespan Withdraws from Politics.—The Queen's Dowry.—First Campaign in Flanders.—The Queen Meets the King.—Some One Else Sees Him First.—The Queen's Anger at La Valliere.

In compiling these Memoirs, I have never pretended to keep a strictly regular diary, where events are set down chronologically and in their proper order. I write as I recollect; some of my recollections are chronicled sooner, and others later. Thus it happens that the King's first conquests are only now mentioned in the present chapter, although they occurred in the year 1667, at the beginning of my credit and my favour.

I was naturally inclined for politics, and should have liked the hazard of the game; but I suppose that the King considered me more frivolous and giddy than I really was, for, despite the strong friendship with which he has honoured me, he has never been gracious enough to initiate me into the secrets of the Cabinet and the State.

If this sort of exclusion or ostracism served to wound my self-respect, it nevertheless had its special advantage for me, for in epochs less glorious or less brilliant (that is to say, in times of failure), they could never cavil at advice or counsel which I had given, nor blame me for the shortcomings of my proteges or creatures.

The King was born ambitious. This prince will not admit it; he gives a thousand reasons in justification of his conquests. But the desire for conquest proves him to be a conqueror, and one is not a conqueror without being ambitious. I think I can explain myself by mentioning the treaty drawn up at the time of his marriage. It was stipulated that the Infanta should have rights over the Netherlands, then possessed by Don Balthazar, Prince of Spain. But it was agreed to give the Princess Maria Theresa a handsome dowry, in lieu of which she signed a paper renouncing her rights.

Her father, King Philip IV., died at the close of the year 1665, and the Queen-mother besought our King not to take advantage of the minority of the young Charles II., his brother-in-law, by troubling Spain afresh with his pretensions.

Hardly had Anne of Austria been interred, when the King informed the Spanish Court of his claims. In the spring of the following year, he himself led an army into Spanish Flanders, where his appearance was not expected. These fine provinces, badly provisioned and badly fortified, made but a merely formal resistance to Conde, Turenne, Crequi, and all our illustrious generals, who, led by the King in person, wrought the troops to a wild pitch of enthusiasm.

The King had left the Infanta, his wife, at Compiegne, and it was there that we awaited either news of the army or orders to advance.

From Compiegne we went to La Fere, where we heard that the King was coming to receive us. Suddenly it was rumoured that the Duchesse de la Valliere had just arrived, and that she was acting in accordance with orders received.

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The Queen began to weep, and, sobbing, bewailed her destiny. She was seized by convulsions and violent retching, much to the alarm of her ladies and the physicians.

Next day, after mass, the Duchesse and the Marquise de la Valliere came to make their courtesy to the Queen, who, staring at them, said not a word. When dinner-time came, she gave orders that no food should be served to them, but the officials supplied this to them in secret, fearing to be compromised.

In the coach, the Queen complained greatly of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and the Princesse de Bade, one of the ladies-in-waiting, said to me, “Could you have believed that, with such gentleness, one could also display such impudence?” The Duchesse de Montausier, I know not why, expressed herself to me in the same terms of amazement. I replied that, “Were I in that fair lady’s place, I should dare to show myself least of all to the Queen, for fear of grieving her Majesty.” I was often rebuked afterwards for this speech, which, I admit, I delivered somewhat thoughtlessly.

On leaving La Fere, the Queen gave particular orders to let the Duchess have no relays, so that she could not follow; but the Master of the Horse had caused these to be brought to her from Versailles, so nothing was wanting.

On putting my head out of window, when we turned a corner of the road, I saw that La Valliere’s coach, with six horses, was following quite close behind; but I took care not to tell the Queen, who believed those ladies were a long way off.

All at once, on a height, we saw a body of horsemen approaching. The King could be plainly distinguished, riding at their head. La Valliere’s coach immediately left the main road, and drove across country, while the Queen called out to have it stopped; but the King embraced its occupants, and then it drove off at a gallop to a chateau already fixed upon for its reception.

I like to be just, and it is my duty to be so. This mark of irreverence towards the Queen is the only one for which Mademoiselle de la Valliere can be blamed; but she would never have done such a thing of her own accord; it was all the fault of the Marquise, blinded as she was by ambition.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The King Contemplates the Conquest of Holland.—The Grand Seignior’s Embassy.—Madame de Montespan’s Chance of Becoming First Lady of the Harem.—Anxiety to Conclude Negotiations with so Passionate an Ambassador.—Help Sent to Candia.—With Disastrous Results.—Death of the Duc de Beaufort.—Why It Is Good to Carry About the Picture of One’s Lady-love.

Having gained possession of the Netherlands in the name of the Infanta, his consort, the King seriously contemplated the subjugation of the Dutch, and possibly also the invasion of these rich countries. Meanwhile, he privately intimated as much to the princes of Europe, promising to each of them some personal and particular advantage in exchange for a guarantee of assistance or neutrality in this matter.

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The Grand Seignior, hearing that the Pope and the Venetians were urging our Cabinet to come to the help of Candia,

[This important island of Candia, the last powerful bulwark of Christendom against the Turk, belonged at that time to Venice. *Editor's note*.]

lost no time in sending a splendid embassy to Paris, to congratulate the young King upon his conquest of Flanders, and to predict for him all success in the paths along which ambition might lead him.

Being naturally fond of show and display, the King left nothing undone which might give brilliance to the reception of so renowned an embassy. The Court wore an air of such splendour and magnificence that these Mussulmans, used though they were to Asiatic pomp, seemed surprised and amazed at so brilliant a reception, at which nothing, indeed, had been forgotten.

The ambassador-in-chief was a pleasant young man, tall, shapely, and almost as good-looking as the King. This Turk had splendidly shaped hands, and eyes that shone with extraordinary brilliance. He conceived an ardent passion for me, a passion that went to such lengths that he sacrificed thereto all his gravity, all his stately Ottoman demeanour.

When I passed by, he saluted me, placing his hand to his heart, stopping to gaze at me intently, and watch me as long as possible. Being introduced (either by chance or design) to my Paris jeweller, he seized a gold box upon which he saw my portrait, and, giving the jeweller a considerable sum, refused to part with the picture, however much they begged him to do so.

One fine morning, in spite of his turban, he got into the large chapel of the chateau during mass, and while the Court of France was adoring the true God, Ibrahim knelt down in front of me, which made every one laugh, including the King.

All such absurdities caused the ministers to give him the required reply with all speed, and they were not backward in granting him a farewell audience.

When the time came for him to go, Ibrahim burst into tears, exclaiming that, in his country, I should be in the first rank, whereas at Saint Germain I was only in the second; and he charged his interpreter to tell the King of France that the unhappy Ibrahim would never get over this visit to his Court.

The King replied, with a smile, that he had "better become a Christian, and stay with us."

At these words the ambassador turned pale, and glancing downwards, withdrew, forgetting to salute his Majesty.

Then he returned, and made all his bows quite nicely; nor would he quit the capital before he had sent me his portrait, some pretty verses in Italian, which he had caused to be composed, and besides this, a set of amber ornaments, the most beautiful of any worn by ladies of the harem.

Despite this imposing and costly embassy, despite the ambassador's compliment, who referred to the King as "Eldest Son of the Sun," this same Son of the Sun despatched seven thousand picked troops to help Venice against the Turks. To this detachment the Venetian Republic sent fourteen vessels laden with their own soldiers, under the leadership of our Duc de Beaufort, Grand Admiral of France, and Lieutenant-General Duc de Navailles.

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Had these troops arrived in the nick of time, they would have saved Candia, but by a sudden accident all was lost, and after so terrible a reverse, the Isle of Candia, wrested from the potentates of Europe and Christendom, fell a prey to the infidels.

A pistol-shot fired at a Turk blew up several barrels of gunpowder belonging to a large magazine captured from the enemy. Our troops, thinking that a mine had been sprung, fled in headlong confusion, never even caring to save their muskets. The Turks butchered them in the most frightful manner. In this huge massacre, some of our most promising officers perished, and the Duc de Beaufort was never found either among the wounded or the slain.

The young Comte de Guiche, of whom I shall presently speak, had his hand smashed, and if on his breast he had not worn a portrait of Madame,—[The ill-fated Duchesse d'Orleans.]—the sword of a Turk would have struck him to the heart.

The King felt sorry that he had only despatched seven thousand men thither. But when M. de Louvois informed him that the whole detachment had been almost annihilated, he regretted having sent so many.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Danger of Harbouring a Malcontent.—The King's Policy with Regard to Lorraine.—-Advice of Madame de Thianges.—Conquest of Lorraine.—The Lorraines Surrender to the Emperor.

The petty princes placed too near a great potentate are just like the shrubs that grow beside an old oak tree, whose broad shade blights them, while its roots undermine and sap them, till at last they are weakened and destroyed.

When young Gaston, son of Henri IV., seeking to get free from Richelieu's insolent despotism, withdrew to the Duc de Lorraine, the Cardinal uttered a cry of joy, and remarked to Louis XIII., that vindictive, jealous prince, "Oh, what a good turn the Duc d'Orleans has just done you to-day! By going to stay with M. de Lorraine, he will oust him!"

The Court soon got to know that M. de Lorraine had given Monsieur a most cordial reception, and that the latter, who, like his father, was very susceptible, had proposed for the hand of the Princesse Marguerite, a charming person, and sister to the reigning Duke.

King Louis XIII. openly opposed this marriage, which nevertheless was arranged for, and celebrated partly at Nancy and partly at Luneville.

Such complacence earned for M. de Lorraine the indignation of the King and his minister, the Cardinal. They waged against him a war of revenge, or rather of spoliation, and as the prince, being unable then to offer any serious resistance, was sensible enough to surrender, he got off with the sacrifice of certain portions of his territory. He also had to witness the demolition by France of the fine fortifications of Nancy.

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Things were at this juncture when our young King assumed the management of affairs. The policy pursued by Louis XIII. and his Cardinal seemed to him an advantageous one, also; he lured to his capital M. de Lorraine, who was still young and a widower, and by every conceivable pretext he was prevented from marrying again. Lorraine had a nephew,—[Prince Charles.]—a young man of great promise, to whom the uncle there and then offered to make over all his property and rights, if the King would honour him with his protection and marry him to whomsoever he fancied. The King would not consent to a marriage of any kind, having a firm, persistent desire in this way to make the line of these two princes extinct.

I was talking about this one day in the King's chamber, when my sister De Thianges had the hardihood to say:

"I hear that the Messieurs de Lorraine are about to take their departure, and that, having lost all hope of making themselves beloved, they have resolved to make themselves feared."

The King looked impassively at my sister, showing not a sign of emotion, and he said to her:

"Do you visit there?"

"Sire," replied Madame de Thianges, unabashed, "augment the number, not of your enemies, but of your friends; of all policies that is the best." The King never said a word.

Soon afterwards, the Lorraines appealed secretly to the Empire and the Emperor. The King was only waiting for such an opportunity; he forthwith sent Marshal de Crequi at the head of twenty thousand men, who invaded Lorraine, which had already been ravaged, and the Duchy of Bar, which had not.

The manifesto stated the motives for such complaint, alleging that the Duke had not been at the pains to observe the Treaty of Metz with regard to the surrender of Harsal, and, as a punishment, his entire sovereignty would be confiscated.

A large army then marched upon Peronne; it had been formed at Saint Germain, and was divided into two columns. The first went to join the Duc de Crequi, who occupied Lorraine; the other took up its position near Sedan, to keep the Flemish and Dutch in check in case of any attempted rebellion.

The Lorraines, in despair, gave themselves up to the Emperor, who, aware of their fine soldierly qualities, bestowed upon both high posts of command. They caused great losses to France and keen anxiety to her King.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Embassy of the King of Arda.—Political Influence Exercised by the Good Looks of Madame de Montespan.—Gifts of the Envoys.—What the Comte de Vegin Takes for a Horse.—Madame de Montespan Entertains Them in Her Own House.—Three Missionaries Recommend Her to Them.

From the wilds of Africa, the King of Arda sent an embassy no less brilliant and far more singular than that of the Turks. This African prince, hearing of the French King's noble character and of his recent conquests, proposed to form with him a political and commercial alliance, and sought his support against the English and the Dutch, his near neighbours.

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The King said to me; “Madame, I believe Ibrahim has proclaimed your charms even to the Africans; you bring embassies to me from the other end of the globe. For Heaven’s sake, don’t show yourself, or these new envoys will utterly lose their heads, too.”

The envoys referred to were notable for their rich, semibarbaric dress, but not one of them was like Ibrahim. They brought the King a present, in the shape of a tiger, a panther, and two splendid lions. To the Queen they gave a sort of pheasant covered with gold and blue feathers, which burst out laughing while looking intensely grave, to the great diversion of every one. They also brought to the princess a little blackamoor, extremely well-made, who could never grow any bigger, and of which she, unfortunately, grew very fond.—[Later on the writer explains herself more fully.—*Editor’s note*.]

These Africans also came in ceremonious fashion to present their respects to me. They greeted me as the “second spouse of the King” (which greatly offended the Queen), and in the name of the King of Arda, they presented me with a necklace of large pearls, and two bracelets of priceless value,—splendid Oriental sapphires, the finest in the world.

I gave orders for my children to be brought to them. On seeing these, they prostrated themselves. The little Comte de Vein, profiting by their attitude, began to ride pick-a-back on one of them, who did not seem offended at this, but carried the child about for a little while.

The ceremony of their presentation will, doubtless, have been described in various other books; but I cannot forbear mentioning one incident. As soon as the curtains of the throne were drawn aside, and they saw the King wearing all his decorations and ablaze with jewels, they put their hands up to their eyes, pretending to be dazzled by the splendour of his presence, and then they flung themselves down at full length upon the ground, the better to express their adoration.

I invited them to visit me at the Chateau de Clagny, my favourite country-seat, and there I caused a sumptuous collation to be served to them in accordance with their tastes. Plain roast meat they ate with avidity; other dishes seemed to inspire them with distrust, —they looked closely at them, and then went off to something else.

I do not interfere in affairs of State, but I wanted to know from what source in so remote a country they could have obtained any positive information as to the secrets of the Court of France. Through the interpreter, they replied that three travellers—-missionaries—had stayed for a couple of months with their master, the King of Arda, and the good fathers had told them “that Madame de Montespan was the second spouse of the great King.” These same missionaries had chosen the sort of presents which they were to give me.

CHAPTER XXIX.

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Comte de Vegin, Abbe of Saint Germain des Pres.—Revenues Required, but Not the Cowl.—Discussion between the King and the Marquise.—Madame Scarron Chosen as Arbiter.—An Unanswerable Argument.

The wealthy abbey of Saint Germain des Pres—[Yielding a revenue of five hundred thousand livres.]—was vacant; the King appointed thereto his son, the Comte de Vegin, and as the Benedictine monks secretly complained that they should have given to them as chief a child almost still in its cradle, the King instructed the grand almoner to remind them that they had had as abbes in preceding reigns princes who were married and of warlike tastes. "Such abuses," said the prelate, "were more than reprehensible; his Majesty is incapable of wishing to renew them. As to the Prince's extreme youth, that is in no way prejudicial to you, my brethren, as monseigneur will be suitably represented by his vicar-general until such time as he is able to assume the governorship himself."

"Is it your intention to condemn my son to be an ecclesiastic?" I asked the King, in amazement.

"Madame, these are my views," he answered: "If the Comte de Vegin as he grows up should continue to show pluck and a taste for things military, as by birth he is bound to do, we will relieve him of the abbey on the eve of his marriage, while he will have profited thereby up to that time. If, on the contrary, my son should show but inferior mental capacity, and a pusillanimous character, there will be no harm in his remaining among the Church folk; he will be far better off there than elsewhere. The essential thing for a parent is to study carefully and in good time the proper vocation for his children; the essential thing for the ruler of an Empire is to employ the right people to do the work in hand."

"Will my son, on receiving this abbey, have to wear the dress of his office?" I asked. "Imagine the Comte de Vegin an abbe!"

"Do not feel the slightest repugnance on that score," added the King. "The Electors of the German Empire are nearly all of them ecclesiastics; our own history of France will show you that the sons of kings were bishops or mere abbes; the grandson of the Duc de Savoie is a cardinal and an archbishop, and King Charles X., my grandfather's paternal uncle, nearly became King of France and cardinal at one and the same time."

At this moment Madame Scarron came in. "Madame, we will make you our judge in the argument that we are now having," said his Majesty. "Do you think there is any objection to our giving to little Vegin the dress of an abbe?"

"On the contrary, Sire," replied the governess, smiling, "such a dress will inspire him betimes with reserve and modesty, strengthening his principles, and making far more profitable to him the excellent education which he is now receiving."

“I am obliged to you for your opinion,” said the King, “and I flatter myself, madame, that you see things in the same light that I do.”

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When the King had gone, Madame Scarron asked me why I disapproved of this abbey.

“I do not wish to deny so rich a benefice to my son,” I replied, “but it seems to me that he might enjoy the revenues therefrom, without being obliged to wear the livery. Is not the King powerful enough to effect this?”

“You are hardly just, madame,” replied the governess, in a serious tone. “If our religion be a true one, God himself is at the head of it, and for so supreme a Chief the sons of kings are but of small account.”

With an argument such as this she closed my mouth, leaving me quite amazed, and next day she smiled with delight when she presented the little Comte de Vegin dressed as a little abbe.

She was careful to see that the crozier, mitre, and cross were painted on the panels of his carriage, and let the post of vicar-general be given to one of her pious friends who was presented to me.

CHAPTER XXX.

Once a Queen, Always a Queen.—An Anonymous Letter.—The Queen’s Confidence.—She Has a Sermon Preached against Madame de Montespan.—Who the Preacher was.—One Scandal May Avert Another.

I related how, near La Fere, at the time of the Flanders campaign, Madame de la Valliere’s coach, at the risk of offending the Queen, left the main road and took a short cut across country, so as to get on ahead, and arrive before anybody else. By this the Duchess thought to give her royal friend a great mark of her attachment. On the contrary, it was the first cause for that coolness which the King afterwards displayed.

“Fain would he be beloved, yet loved with tact.”

The very next day his Majesty, prevailed upon La Valliere to say that such a style of travelling was too fatiguing for her. She had the honour of dining with the Queen, and then she returned to the little chateau of Versailles, so as to be near her children.

The King arranged with Madame de Montausier, lady-in-waiting to the Queen, that I should use her rooms to dress and write in, and that his Majesty should be free to come there when he liked, and have a quiet chat with me about matters of interest.

The Queen, whom I had managed to please by my amusing talk, always kept me close to her side, both when taking long walks or playing cards. At a given signal, a knock overhead, I used to leave the Queen, excusing myself on the score of a headache, or arrears of correspondence; in short, I managed to get away as best I could.

The King left us in order to capture Douai, then Tournay, and finally the whole of Flanders; while the Queen continued to show me every sign of her sincere and trustful friendship.

In August, on the Day of Our Lady, while the King was besieging Lille, a letter came to the Queen, informing her that her husband had forsaken Madame de la Valliere for her Majesty's lady-in-waiting, the Marquise de Montespan. Moreover, the anonymous missive named "the prudent Duchesse de Montausier" as confidante and accomplice.

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“It is horrible—it is infamous!” cried the Queen, as she flung aside the letter. “I shall never be persuaded that such is the case. My dear little Montespan enjoys my friendship and my esteem; others are jealous of her, but they shall not succeed. Perhaps the King may know the handwriting; he shall see it at once!” And that same evening she forwarded the letter to him.

The Comte de Vegin had been born, and the Queen was absolutely ignorant of his existence. My pregnancy with the Duc du Maine had likewise escaped her notice, owing to the large paniers which I took to wearing, and thus made the fashion. But the Court is a place where the best of friends are traitors. The Queen was at length convinced, after long refusing to be so, and from that day forward she cordially detested me.

While the King was conquering Holland, she instructed her chief almoner to have a sermon of a scandalous sort to be preached, which, delivered with all due solemnity in her presence, should grieve and wound me as much as possible.

On the day appointed, a preacher, totally unknown to us, gets into the pulpit, makes a long prayer for the guidance of the Holy Ghost, and then, rising gracefully, bows low to the Queen. Raising his eyes to heaven, he makes the sign of the cross and gives out the following text: “Woman, arise and sin no more. Go hence; I forgive thee.”

As he uttered these words, he looked hard at my pew, and soon made me understand by his egordium how interesting his discourse would be to me. Written with rare grace of style, it was merely a piece of satire from beginning to end,—of satire so audacious that it was constantly levelled at the King.

The orator brought before us in succession lifelike portraits of the Queen, of her august spouse, of my children, of M. de Montespan, and of myself. Upon some he lavished praise; others he vehemently rebuked; while to others he gave tender pity. Anon he caused the lips of his hearers to curl in irony, and again, roused their indignation or touched them to tears.

Any one else would have been bored by such a rigmarole; it rather amused me.

That evening, and for a week afterwards, nothing else but this sermon was talked of at Versailles. The Queen had received complete satisfaction. Before me she was at pains not to laugh, and I was pleased to see that her resentment had almost disappeared.

Upon his return, the King was for punishing such an offence as this. Things are not easily hidden from him; his Majesty desired to know the name and rank of the ecclesiastic. The entire Court replied that he was a good-looking young Franciscan.

The chief almoner, being forced to state the monastery from which the preacher came, mentioned the Cordeliers of Paris. There it transpired that the monk told off by the prior for this enterprise had been too frightened to execute it, and had sent, as his deputy, a young actor from Orleans,—a brother of his, who thus could not say no.

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So, as it happened, Queen Maria Theresa and her chief almoner (an exemplary person) had caused virtue to be preached to me by a young play-actor! The King dared not take further proceedings in so strange a matter, for fear lest one scandal might beget a far greater one. It was this that caused Madame Cornuel to remark, “The pulpit is in want of comedians; they work wonders there!”

CHAPTER XXXI.

The King Alters His Opinion about Madame Scarron.—He Wants Her to Assume Another Name.—He Gives Her the Maintenon Estates.—She and Madame de Montespan Visit These.—A Strange Story.

At first the King used to feel afraid of Madame Scarron, and seemingly laughed at me when I endeavoured to persuade him that there was nothing affected or singular about her. The Marquis de Beringhen, for some reason or other, had prejudiced his Majesty against her, so that very often, when the King heard that she was visiting me, he never got beyond the vestibule, but at once withdrew. One day she was telling me, in her pleasant, original way, a funny tale about the famous Brancas, and I laughed till I cried again,—in fact, until I nearly made myself quite ill.

The King, who was listening at the door, was greatly tickled by the story. He came in smiling and thoroughly self-possessed. Then, addressing the governess, he said, “Madame, allow me to compliment you and to thank you at the same time. I thought you were of a serious, melancholy disposition, but as I listened to you through the keyhole, I am no longer surprised that you have such long talks with the Marquise. Will you do me the favour of being as amusing some other time, if I venture to make one of the party?”

The governess, courtesying, blushed somewhat; and the King continued, “Madame, I am aware of your affection for my children; that is a great recommendation to me; banish all restraint; I take the greatest pleasure in your company.”

She replied, “It was the fear of displeasing you which, despite myself, caused me to incur your displeasure.”

The King continued, “Madame, I know that the late M. de Scarron was a man of much wit and also of agreeable manners. My cousin, De Beaufort, used to rave about him, but on account of his somewhat free poems, his name lacks weight and dignity. In fact, his name in no way fits so charming a personality as yours; would it grieve you to change it?”

The governess cleverly replied that all that she owed to the memory of her defunct husband was gratitude and esteem.

“Allow me, then, to arrange matters,” added the King. “I am fond of sonorous names; in this I agree with Boileau.”

A few days afterwards we heard that the splendid Maintenon estates were for sale. The King himself came to inform the widow of this, and, giving her in advance the fee for education, he counted out a hundred thousand crowns wherewith instantly to purchase the property.

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Forthwith the King compelled her to discard this truly ridiculous author's name, and styled her before everybody Madame de Maintenon.

I must do her the justice to state that her gratitude for the King's liberality was well-nigh exaggerated, while no change was perceptible in her manners and bearing. She had, naturally, a grand, dignified air, which was in strange contrast to the grotesque buffoonery of her poet-husband. Now she is exactly in her proper place, representing to perfection the governess of a king's children.

Spiteful persons were wont to say that I appeared jealous on seeing her made a marquise like myself. Good gracious, no! On the contrary, I was delighted; her parentage was well known to me. The Duchesse de Navailles, my protectress, was a near relative of hers, and M. d'Aubigne, her grandfather, was one of King Henri's two Chief Gentlemen of the Chamber.

Madame de Maintenon's father was, in many respects, greatly to blame. Without being actually dishonest, he squandered a good deal of his fortune, the greater part being pounced upon by his family; and had the King forced these harpies to disgorge, Madame de Maintenon could have lived in opulence, eclipsing several of the personages at Court.

I am glad to be able to do her justice in these Memoirs, to the satisfaction of my own self-respect. I look upon her as my own handiwork, and everything assures me that this is her conviction also, and that she will always bear it in mind.

The King said to us, "Go and see the Chateau de Maintenon, and then you can tell me all about it. According to an old book, I find that it was built in the reign of Henri II. by Nicolas de Cointerot, the King's minister of finance; a 'surintendant's' castle ought to form a noteworthy feature of the landscape."

Madame de Maintenon hereupon told us a most extraordinary story. The lady who sold this marquisate had retired two years previously to the island of Martinique, where she, at the present moment, owned the residence of Constant d'Aubigne, the same house where the new Marquise de Maintenon had spent her childhood with her parents, so that while one of these ladies had quitted the Chateau de Maintenon in order to live in Martinique, the other had come from Martinique in order to reside at the Chateau de Maintenon. Truly, the destinies of some are strange in this world.

The chateau appeared to be large, of solid proportions, and built in a grandly simple style, befitting a minister of dignity and position. The governess shed tears of emotion when setting foot there for the first time. The six priests, whom the surintendant had appointed, officiated in the large chapel or little church attached to the castle.

They approached us in regular procession, presenting holy water, baskets of flowers and fruit, an old man, a child, and two little lambs to the Marquise. The villagers, dressed out with flowers and ribbons, also came to pay, their respects to her. They danced in the castle courtyard, under our balcony, to the sound of hautbois and bagpipes.

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We gave them money, said pleasant things to everybody, and invited all the six clerics to sup with us. These gentry spoke with great respect of the other Madame de Maintenon, who had become disgusted with her property, and with France generally, because, for two winters running, her orange-groves and fig-trees had been frost-bitten. She herself, being a most chilly, person, never left off her furs until August, and in order to avoid looking at or walking upon snow and ice, she fled to the other end of the world.

“The other extreme will bring her back to us,” observed Madame de Maintenon to the priests. “Though his Majesty were to give me Martinique or Saint Domingo, I certainly would never go and live there myself.”

When we returned, all these little details greatly amused the King. He, too, wanted to go and see the castle of another Fouquet, but, as we complained of the bad roads, he ordered these to be mended along the entire route.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The Second Comte de Vexin.—He is made Abbe of Saint Denis.—Priests or Devils?—-The Coronation Diadem.—Royalty Jokes with the Monks.

My poor little Comte de Vegin died. We all mourned for him as he deserved; his pretty face would have made every one love him; his extreme gentleness had nothing of the savage warrior about it, but at any rate, he was the best-looking cardinal in Christendom. He made such funny speeches that one could not help recollecting them. He was more of a Mortemart than a Bourbon, but that did not prevent the King from idolising him.

The King thought of conferring the Abbey of Saint Germain des Pres upon his younger brother; to this I was opposed, imagining, perhaps without reason, that such succession would bring bad luck. So the King presented him to the Abbey of Saint Denis, the revenue of which was equally considerable, and he conferred upon him the title of Comte de Vexin, caring nothing for the remarks I made concerning the similarities of such names and distinctions.

The second Comte de Vegin bid fair to be a man of reflection and of genius. He obviously disliked his little abbe’s dress, and we always kept saying, “It’s only for the time being, my little fellow.”

When, after his nomination, the monks of Saint Denis came to make their obeisance to him, he asked if they were devils, and continually covered his face so as not to see them.

The King arrived, and with a few flattering words managed to soothe the priests' outraged dignity, and when they asked the little prince if he would honour them by a visit of inspection to Suger's room,

[Suger was Abbe of Saint Denis, and a famous minister of Queen Blanche. Editor's Note.]

which had just been restored, he replied with a sulky smile, "I'll come and see you, but with my eyes shut."

Then the priests mildly remonstrated because the coronation diadem had not been brought back to their store of treasures, but was still missing.

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“So, in your treasure-house at Saint Denis you keep all the crowns of all the reigns?” asked the prince.

“Yes, Sire, and where could they be better guarded than with us? Who has most may have least.”

“With all their rubies, diamonds, sapphires, and emeralds?”

“Yes, Sire; and hence the name treasure.”

The King replied, “If this be the case, I will send you my coronation crown. At that time my brow was not so big; you will find the crown small, I tell you.”

Then one of the monks, in the most serious manner, said, “It’s not as small as it was; your Majesty has enlarged it a good deal.”

Madame de Maintenon burst out laughing, and I was not slow to follow her example; we saw that the King could hardly maintain his gravity. He said to the priest, “My father, you turn a pretty compliment in a most praiseworthy manner; you ought to have belonged to the Jesuits, not to the Benedictines.”

We burst out laughing anew, and this convent-deputation, the gloomiest-looking, most funereal one in the world, managed to cause us some diversion, after all.

To make amends for our apparent frivolity, his Majesty himself took them to see his splendid cabinet of medals and coins, and sent them back to their abbey in Court carriages.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

M. de Lauzun Proposes for the Hand of Mademoiselle de Thianges.—Letter from the Duc de Lorraine.—Madame de Thianges Thinks that Her Daughter Has Married a Reigning Prince.—The King Disposes Otherwise.—The Duc de Nevers.

The brilliant Marquis de Lauzun, after paying court to myself, suddenly, turned his attention to Mademoiselle de Thianges,—my sister’s child. If a fine figure and a handsome face, as well as the polished manners of a great gentleman, constitute a good match, M. de Lauzun was, in all respects, worthy of my niece. But this presumptuous nobleman had but a slender fortune. Extravagant, without the means to be so, his debts grew daily greater, and in society one talked of nothing but his lavish expenditure and his creditors. I know that the purses of forty women were at his disposal. I know, moreover, that he used to gamble like a prince, and I would never marry my waiting-maid to a gambler and a rake.

Both Madame de Thianges and myself rejected his proposals, and though resolved to let him have continued proofs of our good-will, we were equally determined never to accept such a man as son-in-law and nephew.

Hereupon the letter which I am about to transcribe was sent to me by a messenger:

Prince Charles de Lorraine to madame la marquise de Montespan.

Madame:—My unfortunate uncle and I have always loved France, but France has forced us both to break off all relations with her and to become exiles!!! Despite the kindness and generosity wherewith the Imperial Court seeks to comfort us in our misfortune, the perpetual cry of our hearts calls us back to our fatherland,—to that matchless land where my ancestors have ever been beloved.

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My uncle is guilty of no crime but that of having formerly received in his palace a son of good King Henri IV., after his humiliation by a shameless minister. My dear uncle proposed to resign all his property in my favour, and to meet the wishes of his Majesty as to the wife that should be mine.

When my uncle asked for the hand of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, on my behalf, my cousin replied that a ruined and dismantled throne did not augur well for a dowry, and she further remarked that we were not on good terms with the King.

When I begged Cardinal Mazarin to grant me the hand of the present Madame de Mazarin, his Eminence replied, “Would you like to be a cardinal? I can manage that; but as regards my niece, the Queen is going to get her married immediately.”

When, before God and man, I wedded Mademoiselle de Nemours, whose worthy mother led her to the altar, his Majesty refused to sign the marriage contract, and told Madame de Nemours that it would never be considered valid.

Soon afterwards the Bishop of Laon, who has complete influence over Madame de Vendome, declared as null and void—a marriage negotiated and consecrated by himself, and thus a bond made in heaven has been broken on earth.

Such treatment as this, I confess, seemed to us to exceed the bounds of humanity and of justice. My uncle and I quitted France,—the France that persecutes and harasses us, that desires the destruction of our family and the forcible union of our territory with her own.

The late Queen, of illustrious and glorious memory, disapproved of Richelieu’s injustice towards us. Under the ministry of the Cardinal, his successor, she often, in noble fashion, held out to us a helping hand. How comes it that the King, who in face is her living image, does not desire to be like her in heart?

I address myself to you, madame, who by your beauty and Spiritual charm hold such imperious sway over his decisions, and I implore you to undertake our defence. My uncle and I, his rightful and duteous heir, offer the King devoted homage and unswerving fealty. We offer to forget the past, to put our hearts and our swords at his service. Let him withdraw his troops and those standards of his that have brought terror and grief to our unhappy Lorraine. I offer to marry Mademoiselle de Thianges, your beautiful and charming niece, and to make her happy, and to surrender all any estates to the King of France, if I die without male issue or heirs of any sort.

I know your kind-heartedness, madame, by a niece who is your picture. In your hands I place her interests and my fate. I await your message with impatience, and I shall receive it with courage if you fail to obtain that which you ought to obtain.

Be assured, madame, of my unbounded admiration and respect.

CHARLES

I at once went to my house at Clagny, whither I privately summoned Madame de Thianges. On reading this letter, my sister was moved to tears, for she had always deeply felt how unjustly this family had been treated. She was also personally attached to this same Prince Charles, whom to see was to love.

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We read this letter through thrice, and each time we found it more admirable; the embarrassing thing was how to dare to let his Majesty know its contents. However temperate the allusions to himself, there was still the reproach of injustice and barbarity, set against the clemency of Anne of Austria, and her generous compassion.

My sister said to me, “Go boldly to work in the matter. Despite your three children, the King leaves you merely a marquise; and for my own part, if my daughter becomes Duchesse do Lorraine, I promise you the Principality of Vaudemont.”

“It is quite true,” I replied; “his conduct is inexplicable. To Madame Scarron, who was only the governess of his children, he gives one of the first marquisates of France, while to me, who have borne these three children (with infinite pain), I admit he has only given some jewelry, some money, and this pretty castle of Clagny.”

“You are as clever as can be, my dear Athenais,” said Madame de Thianges, “but, as a matter of fact, your cleverness is not of a business kind. You don’t look after yourself, but let yourself be neglected; you don’t push yourself forward enough, nor stand upon your dignity as you ought to do.

“The little lame woman had hardly been brought to bed of Mademoiselle de Blois, when she was made Duchesse de Vaujours and de la Valliere.

“Gabrielle d’Estrees, directly she appeared, was proclaimed Duchesse de Beaufort.

“Diane de Poitiers was Duchesse de Valentinois and a princess. It’s only you who are nobody, and your relations also are about the same! Make the most of this grand opportunity; help the Prince of Lorraine, and the Prince of Lorraine will help you.”

On our return from the chateau, while our resolution was yet firm, we went laughing to the King. He asked the reason of our gaiety. My sister said with her wonted ease, “Sire, I have come to invite you to my daughter’s wedding.”

“Your daughter? Don’t you think I am able to get her properly married?” cried the King.

“Sire, you cannot do it better than I can myself. I am giving her a sovereign as husband, a sovereign in every sense of the term.”

It seemed to me the King flushed slightly as he rejoined, “A sovereign on his feet, or a sovereign overthrown?”

“How do you mean, Sire?” said my sister.

“Madame de Thianges,” replied the King, “pray, let us be friends. I was informed two days ago of the proposals of the Messieurs de Lorraine; it is not, yet time to give them a

definite reply. It behoves, me to give your daughter in marriage, and I have destined her for the Duc de Nevers, who is wealthy, and my friend."

"The Duc de Nevers!" cried my sister; "why, he's cracked for six months in the year."

"Those who are cracked for a whole twelvemonth deserve far more pity," replied the King.

Then, turning to me, he observed, "You make no remark, madame? Does your niece's coronation provide you also with illusions?"

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I easily perceived that we had been cherishing an utterly fantastic scheme, and I counselled Madame de Thianges to prefer to please the King; and, as she was never able to control her feelings, she sharply replied, “Madame la Marquise, good day or good night!”

The King, however, did not relax his persistence in giving us the Duc de Nevers as son-in-law and nephew; and as this young gentleman’s one fault is to require perpetual amusement, partly derived from poetry and partly from incessant travelling, my niece is as happy with him as a woman who takes her husband’s place well can be. As soon as he gets to Paris, he wants to return to Rome, and hardly has he reached Rome, when he has the horses put to for Paris.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Mademoiselle de Mortemart, Abbess of Fontevrault.—She Comes to Court.—The Cloister.—Her Success at Court.—Her Opinion Respecting Madame de Montespan’s Intimacy with the King.

My second sister, Mademoiselle de Mortemart, was so unfortunate as to fall in love with a young Knight of Malta, doomed from his birth and by his family to celibacy. Having set out upon his caravans,—[Sea-fights against the Turks and the pirates of the Mediterranean.]—he was killed in combat by the Algerians.

Such was Mademoiselle de Mortemart’s grief that life became unbearable to her. Beautiful, witty, and accomplished, she quitted the world where she was beloved, and, at the, age of seventeen, took the veil at Fontevrault.

So severely had she blamed the conduct of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, while often vehemently denouncing that which she termed the disorder at Court, that, since the birth of the Duc du Maine, I had not gone to the convent to see her. We were like unto persons both most anxious to break off an intimacy and yet who had not done so.

The Duc de Lorraine was known to her. He wrote to her, begging her to make it up with me, so as to further his own ends. To gratify him, and mainly because of her attachment to Prince Charles, my sister actually wrote to me, asking for my intervention and what she termed my support.

Nuns always profess to be, and think that they are, cut off from the world. But the fact is, they care far more for mundane grandeur than we do. Madame de Thianges and her sister would have given their very heart’s blood to see my niece the bride of a royal prince.

One day the King said to me, “The Marquise de Thianges complains that I have as yet done nothing for your family; there is a wealthy abbey that has just become vacant; I am going to give it to your sister, the nun; since last night she is the Abbess of Fontevrault.”

I thanked the King, as it behoved me to do, and he added, “Your brother shall be made a duke at once. I am going to appoint him general of Royal Galleys, and after one or two campaigns he will have a marshal’s baton.”

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“And what about me, Sire?” said I. “What, may it please your Majesty, shall I get from the distribution of all these favours and emoluments?” I laughingly asked the question.

“You, madame?” he replied. “To you I made a present of my heart, which is not altogether worthless; yet, as it is possible that, when this heart shall have ceased to beat, you may have to maintain your rank, I will give you the charming retreat of Petit-Bourg, near Fontainebleau.”

Saying this, his face wore a sad look, and I was sorry that I asked him for anything. He is fond of giving, and of giving generously, but of his own accord, without the least prompting. Had I refrained from committing this indiscretion, he might, possibly, have made me a duchess there and then, renaming Petit-Bourg Royal-Bourg.

The new abbess of Fontevrault, caring less now for claustral seclusion, equipped her new residence in very sumptuous style. In a splendid carriage she came to thank the King and kiss hands. With much tact and dignity she encountered the scrutiny of the royal family and of the Court. Her manners showed her to have been a person brought up in the great world, and possessed of all the tact and delicacy which her position as well as mine required.

As she embraced me, she sighed; yet, instantly recovering herself, she made the excuse that so many ceremonious greetings and compliments had fatigued her.

It was not long before the King joined us, who said, “Madame, I never thought that there was much amusement to be got by wearing the veil. Now, you must admit that days in a convent seem very long to any one who has wit and intelligence.”

“Sire,” replied my sister, “the first fifteen or twenty months are wearisome, I readily confess. Then comes discouragement; after that, habit; and then one grows resigned to one’s fetters from the mere pleasure of existence.”

“Did you meet with any good friends among your associates?”

“In such assemblies,” rejoined the Abbess, “one can form no attachment or durable friendship. The reason for this is simple. If the companion you choose is religious in all sincerity, she is perforce a slave to every little rule and regulation, and to her it would seem like defrauding the Deity to give affection to any one but to Him. If, by mischance, you meet with some one of sensitive temperament, with a bright intellect that matches your own, you lay yourself open to be the mournful sharer of her griefs, doubts, and regrets, and her depression reacts upon you; her sorrow makes your melancholy return. Privation conjures up countless illusions and every chimera imaginable, so that the peaceful retreat of virgins of the Lord becomes a veritable hell, peopled by phantoms that groan in torture!”

“Oh, madame!” exclaimed the King. “What a picture is this! What a spectacle you present to our view!”

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“Fortunately,” continued Mademoiselle de Mortemart, “in convents girls of intelligence are all too rare. The greater number of them are colourless persons, devoid of imagination or fire. To exiles like these, any country, any climate would seem good; to flaccid, crushed natures of this type, every belief would seem authoritative, every religion holy and divine. Fifteen hundred years ago these nuns would have made excellent vestal virgins, watchful and resigned. What they need is abstinence, prohibitions, thwartings, things contrary to nature. By conforming to most rigorous rules, they consider themselves suffering beings who deserve heavy recompense; and the Carmelite or Trappist sister, who macerates herself by the hair-shirt or the cilex, would look upon God as a false or wicked Being, if, after such cruel torment, He did not promptly open to her the gates of Paradise.

“Sire,” added the Abbess de Fontevrault, “I have three nuns in my convent who take the Holy Communion every other day, and whom my predecessor could never bring herself to absolve for some old piece of nonsense of twenty years back.”

“Do you think you will be able to manage them, madame?” asked the King, laughing.

“I am afraid not,” replied my sister. “Those are three whom one could never manage, and your Majesty on the throne may possibly have fewer difficulties to deal with than the abbess or the prior of a convent.”

The King was obliged to quit us to go and see one of the ministers, but he honoured the Abbess by telling her that she was excellent company, of which he could never have too much.

My sister wished to see Madame de Maintenon and the Duc du Maine; so we visited that lady, who took a great liking to the Abbess, which was reciprocated.

When my sister saw the young Duc du Maine, she exclaimed, “How handsome he is! Oh, sister, how fond I shall be of such a nephew!”

“Then,” said I, “you will forgive me, won’t you, for having given birth to him?”

“When I reproached you,” she answered, “I had not yet seen the King. When one has seen him, everything is excusable and everything is right. Embrace me, my dear sister, and do not let us forget that I owe my abbey to you, as well as my independence, fortune, and liberty.”

BOOK 3.

CHAPTER XXXV.

M. de Lauzun and Mademoiselle de Montpensier.—Marriage of the One and Passion of the Other.—The King Settles a Match.—A Secret Union.—The King Sends M. de Lauzun to Pignerol.—The Life He Leads There.—Mademoiselle's Liberality.—Strange Way of Acknowledging It.

They are forever talking about the coquetry of women; men also have their coquetry, but as they show less grace and finesse than we do, they do not get half as much attention.

The Marquis de Lauzun, having one day, noticed a certain kindly feeling for him in the glances of Mademoiselle, endeavoured to seem to her every day more fascinating and agreeable. The foolish Princess completely fell into the snare, and suddenly giving up her air of noble indifference, which till then had made her life happy, she fell madly in love with a schemer who despised and detested her.

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Held back for some months by her pride, as also by the exigencies of etiquette, she only disclosed her sentimental passion by glances and a mutual exchange of signs of approval; but at last she was tired of self-restraint and martyrdom, and, detaining M. de Lauzun one day in a recess, she placed her written offer of marriage in his hand.

The cunning Marquis feigned astonishment, pretending humbly to renounce such honour, while increasing his wiles and fascinations; he even went so far as to shed tears, his most difficult feat of all.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier, older than he by twelve or fourteen years, never suspected that such a disparity of years was visible in her face. When one has been pretty, one imagines that one is still so, and will forever remain so. Plastered up and powdered, consumed by passion, and above all, blinded by vanity, she fancied that Nature had to obey princes, and that, to favour her, Time would stay his flight.

Though tired and bored with everything, Lauzun, the better to excite her passion, put on timid, languid airs, like those of some lad fresh from school. Quitting the embraces of some other woman, he played the lonely, pensive, melancholy bachelor, the man absorbed by this sweet, new mystery of love.

Having made mutual avowal of their passion, which was fill of esteem, Lauzun inquired, merely from motives of caution, as to the Princess's fortune; and she did not fail to tell him everything, even about her plate and jewels. Lauzun's love grew even more ardent now, for she had at least forty millions, not counting her palace.

He asked if, by the marriage, he would become a prince, and she replied that she, herself, had not sufficient power to do this; that she was most anxious to arrange this, if she could; but anyhow, that she could make him Duc de Montpensier, with a private uncontrolled income of five hundred thousand livres.

He asked if, on the family coat-of-arms, the husband's coronet was to figure, or the wife's; but, as she would not change her name, her arms, she decided, could remain as heretofore,—the crown, the fleur-de-lis, and so forth.

He inquired if the children of the marriage would rank as princes, and she said that she saw nothing to prevent this. He also asked if he would be raised higher in the peerage, and might look to being made a prince at last, and styled Highness as soon as the contract had been signed.

This caused some doubt and reflection. "The King, my cousin," said Mademoiselle, "is somewhat strict in matters of this sort. He seems to think that the royal family is a new arch-saint, at whom one may look only when prostrate in adoration; all contract therewith is absolutely forbidden. I begin to feel uneasy about this; yes, Lauzun, I have fears for our love and marriage."

“Are you, then, afraid?” asked Lauzun, quite crestfallen.

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“I knew how to point the Bastille cannon at the troops of the King,” she replied; “but he was very young then. No matter, I will go and see him; if he is my King, I am his cousin; if he has his crotchets, I have my love and my will. He can’t do anything, my dear Lauzun; I love you as once he loved La Valliere, as to-day he loves Montespan; I am not afraid of him. As for the permission, I know our history by heart, and I will prove to him by a hundred examples that, from the time of Charlemagne up to the present time, widows and daughters of kings have married mere noblemen. These nobleman may have been most meritorious,—I only know them from history,—but not one of them was as worthy as you.”

So saying, she asked for her fan, her gloves, and her horses, and attended by her grooms-in-waiting, she went to the King in person.

The King listened to her from beginning to end, and then remarked, “You refused the Kings of Denmark, Portugal, Spain, and England, and you wish to marry my captain of the guard, the Marquis de Lauzun?”

“Yes, Sire, for I place him above all monarchs,—yourself alone excepted.”

“Do you love him immensely?”

“More than I can possibly say; a thousand, a hundred thousand times more than myself.”

“Do you think he is equally devoted to you?”—“That would be impossible,” she tranquilly answered; “but his love for me is delicate, tender; and such friendship suffices me.”

“My cousin, in all that there is self-interest. I entreat you to reflect. The world, as you know, is a mocking world; you want to excite universal derision and injure the respect which is due to the place that I fill.”

“Ah, Sire, do not wound me! I fling myself at your feet. Have compassion upon M. de Lauzun, and pity my tears. Do not exercise your power; let him be the consolation of my life; let me marry him.”

The King, no longer able to hide his disgust and impatience, said, “Cousin, you are now a good forty-four years old; at that age you ought to be able to take care of yourself. Spare me all your grievances, and do what pleases you.”

On leaving Mademoiselle, he came to my apartment and told me about all this nonsense. I then informed him of what I had heard by letter the day before. Lauzun, while still carrying on with the fastest ladies of the Court and the town, had just wheedled the Princess into making him a present of twenty millions,—a most extravagant gift.

“This is too much!” exclaimed the King; and he at once caused a letter to be despatched to Mademoiselle and her lover, telling them that their intimacy must cease, and that things must go no farther.

But the audacious Lauzun found means to suborn a well-meaning simpleton of a priest, who married them secretly the very same day.

The King’s indignation and resentment may well be imagined. He had his captain of the guard arrested and sent as a prisoner to Pignerol.

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On this occasion, M. de Lauzun complained bitterly of me; he invented the most absurd tales about me, even saying that he had struck me in my own apartments, after taunting me to my face with “our old intimacy.”

That is false; he reproached me with nothing, for there was nothing to reproach. Shortly after the Princess’s grand scene, he came and begged me to intercede on his behalf. I only made a sort of vague promise, and he knew well enough that, in the great world, a vague promise is the same as a refusal.

For more than six months I had to stanch the tears and assuage the grief of Mademoiselle. So tiresome to me did this prove, that she alone well-nigh sufficed to make me quit the Court.

Such sorrowing and chagrin made her lose the little beauty that still remained to her; nothing seemed more incongruous and ridiculous than to hear this elderly grand lady talking perpetually about “her dearest darling, the prisoner.”

At the time I write he is at Pignerol; his bad disposition is forever getting him into trouble. She sends him lots of money unknown to the King, who generally knows everything. All this money he squanders or gambles away, and when funds are low, says, “The old lady will send us some.”

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Hyde, the Chancellor.—Misfortune Not Always Misfortune.—Prince Comnenus.—The King at Petit-Bourg.—His Incognito.—Who M. de Vivonne Really Was.

The castle of Petit-Bourg, of which the King made me a present, is situate on a height overlooking the Seine, whence one may get the loveliest of views. So pleasant did I find this charming abode, that I repaired thither as often as possible, and stayed for five or six days. One balmy summer night, I sat in my dressing-gown at the central balcony, watching the stars, as was my wont, asking myself whether I should not be a thousand times happier if I should pass my life in a retreat like this, and so have time to contemplate the glorious works of Nature, and to prepare myself for that separation which sooner or later awaited me. Reason bade me encourage such thoughts, yet my heart offered opposition thereto, urging that there was something terrifying in solitude, most of all here, amid vast fields and meadows, and that, away from the Court and all my friends, I should grow old, and death would take me before my, time. While plunged in such thoughts, I suddenly heard the sound of a tocsin, and scanning the horizon, I saw flames and smoke rising from some hamlet or country-house. I rang for my servants, and told them instantly to despatch horsemen to the scene of the catastrophe, and bring back news.

The messengers started off, and soon came back to say that the fire had broken out at the residence of my lord Hyde, Chancellor of England, who was but lately convalescent. They had seen him lying upon a rug on the grass, some little distance from the burning mansion. I forthwith ordered my carriage to be sent for him, and charged my surgeon and secretary to invite him to take shelter at my castle.

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My lord gratefully accepted the invitation; he entered my room as the clock struck twelve. As yet he could not tell the cause of the disaster, and in a calm, patriarchal manner observed, “I am a man marked out for great misfortune. God forbid, madame, that the mischance which dogs my footsteps touch you also!”

“I cannot bear to see a fire,” said I, in reply to the English nobleman, “for some dreadful accident always results therefrom. Yet, on the whole, they are of good augury, and I am sure, my lord, that your health or your affairs will benefit by this accident.”

Hearing me talk thus, my lord smiled. He only took some slight refreshment,—a little soup,—and heard me give orders for all my available servants to be sent to the scene of disaster, in order to save all his furniture, and protect it as well.

After repeated expressions of his gratitude, he desired to withdraw, and retired to rest. Next day we learnt that the fire had been got under about one o’clock in the morning; one wing only of the chateau had been destroyed, and the library, together with all the linen and plate, was well-nigh intact. Lord Hyde was very glad to hear the news. They told him that all the labourers living near had gladly come to the help of his servants and mine. As his private cashbox had been saved, owing to their vigilance and honesty, he promised to distribute its contents among them when he returned.

Hardly had he got the words out, when they came to tell me that, on the highroad, just in front of my gates, a carriage, bound for Paris, had the traces broken, and the travellers persons of distinction begged the favour of my hospitality for a short while. I consented with pleasure, and they went back to take the travellers my answer.

“You see, madame,” said the Chancellor, “my bad luck is contagious; no sooner have I set foot in this enchanting abode than its atmosphere deteriorates. A travelling-carriage passes rapidly by in front of the gates, when lo! some invisible hand breaks it to pieces, and stops it from proceeding any further.”

Then I replied, “But how do you know, monsieur, that this mishap may not prove a most agreeable adventure for the travellers to whom we are about to give shelter? To begin with, they will have the honour of making your acquaintance, and to meet with an illustrious person is no common or frivolous event.”

The servants announced the Princes Comnenus, who immediately entered the salon. Though dressed in travelling-costume, with embroidered gaiters, in the Greek fashion, it was easy to see what they were. The son, a lad of fourteen, was presented to me by his father, and when both were seated, I introduced them to the Chancellor.

“The name is well known,” observed the Prince, “even in Greece. My lord married his daughter to the heir-presumptive to the English throne, and England, being by nature ungrateful, has distressed this worthy parent, while robbing him of all his possessions.”

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At these words Lord Hyde became greatly affected; he could not restrain his tears, and fearing at first to compromise himself, he told us that his exile was voluntary and self-imposed, or very nearly so.

After complimenting the Chancellor of a great kingdom, Prince Comnenus thought that he ought to say something courteous and flattering to myself.

“Madame,” quoth he, “it is only now, after asking for hospitality and generously obtaining it, that I and my son have learnt the name of the lady who has so graciously granted us admission to this most lovely place. For a moment we hesitated in awe. But now our eyes behold her whom all Europe admires, whom a great King favours with his friendship and confidence. What strange chances befall one in life! Could I ever have foreseen so fortunate a mishap!”

I briefly replied to this amiable speech, and invited the travellers to spend, at least, one day with us. They gladly accepted, and each retired to his apartment until the time came for driving out. Dinner was laid, and on the point of being served, when the King, who was on his way from Fontainebleau, suddenly entered my room. He had heard something about a fire, and came to see what had happened. I at once informed him, telling him, moreover, that I had the Duke of York’s father-in-law staying with me at the moment.

“Lord Hyde, the Chancellor?” exclaimed the King. “I have never seen him, and have always been desirous to make his acquaintance. The opportunity is an easy and favourable one.”

“But that is not all, Sire; I have other guests to meet you,” said I.

“And who may they be?” inquired the King, smiling. “Just because I have come in rough-and-ready plight, your house is full of people.”

“But they are in rough-and-ready plight as well,” I answered; “so your Majesties must mutually excuse each other.”

“Are you in fun or in earnest?” asked his Majesty. “Have you really got some king stowed away in one of your rooms?”

“Not a king, Sire, but an emperor,—the Emperor of Constantinople and Trebizond, accompanied by the Prince Imperial, his son. You shall see two Greek profiles of the best sort, two finely cut noses, albeit hooked, and almond-shaped eyes, like those of Achilles and Agamemnon.”

Then the King said, “Send for your groom of the chambers at once, and tell him to give orders that my incognito be strictly observed. You must introduce me to these

dignitaries as your brother, M. de Vivonne. Under these conditions, I will join your party at table; otherwise, I should be obliged to leave the castle immediately."

The King's wishes were promptly complied with; the footmen were let into the secret, and I introduced "Monsieur de Vivonne" to my guests.

The talk, without being sparkling, was pleasant enough until dessert. When the men-servants left us, it assumed a very different character. The King induced the Chancellor to converse, and asked him if his exile were owing to the English monarch personally, or to some parliamentary intrigue.

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“King Charles,” replied his lordship, “is a prince to gauge whose character requires long study. Apparently, he is the very soul of candour, but no one is more deceitful than he. He fawns and smiles upon you when in his heart of hearts he despises and loathe you. When the Duke of York, unfortunately, became violently enamoured of my daughter, he did not conceal his attachment from his brother, the King, and at last asked for his approval to join his fortunes to my daughter’s, when the King, without offering opposition, contented himself by pointing out the relative distance between their rank and position; to which the Duke replied, ’But at one time you did everything you possibly could to get Olympia Mancini, who was merely Mazarin’s niece!’ And King Charles, who could not deny this, left his brother complete liberty of action.

“As my daughter was far dearer and more precious to me than social grandeur, I begged the Duke of York to find for himself a partner of exalted rank. He gave way to despair, and spoke of putting an end to his existence; in fact, he behaved as all lovers do whom passion touches to madness; so this baleful marriage took place. God is my witness that I opposed it, urged thereto by wisdom, by modesty, and by foresight. Now, as you see, from that cruel moment I have been exiled to alien lands, robbed of the sight of my beloved child, who has been raised to the rank of a princess, and whom I shall never see again. Why did my sovereign not say to me frankly, I do not like this marriage; you must oppose it, Chancellor, to please me?

“How different was his conduct from that of his cousin, the French King! Mademoiselle d’Orleans wanted to make an unsuitable match; the King opposed it, as he had a right to do, and the marriage did not take place.”

My “brother,” the King, smiled as he told his lordship he was right.

Prince Comnenus was of the same opinion, and, being expressly invited to do so, he briefly recounted his adventures, and stated the object of his journey to Paris.

“The whole world,” said he, “is aware of the great misfortunes of my family. The Emperors Andronicus and Michael Comnenus, driven from the throne of Constantinople, left their names within the heart and memory of Greece; they had ruled the West with a gentle sceptre, and in a people’s grateful remembrance they had their reward. My ancestors, their descendants, held sway in Trebizond, a quicksand which gave way beneath their tread. From adversity to adversity, from country to country, we were finally driven to seclusion in the Isle of Candia, part of the quondam Minos territory. Venice had allowed Candia to fall before Mahomet’s bloody sword. Europe lost her bulwark, the Cross of the Saviour was thrown down, and the Candian Christians have been massacred or forced to flee. I have left in the hands of the conqueror my fields and forests, my summer palace, my winter palace, and my gardens filled with the produce of America, Asia, and Europe. From this overwhelming disaster I managed to save my son; and as my sole fortune I brought away with me the large jewels of

Andronicus, his ivory and sapphire sceptre, his scimitar of Lemnos, and his ancient gold crown, which once encircled Theseus's brow.

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“These noble relics I shall present to the King of France. They say that he is humane, generous, fond of glory, and zealous in the cause of justice. When before his now immovable throne he sees laid down these last relics of an ancient race, perhaps he will be touched by so lamentable a downfall, and will not suffer distress to trouble my last days, and darken the early years of this my child.”

During this speech I kept watching the King’s face. I saw that he was interested, then touched, and at last was on the point of forgetting his incognito and of appearing in his true character.

“Prince,” said he to the Greek traveller, “my duties and my devotion make it easy for me to approach the King of France’s person very closely. In four or five days he will be leaving Fontainebleau for his palace at Saint Germain. I will tell him without modification all that I have just heard from you. Without being either prophet or seer, I can guarantee that you will be well received and cordially welcomed, receiving such benefits as kings are bound to yield to kings.

“Madame, who respects and is interested in you, is desirous, I feel certain, for me to persuade you to stay here until her departure; she enjoys royal favour, and it is my sister herself who shall present you at Court. You shall show her, you shall show us all, the golden crown of Theseus, the sceptre of Adronicus, and this brow which I gaze upon and revere, for it deserves a kingly diamond.

“As for you, my lord,” said his Majesty to the English nobleman, “if the misfortune of last night prove disastrous in more ways than one, pray wait for a while before you go back to the smouldering ashes of a half-extinguished fire. My sister takes pleasure in your company; indeed, the Marquise is charmed to be able to entertain three such distinguished guests, and begs to place her chateau at your disposal until such time as your own shall be restored. We shall speak of you to the King, and he will certainly endeavour to induce King Charles, his cousin, to recall you to your native country.”

Then, after saying one or two words to me in private, he bowed to the gentlemen and withdrew. We went out on to the balcony to see him get into his coach, when, to the surprise and astonishment of my guests, as the carriage passed along the avenue, about a hundred peasants, grouped near the gateway, threw off their hats and cried, “Long live the King!”

Prince Comnenus and his son were inconsolable; I excused myself by saying that it was at the express desire of our royal visitor, and my lord admitted that at last he recollected his features, and recognised him by his grand and courtly address.

Before I end my tale, do not let me forget to say that the King strongly recommended Prince Comnenus to the Republic of Genoa, and obtained for him considerable property in Corsica and a handsome residence at Ajaccio. He accepted five or six beautiful

jewels that had belonged to Andronicus, and caused the sum of twelve hundred thousand francs to be paid to the young Comnenus from his treasury.

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CHAPTER XXXVII

The Universal Jubilee.—Court Preachers.—King David.—Madame de Montespan is Obliged to go to Clagny.—Bossuet's Mission.—Mademoiselle de Mauleon.—An Enemy's Good Faith.

I do not desire to hold up to ridicule the rites of that religion in which I was born and bred. Neither would I disparage its ancient usages, nor its far more modern laws. All religions, as I know, have their peculiarities, all nations their contradictions, but I must be suffered to complain of the abuse sometimes made in our country of clerical and priestly authority.

A general jubilee was held soon after the birth of my second son, and among Christian nations like ours, a jubilee is as if one said, "Now all statutes, divine and earthly, are repealed; by means of certain formula recited, certain visits paid to the temples, certain acts of abstinence practised here and there, all sins, misdemeanours, and crimes are forgiven, and their punishment cancelled." It is generally on the occasion of the proclamation of a new pontificate at Rome that such great papal absolutions are extended over the whole universe.

The jubilee having been proclaimed in Paris, the Court preachers worked miracles. They denounced all social irregularities and friendships of which the Church disapproved. The opening sermon showed plainly that the orator's eloquence was pointed at myself. The second preacher showed even less restraint; he almost mentioned me by name. The third ecclesiastic went beyond all bounds, actually uttering the following words:

"Sire, when King David was still but a shepherd, a heifer was stolen from his flocks; David made complaint to the patriarch of the land, when his heifer was restored to him, and the thief was punished.

"When David came to the throne, he carried off his servant's wife, and as an excuse for such an odious deed, he pleaded the young woman's extreme beauty. The wretched servant besought him to obey the voice, not of passion, but of justice, and the servant was disgraced and perished miserably. Oh, David, unhappy David!"

The King, who had found it hard to sit quiet and hear such insults, said to me that evening:

"Go to Clagny. Let this stormy weather pass by. When it is fine again, you must come back."

Having never run counter to the wishes of the father of my children, I acquiesced, and without further delay gladly departed.

Next day, Madame de Montausier came to see me at my country-house; she told me of the general rumour that was afloat at Court. The news, said she, of my retirement had begun to get about; three bishops had gone to congratulate the King, and these gentlemen had despatched couriers to Paris to inform the heads of the various parishes, inviting them to write to the prince sympathising references touching an event which God and all Christendom viewed with complete satisfaction.

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Madame de Montausier assured me that the King's bearing was fairly calm on the whole, and she also added that he had granted an interview of half an hour at least to the Abbe Bossuet, who had discoursed to him about me in a strain similar to that of the other clerics.

She was my sincere friend; she promised to come to Clagny every evening, driving thither incognito.

She had hardly been gone an hour, when my footman announced "Monsieur Bossuet, Bishop of Condom."

At the mention of this name, I felt momentarily inclined to refuse to see its owner; but I conquered my disgust, and I did well. The prelate, with his semi-clerical, semi-courtly air, made me a low bow. I calmly waited, so as to give him time to deliver his message. The famous rhetorician proceeded as follows:

"You know, madame, with what health-giving sacrifices the Church is now engaged. The merits of our Lord doubtless protect Christians at all times, but the Church has appointed times more efficacious, ceremonies more useful, springs yet more abounding. Thus it is that we now celebrate the grand nine days of the jubilee.

"To this mystic pool herdsman and monarchs alike receive summons and admission. The most Christian King must, for his own sake, accomplish his own sanctification; his sanctification provides for that of his subjects.

"Chosen by God to this royal priesthood, he comprehends the duties imposed upon him by such noble office. The passions of the heart are maladies from which man may recover, just as he recovers from physical disease. The physicians of the soul have lifted up their voice, have taken sage counsel together; and I come to inform you of the monarch's miraculous recovery, and at his request, I bring you this important and welcome news.

"For convalescents, greater care is required than for others; the King, and the whole of France, beseech you, with my voice, to have respect and care for the convalescence of our monarch, and I beg you, madame, to leave at once for Fontevrault."

"For Fontevrault?" I cried, without betraying my emotion. "Fontevrault is near Poitiers; it is too far away. No, I would rather go to Petit-Bourg, near the forest of Fontainebleau."

"Fontainebleau is but eighteen leagues from the capital," he answered; "such proximity would be dangerous. I must insist upon Fontevrault, madame."

"But I cannot take my children to Fontevrault," I retorted; "the nuns, and the Abbess herself, would never admit them. You know better than I do that it is a nunnery."

“Your children,” said he, “are not necessary to you; Madame de la Valliere managed to leave here for good and all.”

“Yes; and in forsaking them she committed a crime,” I answered; “only ferocious-hearted persons could have counselled her or commanded her to do so.” And saying this, I rose, and gave him a glance of disdain.

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He grew somewhat gentler in manner as he slowly went on, “His Majesty will take care of your children; it behoves you to save their mother. And, in order to prove to you that I have not come here of my own accord, but that, on the contrary, I am executing a formal command, here is a letter of farewell addressed to you by the King.”

I took the letter, which was couched in the following terms:

It is but right, madame, that on so solemn an occasion I should set an example myself. I must ask you henceforth to consider our intimacy entirely at an end. You must retire to Fontevrault, where Madame de Montemart will take care of you and afford you distraction by her charming society. Your children are in good hands; do not be in the least uneasy about them. Farewell. I wish you all the firmness and well-being possible. LOUISON

In the first flush of my indignation I was about to trample under foot so offensive a communication. But the final phrase shocked me less than the others.

I read it over again, and understood that if the King recommended me to be firm, it was because he needed to be firm himself. I soon mastered my emotion, and looked at things in their real light. It was easy to see that sanctimonious fanatics had forced the King to act. Bossuet was not sanctimonious, but, to serve his own ends, proffered himself as spokesman and emissary, being anxious to prove to his old colleagues that he was on the side of what they styled moral conduct and good example.

For a while I walked up and down my salon; but the least exertion fatigues me. I resumed my armchair or my settee, leaving the man there like a sort of messenger, whom it was not necessary to treat with any respect. He was bold, and asked me for a definite answer which he could take back to his Majesty. I stared hard at him for about a minute, and then said: “My Lord Bishop of Condom, the clerics who have been advising the King are very pleased that he should set an example to his people of self-sacrifice. I am of their opinion; I think as they do, as you do, as the Pope does; but feeling convinced that to us, the innocent sheep, the shepherds ought first to show an example, I will consent to break off my relationship with his Majesty when you, M. de Condom, shall have broken off your intimacy with Mademoiselle de Mauleon des Vieux!”

By a retort of this kind I admit that I hoped greatly to embarrass the Bishop, and enjoy seeing his face redden with confusion. But he was nowise disconcerted, and I confess to-day that this circumstance proved to me that there was but little truth in the rumours that were current with regard to this subject.

“Mademoiselle de Mauleon!” said he, smiling half-bitterly, half-pityingly. “Surely, madame, your grief makes you forget what you say. Everybody knows that she is an acquaintance of my youth, and that, since that time, having confidence in my doctrines and my counsel, she wished to have me as spiritual monitor and guide. How can you

institute a comparison between such a relationship and your own?” Then, after walking up and down for a moment, as if endeavouring to regain his self-possession, he continued:

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“However, I shall not insist further; it was signally foolish of me to speak in the name of an earthly king, when I should have invoked that of the King of Heaven. I have received an insulting answer. So be it.

“Farewell, madame. I leave you to your own conscience, which, seemingly, is so tranquil that I blame myself for having sought to disturb it.”

With these words he departed, leaving me much amazed at the patience with which a man, known to be so arrogant and haughty, had received such an onslaught upon his private life and reputation.

I need scarcely say that, next day, the species of pastoral letter which my lords the Bishops of Aleth, Orleans, Soissons, and Condom had dictated to the King was succeeded by another letter, which he had dictated himself, and by which my love for him was solaced and assured.

He begged me to wait patiently for a few days, and this arrangement served my purpose very well. I thought it most amusing that the King should have commissioned M. de Bossuet to deliver this second missive, and I believe I said as much to certain persons, which perhaps gave rise to a rumour that he actually brought me love-letters from the King. But the purveyors of such gossip could surely know nothing of Bossuet’s inflexible principles, and of the subtlety of his policy. He was well aware that by lending himself to such amenities he would lose caste morally with the King, and that if by his loyalty he had won royal attachment and regard, all this would have been irretrievably lost. Thus M. de Bossuet was of those who say, “Hate me, but fear me,” rather than of those who strive to be loved. Such people know that friendships are generally frail and transient, and that esteem lasts longer and leads further. He never interfered again with my affairs, nor did I with his; I got my way, and he is still where he was.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Madame de Montespan Back at Court.—Her Friends.—Her Enemies.—Edifying Conversions.—The Archbishop of Paris.

Eight days after the conclusion of the jubilee I returned to Versailles. The King received me with every mark of sincere friendship; my friends came in crowds to my apartments; my enemies left their names with my Swiss servant, and in chapel they put back my seat, chairs, and footstools in their usual place.

Madame de Maintenon had twice sent my children to Clagny

[The splendid Chateau de Clagny (since demolished) was situated on the beautiful country surrounding Versailles, near the wood of Millers d’Avrai.—EDITOR’s *note*.]

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with the under-governess; but she did not come herself, which greatly inconvenienced me. I complained to her about this, and she assured me the King had dissuaded her from visiting me, “so as to put curious folk off the scent;” and when I told her of my interview with M. de Bossuet, she neatly avoided being mixed up in the matter by omitting to blame anybody. The most licentious women, so she told me, had distinguished themselves by pious exercises during the observance of the jubilee. She informed me that the Comtesse de Soissons, the Princesse de Monaco, Madame de Soubise, and five or six virtuous dames of this type, had given gold, silver, and enamelled lamps to the most notable churches of the capital. The notorious Duchesse de Longueville talked of having her own tomb constructed in a Carmelite chapel. Six leaders of fashion had forsworn rouge, and Madame d’Humieres had given up gambling. As for my lord the Archbishop of Paris, he had not changed his way of life a jot, either for the better or for the worse.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Attempted Abduction.—The Marquise Procures a Bodyguard.—Her Reasons for So Doing.—Geography and Morals.

The youthful Marquis d’Antin—my son—was growing up; the King showed him the most flattering signs of his attachment, and as the child had lived only with me, he dreaded his father’s violent temper, of which he had often heard me speak. In order to have the custody of his son, the Marquis de Montespan had appealed to Parliament; but partisans of the King had shelved the matter, which, though ever in abeyance, was still pending. I had my son educated under my care, being sure of the tender attachment that would spring up between himself and the princes, his brothers. At the Montespan chateau, I admit, he would have learned to ride an unbroken horse, as well as to shoot hares, partridges, and big game; he would also have learned to talk loud, to use bad language, to babble about his pedigree, while ignorant of its history or its crest; in fine, he would have learned to despise his mother, and probably to hate her. Educated under my eyes, almost on the King’s lap, he soon learned the customs of the Court and all that a well-born gentleman should know. He will be made Duc d’Antin, I have the King’s word for it,—and his mien and address, which fortunately sort well with that which Fate holds in store for him, entitle him to rank with all that is most exalted at Court.

The Procureur-General caused a man from Barn to be arrested, who had come to abduct my son. This individual, half-Spanish and half-French, was detained in the Paris prisons, and I was left in ignorance of the matter. It was imprudent not to tell me, and almost occasioned a serious mishap.

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One day I was returning from the neighbourhood of Etampes with only my son, his tutor, and my physician in the carriage. On reaching a steep incline, where the brake should be put on, my servants imprudently neglected to do this, and I felt that we were burning the roadway in our descent. Such recklessness made me uneasy, when suddenly twelve horsemen rode headlong at us, and sought to stop the postilions. My six horses were new ones and very fresh; they galloped along at breakneck speed. Our pursuers fired at the coachman, but missed him, and the report of a pistol terrified the horses yet further. They redoubled their speed. We gave ourselves up for lost, as an accident of some sort seemed bound to ensue, when suddenly my carriage reached the courtyard of an inn, where we obtained help.

Baulked of their prey, the horsemen turned about and rode away. They had been noticed the day before, hanging about and asking for Madame de Montespan.

We stayed that night at the inn, and next day, provided with a stout escort, we reached Saint Germain.

The King regretted not having provided against similar attempts. He rewarded my postilions for their neglect to use the brake (a neglect which, at first, I was going to punish), saying to me, “If they had put the brake on, you would have been captured and whisked off to the Pyrenees. Your husband is never going to give in!”

“Such a disagreeable surprise,” added he, “shall not occur again. Henceforth you shall not travel without an adequate escort. In future, you shall have a guard of honour, like the Queen and myself.” I had long wished for this privilege, and I warmly thanked his Majesty.

Nevertheless, people chose to put a completely false construction upon so simple an innovation, and my sentiments in the matter were wholly misunderstood. It was thought that vanity had prompted me to endeavour to put myself on a level with the Queen, and this worthy princess was herself somewhat nettled thereat. God is my witness that, from mere motives of prudence, this unusual arrangement had to be made, and I entirely agreed to it. After all, if the Infanta of Spain gave birth to the Dauphin, Athenais de Mortemart is the mother of several princes.

In France, a Catholic realm, for the King to have a second wife is considered superfluous by the timorous and shrivelled-brained. In Constantinople, Alexandria, and Ispahan, I should have met with only homage, veneration, respect. Errors of a purely geographical nature are not those which cause me alarm; to have brought into the world so perfect a being as the Duc du Maine will never, as I take it, incur blame at the tribunal of Almighty God.

Mademoiselle de Nantes, his charming sister, has from her cradle been destined to belong to one of the royal branches. Mademoiselle de Blois will also become the

mother of several Bourbon princes; I have good grounds for cherishing such flattering hopes.

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The little Comte de Toulouse already bids fair to be a worthy successor to M. du Maine. He has the same grace of manner, and frank, distinguished mien.

When all these princes possess their several escorts, it will seem passing strange that their mother alone should not have any. That is my opinion, and it is shared by all people of sense.

CHAPTER XL.

Osmin, the Little Moor.—He Sets the Fashion.—The Queen Has a Black Baby.—Osmin is Dismissed.

I have already told how the envoys of the King of Arda, an African prince, gave to the Queen a nice little blackamoor, as a toy and pet. This Moor, aged about ten or twelve years, was only twenty-seven inches in height, and the King of Arda declared that, being quite unique, the boy would never grow to be taller than three feet.

The Queen instantly took a great fancy to this black creature. Sometimes he gambolled about and turned somersaults on her carpet like a kitten, or frolicked about on the bureau, the sofa, and even on the Queen's lap.

As she passed from one room to another, he used to hold up her train, and delighted to catch hold of it and so make the Queen stop short suddenly, or else to cover his head and face with it, for mischief, to make the courtiers laugh.

He was arrayed in regular African costume, wearing handsome bracelets, armlets, a necklace ablaze with jewels, and a splendid turban. Wishing to show myself agreeable, I gave him a superb aigrette of rubies and diamonds; I was always sorry afterwards that I did so.

The King could never put up with this little dwarf, albeit his features were comely enough. To begin with, he thought him too familiar, and never even answered him when the dwarf dared to address him.

Following the fashion set by her Majesty, all the Court ladies wanted to have little blackamoors to follow them about, set off their white complexions, and hold up their cloaks or their trains. Thus it came that Mignard, Le Bourdon, and other painters of the aristocracy, used to introduce negro boys into all their large portraits. It was a mode, a mania; but so absurd a fashion soon had to disappear after the mishap of which I am about to tell.

The Queen being pregnant, public prayers were offered up for her according to custom, and her Majesty was forever saying: "My pregnancy this time is different from preceding ones. I am a prey to nausea and strange whims; I have never felt like this

before. If, for propriety's sake, I did not restrain myself, I should now dearly like to be turning somersaults on the carpet, like little Osmin. He eats green fruit and raw game; that is what I should like to do, too. I should like to—"

"Oh, madame, you frighten us!" exclaimed the King. "Don't let all those whimsies trouble you further, or you will give birth to some monstrosity, some freak of nature." His Majesty was a true prophet. The Queen was delivered of a fine little girl, black as ink from head to foot. They did not tell her this at once, fearing a catastrophe, but persuaded her to go to sleep, saying that the child had been taken away to be christened.

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The physicians met in one room, the bishops and chaplains in another. One prelate was opposed to baptising the infant; another only agreed to this upon certain conditions. The majority decided that it should be baptised without the name of father or mother, and such suppression was unanimously advocated.

The little thing, despite its swarthy hue, was most beautifully made; its features bore none of those marks peculiar to people of colour.

It was sent away to the Gisors district to be suckled as a negro's daughter, and the Gazette de France contained an announcement to the effect that the royal infant had died, after having been baptised by the chaplains.

[This daughter of the Queen lived, and was obliged to enter a Benedictine nunnery at Moret. Her portrait is to be seen in the Sainte Genevieve Library of Henri IV.'s College, where it hangs in the winter saloon.—*Editor's note*.]

The little African was sent away, as may well be imagined; and the Queen admitted that, one day soon after she was pregnant, he had hidden himself behind a piece of furniture and suddenly jumped out upon her to give her a fright. In this he was but too successful.

The Court ladies no longer dared come near the Queen attended by their little blackamoors. These, however, they kept for a while longer, as if they were mere nick-hacks or ornaments; in Paris they were still to be seen in public. But the ladies' husbands at last got wind of the tale, when all the little negroes disappeared.

CHAPTER XLI.

Monsieur's Second Marriage.—Princess Palatine.—The Court Turnspit.—A Woman's Hatred.—The King's Mistress on a Par with the First Prince of the Blood.—She Gives His Wife a Lesson.

In order to keep up appearances at his Palais Royal, Monsieur besought the King to consent to his remarriage after the usual term of mourning was at an end.

"Whom have you in view?" asked his brother. He replied that he proposed to wed Mademoiselle—the grande Mademoiselle de Montpensier—on account of her enormous wealth!

Just then Mademoiselle was head over ears in love with Lauzun. She sent the Prince about his business, as I believe I have already stated. Moreover, she remarked: "You had the loveliest wife in all Europe,—young, charming, a veritable picture. You might have seen to it that she was not poisoned; in that case you would not now be a widower. As it is not likely that I should ever come to terms with your favourites, I shall

never be anything else to you but a cousin, and I shall endeavour not to die until the proper time; that is, when it shall please God to take me. You can repeat this speech, word for word, to your precious Marquis d'Effiat and Messieurs de Remecourt and de Lorraine. They have no access to my kitchens; I am not afraid of them."

This answer amused the King not a little, and he said to me: "I was told that the Palatine of Bavaria's daughter is extremely ugly and ill-bred; consequently, she is capable of keeping Monsieur in check. Through one of my Rhenish allies, I will make proposals to her father for her hand. As soon as a reply comes, I will show my brother a portrait of some sort; it will be all the same to him; he will accept her."

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Soon afterwards this marriage took place. Charlotte Elizabeth of Bavaria, though aware of the sort of death that her predecessor died, agreed to marry Monsieur. Had she not been lucky enough to make this grand match, her extreme ugliness would assuredly have doomed her to celibacy, even in Bavaria and in Germany. It is surely not allowable to come into the world with such a face and form, such a voice, such eyes, such hands, and such feet, as this singular princess displayed. The Court, still mindful of the sweetness, grace, and charm of Henrietta of England, could not contemplate without horror and disgust the fearful caricature I have just described. Young pregnant women —after the Queen's unfortunate experience—were afraid to look at the Princess Palatine, and wished to be confined before they reappeared at Court.

As for herself, armed with robust, philosophical notions, and a complete set of Northern nerves, she was in no way disconcerted at the effect her presence produced. She even had the good sense to appear indifferent to all the raillery she provoked, and said to the King:

"Sire, to my mind you are one of the handsomest men in the world, and with few exceptions, your Court appears to me perfectly fitted for you. I have come but scantily equipped to such an assemblage. Fortunately, I am neither jealous nor a coquette, and I shall win pardon for my plainness, I myself being the first to make merry at it."

"You put us completely at our ease," replied the King, who had not even the courage to be gallant. "I must thank you on behalf of these ladies for your candour and wit." Ten or twelve of us began to titter at this speech of hers. The Robust Lady never forgave those who laughed.

Directly she arrived, she singled me out as the object of her ponderous Palatine sarcasms. She exaggerated my style of dress, my ways and habits. She thought to make fun of my little spaniels by causing herself to be followed, even into the King's presence-chamber, by a large turnspit, which in mockery she called by the name of my favourite dog.

When I had had my hair dressed, ornamented with quantities of little curls, diamonds, and jewelled pins, she had the impertinence to appear at Court wearing a huge wig, a grotesque travesty of my coiffure. I was told of it. I entered the King's apartment without deigning to salute Madame, or even to look at her.

I had also been told that, in society, she referred to me as "the Montespan woman." I met her one day in company with a good many other people, and said to her:

"Madame, you managed to give up your religion in order to marry a French prince; you might just as well have left behind your gross Palatine vulgarity also. I have the honour to inform you that, in the exalted society to which you have been admitted, one can no more say 'the Montespan woman,' than one can say 'the Orleans woman.' I have never

offended you in the slightest degree, and I fail to see why I should have been chosen as the favoured object of your vulgar insults."

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She blushed, and ventured to inform me that this way of expressing herself was a turn of speech taken from her own native language, and that by saying “the,” as a matter of course “Marquise” was understood.

“No, madame,” I said, without appearing irritated; “in Paris, such an excuse as that is quite inadmissible, and since you associate with turnspits, pray ask your cooks, and they will tell you.”

Fearing to quarrel with the King, she was obliged to be more careful, but to change one’s disposition is impossible, and she has loathed and insulted me ever since. Her husband, who himself probably taught her to do so, one day tried to make apologies for what he ruefully termed her reprehensible conduct. “There, there, it doesn’t matter,” I said to him; “it is easier to offend me than to deceive me. Allow me to quote to you the speech of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, ’You had a charming and accomplished wife, you ought to have prevented her from being poisoned, and then we should not have had this hag at Court.’”

CHAPTER XLII.

Madame de Montespan’s Father-confessor.—He Alters His Opinion.—Madame de Maintenon Is Consulted.—A General on Theology.—A Country Priest.—The Marquise Postpones Her Repentance and Her Absolution.

My father-confessor, who since my arrival at Court had never vexed or thwarted me, suddenly altered his whole manner towards me, from which I readily concluded that the Queen had got hold of him. This priest, of gentle, easy-going, kindly nature, never spoke to me except in a tone of discontent and reproach. He sought to induce me to leave the King there and then, and retire to some remote chateau. Seeing that he was intriguing, and had, so to speak, taken up his position, like a woman of experience I took up mine as well, and politely dismissed him, at which he was somewhat surprised. In matters of religion, Madame de Maintenon, who understands such things, was my usual mentor. I told her that I was disheartened, and should not go to confession again for ever so long. She was shocked at my resolve, and strove all she could to make me change my mind and endeavour to lead me back into the right way.

She forever kept repeating her favourite argument, saying, “Good gracious! suppose you should die in that state!”

I replied that it was not my fault, as I had never ceased to obey the precepts of the Holy Church. “It was my old father-confessor,” said I, “the Canon of Saint Thomas du Louvre, who had harshly refused to confess me.”

“What he does,” replied she, “is solely for your own good.”

“But if he has only my well-being in view,” I quickly retorted, “why did not he think of this at first? It would have been far better to have stopped me at the outset, instead of letting me calmly proceed upon my career. He is obeying the Queen’s orders, or else those of that Abbe Bossuet de Mauleon, who no longer dares attack me to my face.”

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As we thus talked, the Duc de Vivonne came into my room. Learning the topic of our discussion, he spoke as follows: "I should not be general of the King's Galleys and a soldier at heart and by profession if my opinion in this matter were other than it is. I have attentively read controversies on this point, and have seen it conclusively proved that our kings never kept a confessor at Court. Among these kings, too, there were most holy, most saintly people, and—"

"Then, what do you conclude from that, Duke?" asked Madame de Maintenon.

"Why, that Madame will do well to respect his Majesty the King as her father-confessor."

"Oh, Duke, you shock me! What dreadful advice, to be sure!" cried the governess.

"I have not the least wish to shock you, madame; but my veneration for D'Aubigne—

[Theodore Agrippa, Baron d'Aubigne, lieutenant-general in the army of Henri IV. He persevered in Calvinism after the recantation of the King.—*Editor's note*.]

your illustrious grandfather—is too great to let me think that he is among the damned, and he never attended confession at all."

"Eternity hides that secret from us," replied Madame de Maintenon. "Each day I pray to God to have mercy upon my poor grandfather; if I thought he were among the saved, I should never be at pains to do this."

"Bah, madame! let's talk like sensible, straightforward people," quoth the General. "The reverend Pere de la Chaise—one of the Jesuit oracles—gives the King absolution every year, and authorises him to receive the Holy Sacrament at Easter. If the King's confessor—thorough priest as he is—pardons his intimacy with madame, here, how comes it that the other cleric won't tolerate madame's intimacy with the King? On a point of such importance as this, the two confessors ought really to come to some agreement, or else, as the Jesuits have such a tremendous reputation, the Marquise is entitled to side with them."

Hemmed in thus, Madame de Maintenon remarked "that the morals of Jesuits and lax casuists had never been hers," and she advised me to choose a confessor far removed from the Court and its intrigues.

The next day she mentioned a certain village priest to me, uninfluenced by anybody, and whose primitive simplicity caused him to be looked upon as a saint.

I submitted, and ingenuously went to confess myself to this wonderful man; his great goodness did not prevent him from rallying me about the elegance of my costume, and the perfume of my gloves, and my hair. He insisted upon knowing my name, and on learning it, flew into a passion. I suppress the details of his disagreeable propositions.

Seated sideways in his confessional, he stamped on the floor, abused me, and spoke disrespectfully of the King. I could not stand such scandalous behaviour for long; and, wearing my veil down, I got into my coach, being thoroughly determined that I would take a good long holiday. M. de Vivonne soundly rated me for such cowardice, as he called it, while Madame de Maintenon offered me her curate-in-chief, or else the Abbe Gobelin.

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But, for the time being, I determined to keep to my plan of not going to confession, strengthened in such resolve by my brother Vivonne's good sense, and the attitude of the King's Jesuit confessor, who had a great reputation and knew what he was about.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The Comte de Guiche.—His Violent Passion for Madame.—His Despair.—He Flees to La Trappe.—And Comes Out Again.—A Man's Heart.—Cured of His Passion, He Takes a Wife.

The Comte de Guiche, son of the Marechal de Grammont, was undoubtedly one of the handsomest men in France.

The grandeur and wealth of his family had, at an early age, inspired him with courage and self-conceit, so that in his blind, frivolous presumption, the only person, as he thought, who exceeded his own fascination was possibly the King, but nobody else.

Perceiving the wonderful charm of Monsieur's first wife, he conceived so violent a passion for her that no counsel nor restraint could prevent him from going to the most extravagant lengths in obedience to this rash, this boundless passion.

Henrietta of England, much neglected by her husband, and naturally of a romantic disposition, allowed the young Count to declare his love for her, either by singing pretty romances under her balcony, or by wearing ribbons, bunched together in the form of a hieroglyphic, next his heart. Elegantly dressed, he never failed to attend all the assemblies to which she lent lustre by her presence. He followed her to Saint Germain, to Versailles, to Chambord, to Saint Cloud; he only lived and had his being in the enjoyment of contemplating her charms.

One day, being desirous of walking alongside her sedan-chair, without being recognised, he had a complete suit made for him of the La Valliere livery, and thus, seeming to be one of the Duchess's pages, he was able to converse with Madame for a short time. Another time he disguised himself as a pretty gipsy, and came to tell the Princess her fortune. At first she did not recognise him, but when the secret was out, and all the ladies were in fits of laughter, a page came running in to announce the arrival of Monsieur. Young De Guiche slipped out by a back staircase, and in order to facilitate his exit, one of the footmen, worthy of Moliere, caught hold of the Prince as if he were one of his comrades, and holding a handkerchief over his face, nearly poked his eye out.

The Count's indiscretions were retailed in due course to Monsieur by his favourites, and he was incensed beyond measure. He complained to Marechal de Grammont; he complained to the King.

Hereupon, M. de Guiche received orders to travel for two or three years.

War with the Turks had just been declared, and together with other officers, his friends, he set out for Candia and took part in the siege. All did him the justice to affirm that while there he behaved like a hero. When the fortress had to capitulate, and Candia was lost to the Christians forever, our officers returned to France. Madame was still alive when the young Count rejoined his family. He met the Princess once or twice in society, without being able to approach her person, or say a single word to her.

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Soon afterwards, she gave birth to a daughter. A few days later, certain monsters took her life by giving her poison. This dreadful event made such an impression upon the poor Comte de Guiche, that for a long while he lost his gaiety, youth, good looks, and to a certain extent, his reason. After yielding to violent despair, he was possessed with rash ideas of vengeance. The Marechal de Grammont had to send him away to one of his estates, for the Count talked of attacking and of killing, without further ado, the Marquis d'Effiat, M. de Remecourt, the Prince's intendant, named Morel,

[Morel subsequently admitted his guilt in the matter of Madame's death, as well as the commission of other corresponding crimes. See the Letters of Charlotte, the Princess Palatine.—*Editor's note*.]

and even the Duc d'Orleans himself.

His intense agitation was succeeded by profound melancholy, stupor closely allied to insanity or death.

One evening, the Comte de Guiche went to the Abbey Church of Saint Denis. He hid himself here, to avoid being watched, and when the huge nave was closed, and all the attendants had left, he rushed forward and flung himself at full length upon the tombstone which covers the vast royal vault. By the flickering light of the lamps, he mourned the passing hence of so accomplished a woman, murdered in the flower of her youth. He called her by name, telling her once more of his deep and fervent love. Next day, he wandered about in great pain, gloomy and inconsolable.

One day he came to see me at Clagny, and talked in a hopeless, desolate way about our dear one. He told me that neither glory nor ambition nor voluptuous pleasures could ever allure him or prove soothing to his soul. He assured me that life was a burden to him,—a burden that religion alone prevented him from relinquishing, and that he was determined to shut himself up in La Trappe or in some such wild, deserted place.

I sought to dissuade him from such a project, which could only be the cause of grief and consternation to his relatives. He pretended to yield to my entreaties, but the next night he left home and disappeared.

At length he came back. Luckily, the Trappist Abbe de Ranch wished to take away from him the portrait on enamel of Henrietta of England, so as to break it in pieces before his eyes. So indignant was the Count that he was upon the point of giving the hermit a thrashing. He fled in disgust from the monastery, and this fresh annoyance served, in some degree, to assuage his grief. Life's daily occupations, the excitements of society, the continual care shown towards him by his relatives, youth, above all, and Time, the irresistible healer, at last served to soothe a sorrow which, had it lasted longer, would have been more disastrous in its results.

The Comte de Guiche consented to marry a wife to whom he was but slightly attached, and who is quite content with him, praising his good qualities and all his actions.

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CHAPTER XLIV.

Mexica.—Philippa.—Molina.—The Queen's Jester.

In marrying Maria Theresa, Infanta of Spain, the King had made an advantageous match from a political point of view. For through the Infanta he had rights with regard to Flanders; she also provided him with eventual claims upon Spain itself, together with Mexico and Peru. But from a personal and social point of view, the King could not have contracted a more miserable alliance. The Infanta, almost wholly uneducated, had not even such intellectual resources as a position such as hers certainly required, where personal risk was perpetual, where authority had to be maintained by charming manners, and respect for power ensured by elevation of tone and sentiment, which checks the indiscreet, and imbues everybody with the spirit of consideration and reverence.

Maria Theresa, though a king's daughter, made no more effect at Court than if she had been a mere middle-class person. The King, in fact, by his considerateness, splendour, and glory, served to support her dignity. He hoped and even desired that she should be held in honour, partly for her own sake, in a great measure for his. But as soon as she started upon some argument or narration where force of intellect was needed, she always seemed bewildered, and he soon interrupted her either by finishing the tale himself, or by changing the conversation. This he did good-naturedly and with much tact, so that the Queen, instead of taking offence, was pleased to be under such an obligation to him. From such a wife this prince could not look to have sons of remarkable talent or intellect, for that would have been nothing short of a miracle. And thus the little Dauphin showed none of those signs of intelligence which the most ordinary commonplace children usually display. When the Queen heard courtiers repeat some of the droll, witty sayings of the Comte de Vegin, or the Duc du Maine, she reddened with jealousy, and remarked, "Everybody goes into ecstasies about those children, while Monsieur le Dauphin is never even mentioned."

She had brought with her from Spain that Donna Silvia Molina, of whom I have already spoken, and who had got complete control over her character. Instead of tranquillising her, and so making her happy, Donna Silvia thought to become more entertaining, and above all, more necessary to her, by gossiping to her about the King's amours. She ferreted out all the secret details, all the petty circumstances, and with such dangerous material troubled the mind and destroyed the repose of her mistress, who wept unceasingly, and became visibly changed.

La Molina, enriched and almost wealthy, was sent back to Spain, much to the grief of Maria Theresa, who for several days after her departure could neither eat nor sleep.

At the same time, the King got rid of that little she-dwarf, named Mexica, in whose insufferable talk and insufferable presence the Queen took delight. But the sly little wretch escaped during the journey, and managed to get back to the princess again, hidden in some box or basket. The Queen was highly delighted to see her again; she pampered her secretly in her private cabinet with the utmost mystery, giving up every moment that she could spare.

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One day, by way of a short cut, the King was passing through the Queen's closet, when he heard the sound of coughing in one of the cupboards. Turning back, he flung it open, where, huddled up in great confusion, he found Mexica.

"What!" cried his Majesty; "so you are back again? When and how did you come?"

In a feeble voice Mexica answered, "Sire, please don't send me away from the Queen any more, and she will never complain again about Madame de Montespan."

The King laughed at this speech, and then came and repeated it to me. I laughed heartily, too, and such a treaty of peace seemed to contain queer compensation clauses: Madame de Montespan and Mexica were mutually bound over to support each other; the spectacle was vastly droll, I vow.

Besides her little dwarf, the Queen had a fool named Tricominy. This quaint person was permitted to utter everywhere and to everybody in incoherent fashion the pseudo home-truths that passed through his head. One day he went up to the grande Mademoiselle de Montpensier, and said to her before everybody, "Since you are so anxious to get married, marry me; then that will be a man-fool and a woman-fool." The Princess tried to hit him, and he took refuge behind the Queen's chair.

Another time, to M. Letellier, Louvois's brother and Archbishop of Rheims, he said, "Monseigneur, do let me ascend the pulpit in your Cathedral, and I will preach modesty and humanity to you." When the little Duc d'Anjou, that pretty, charming child, died of suppressed measles, the Queen was inconsolable, and the King, good father that he is, was weeping for the little fellow, for he promised much. Says Tricominy, "They're weeping just as if princes had not got to die like anybody else. M. d'Anjou was no better made than I am, nor of better stuff."

Tricominy was dismissed, because it was plain that his madness took a somewhat eccentric turn; that, in fact, he was not fool enough for his place.

The Queen had still a Spanish girl named Philippa, to whom she was much attached, and who deserved such flattering attachment. Born in the Escurial Palace, Philippa had been found one night in a pretty cradle at the base of one of the pillars. The palace guards informed King Philip, who adopted the child and brought it up, since it had been foisted upon him as his daughter. He grew fond of the girl, and on coming to Saint Jean de Luz to marry the Infanta to his nephew the King, he made them a present of Philippa, and begged them both to be very good to her. In this amiable Spanish girl, the Infanta recognised a sister. She knew she was an illegitimate daughter of King Philip and one of the palace ladies.

When Molina left the Court, she did everything on earth to induce Philippa to return with her to Spain, but the girl was sincerely attached to the Queen, who, holding her in a

long embrace, promised to find her a wealthy husband if she would stay. However, the Queen only gave her as husband the Chevalier de Huze, her cloak-bearer, so as to keep the girl about her person and to be intimate with her daily. Philippa played the mandolin and the guitar to perfection; she, also sang and danced with consummate grace.

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CHAPTER XLV.

Le Bouthilier de Ranch, Abbe de la Trappe.

The Abbe le Bouthilier de Rance,—son of the secretary of state, Le Bouthilier de Chavigny,—after having scandalised Court and town by his public gallantries, lost his mistress, a lady possessed of a very great name and of no less great beauty. His grief bordered upon despair; he forsook the world, gave away or sold his belongings, and went and shut himself up in his Abbey of La Trappe, the only benefice which he had retained. This most ancient monastery was of the Saint Bernard Order, with white clothing. The edifice spacious, yet somewhat dilapidated was situated on the borders of Normandy, in a wild, gloomy valley exposed to fog and frost.

The Abbe found in this a place exactly suitable to his plan, which was to effect reforms of austere character and contrary to nature. He convened his monks, who were amazed at his arrival and residence; he soundly rated them for the scandalous laxity of their conduct, and having reminded them of all the obligations of their office, he informed them of his new regulations, the nature of which made them tremble. He proposed nothing less than to condemn them to daily manual labour, the tillage of the soil, the performance of menial household duties; and to this he added the practices of immoderate fasting, perpetual silence, downcast glances, veiled countenances, the renouncement of all social ties, and all instructive or entertaining literature. In short, he advocated sleeping all together on the bare floor of an ice-cold dormitory, the continual contemplation of death, the dreadful obligation of digging, while alive, one's own grave every day with one's own hands, and thus, in imagination, burying oneself therein before being at rest there for ever.

As laws so foolish and so tyrannical were read out to them, the worthy monks—all of them of different character and age openly expressed their discontent. The Abbe de Rance allowed them to go and get pleasure in other monasteries, and contrived to collect around him youths whom it was easy to delude, and a few elderly misanthropes; with these he formed his doleful wailing flock.

As he loved notoriety in everything, he had various views of his monastery engraved, and pictures representing the daily pursuits of his laborious community. Such pictures, hawked about everywhere by itinerant vendors of relics and rosaries, served to create for this barbarous reformer a reputation saintly and angelic. In towns, villages, even in royal palaces, he formed the one topic of conversation. Several gentlemen, disgusted either with vice or with society, retired of their own accord to his monastery, where they remained in order that they might the sooner die.

Desirous of enjoying his ridiculous celebrity, the Abbe de Rance came to Paris, under what pretext I do not remember, firmly resolved to show himself off in all the churches,

and solicit abundant alms for his phantoms who never touched food. From all sides oblations were forthcoming; soon he had got money enough to build a palace, if he had liked.

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It being impossible for him to take the august Mademoiselle de Montpensier to his colony of monks, he desired at any rate to induce her to withdraw from the world, and counselled her to enter a Carmelite convent. Mademoiselle's ardent passion for M. de Lauzun seemed to the Trappist Abbe a scandal; in fact, his sour spirit could brook no scandal of any sort. "I attended her father as he lay dying," said he, "and to me belongs the task of training, enlightening, and sanctifying his daughter. I would have her keep silence; she has spoken too much."

The moment was ill chosen; just then Mademoiselle de Montpensier was striving to break the fetters of her dear De Lauzun; she certainly did not wish to get him out of one prison, and then put herself into another. Every one blamed this reformer's foolish presumption, and Mademoiselle, thoroughly exasperated, forbade her servants to admit him. It was said that he had worked two or three miracles, and brought certain dead people back to life.

"I will rebuild his monastery for him in marble if he will give us back poor little Vegin, and the Duc d'Anjou," said the King to me.

The remark almost brought tears to my eyes, just as I was about to joke with his Majesty about the fellow and his miracles.

Well satisfied with his Parisian harvest, the Abbe le Bouthilier de Rance went straight to his convent, where the inmates were persevering enough to be silent, fast, dig, catch their death of cold, and beat themselves for him.

Madame Cormeil, wishing to have a good look at the man, sent to inform him of her illness. Would-be saints are much afraid of words with a double meaning. In no whit disconcerted, he replied that he had devoted his entire zeal to the poor in spirit, and that Madame Cormeil was not of their number.

CHAPTER XLVI.

The Court Goes to Flanders.—Nancy.—Ravon.—Sainte Marie aux Mines.—Dancing and Death.—A German Sovereign's Respectful Visit.—The Young Strasburg Priests.—The Good Bailiff of Chatenoi.—The Bridge at Brisach.—The Capucin Monk Presented to the Queen.

Before relating that which I have to say about the Queen and her precautions against myself, I would not omit certain curious incidents during the journey that the King caused us to take in Alsatia and Flanders, when he captured Maestricht and Courtrai.

The King having left us behind at Nancy, a splendid town where a large proportion of the nobility grieved for the loss of Messieurs de Lorraine, their legitimate sovereigns, the Queen soon saw that here she was more honoured than beloved. It was this position

which suggested to her the idea of going to Spa, close by, and of taking the waters for some days.

If the Infanta was anxious to escape from the frigid courtesies of the Lorraine aristocracy, I also longed to have a short holiday, and to keep away from the Queen, as well for the sake of her peace of mind as for my own. My doctor forbade me to take the Spa waters, as they were too sulphurous; he ordered me those of Pont-a-Mousson. Hardly had I moved there, when orders came for us all to meet at Luneville, and thence we set out to rejoin the King.

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Horrible was the first night of our journey spent at Ravon, in the Vosges Mountains. The house in which Mademoiselle de Montpensier and I lodged was a dilapidated cottage, full of holes, and propped up in several places. Lying in bed, we heard the creaking of the beams and rafters. Two days afterwards the house, so they told us, collapsed.

From that place we went on to Sainte Marie aux Mines, a mean sort of town, placed like a long corridor between two lofty, well-wooded mountains, which even at noonday deprive it of sun. Close by there is a shallow, rock-bound streamlet which divides Lorraine from Alsace. Sainte Marie aux Mines belonged to the Prince Palatine of Birkenfeld. This Prince offered us his castle of Reif Auvilliers, an uncommonly beautiful residence, which he had inherited from the Comtesse de Ribaupierre, his wife.

This lady's father was just dead, and as, in accordance with German etiquette, the Count's funeral obsequies could not take place for a month, in the presence of all his relatives and friends, who came from a great distance, the corpse, embalmed and placed in a leaden coffin, lay in state under a canopy in the mortuary chapel.

Our equerries, seeing that the King's chamber looked on to the mortuary chapel, took upon themselves to blow out all the candles, and for the time being stowed away the corpse in a cupboard.

We knew nothing about this; and as the castle contained splendid rooms, the ladies amused themselves by dancing and music to make them forget the boredom of their journey.

The King looked in upon us every now and then, saying, in a low voice, "Ah! if you only knew what I know!"

And then he would go off, laughing in his sleeve. We did not get to know about this corpse until five or six days afterwards, when we were a long way off, and the discovery greatly shocked us.

The day we left Sainte Marie aux Mines, a little German sovereign came to present his homage to the King. It was the Prince de Mont-Beliard, of Wurtemberg, whom I had previously met in Paris, on the occasion of his marriage with Marechal de Chatillon's charming daughter. The luxurious splendour of Saint Germain and Versailles had certainly not yet succeeded in turning the heads of these German sovereigns. This particular one wore a large buff doublet with big copper-gilt buttons. His cravat was without either ribbons or lace. His rather short hair was roughly combed over his forehead; he carried no sword, and instead of gold buckles or clasps, he had little bows of red leather on his black velvet shoes. His coach, entirely black, was still of old-fashioned make; that is to say, studded with quantities of gilt nails. Wearing mourning for the Empress, his six horses were richly, caparisoned, his four lackeys wearing yellow

liveries faced with red. An escort of twenty guardsmen, dressed similarly, was in attendance; they seemed to be well mounted, and were handsome fellows.

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A second carriage of prodigious size followed the ducal conveyance; in this were twelve ladies and gentlemen, who got out and made their obeisance to the King and Queen.

The Prince de Mont-Beliard did not get into his coach again until ours were in motion. He spoke French fairly well, and the little he said was said with much grace. He looked very hard at me, which shocked the Queen greatly, but not the King.

A little further on, their Majesties were greeted by the delegates of the noble chapter of Strasburg. These comprised the Count of Manderhall and two canons. What canons, too! And how astonished we were!

The old Count was dressed in a black cassock, and his hair looked somewhat like a cleric's, but his cravat was tied with a large flame-coloured bow, and he wore ill-fitting hose of the same hue. As for the two canons, they were pleasant young men, good-looking and well-made. Their light gray dress was edged with black and gold; they wore their hair long in wavy curls, and in their little black velvet caps they had yellow and black feathers, and their silver-mounted swords were like those worn by our young courtiers. Their equipment was far superior to that of the deputation of the Prince de Mont-Beliard. It is true, they were churchmen, and churchmen have only themselves and their personal satisfaction to consider.

These gentlemen accompanied us as far as Chatenoi, a little town in their neighbourhood, and here they introduced the bailiff of the town to the King, who was to remain constantly in attendance and act as interpreter.

The bailiff spoke French with surprising ease. He had been formerly tutor at President Tambonneaux's, an extremely wealthy man, who entertained the Court, the town, and all the cleverest men of the day. The King soon became friends with the bailiff, and kept him the whole time close to his carriage.

When travelling, the King is quite another man. He puts off his gravity of demeanour, and likes to amuse his companions, or else make his companions amuse him. Believing him to be like Henri IV. in temper, the bailiff was for asking a thousand questions. Some of these the King answered; to others he gave no reply.

"Sire," said he to his Majesty, "your town of Paris has a greater reputation than it actually deserves. They say you are fond of building; then Paris ought to have occasion to remember your reign. Allow me to express a hope that her principal streets will be widened, that her temples, most of them of real beauty, may be isolated. You should add to the number of her bridges, quays, public baths, almshouses and infirmaries."

The King smiled. "Come and see us in four or five years," he rejoined, "or before that, if you like, and if your affairs permit you to do so. You will be pleased to see what I have already done."

Then the bailiff, approaching my carriage window, addressed a few complimentary remarks to myself.

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“I have often met your father, M. de Mortemart,” said he, “at President Tambonneaux’s. One day the little De Bouillons were there, quarrelling about his sword, and to the younger he said, ’You, sir, shall go into the Church, because you squint. Let my sword alone; here’s my rosary.’”

“Well,” quoth the King, “M. de Mortemart was a true prophet, for that little Bouillon fellow is to-day Cardinal de Bouillon.”

“Sire,” continued the worthy German, “I am rejoiced to hear such news. And little Peguilain de Lauzun, of whom you used to be so fond when you were both boys,—-where is he? What rank does he now hold?”

Hereupon the King looked at Mademoiselle, who, greatly confused, shed tears.

“Well, M. Bailiff,” said his Majesty, “did you easily recognise me at first sight?”

“Sire,” replied the German, “your physiognomy is precisely the same; when a boy, you looked more serious. The day you entered Parliament in hunting-dress I saw you get into your coach; and that evening the President said to his wife, ’Madame, we are going to have a King. I wish you could have been there, in one of the domes, just to hear the little he said to us.’”

Whereupon the King laughingly inquired what reply the President’s wife made. But the bailiff, smiling in his turn, seemed afraid to repeat it, and so his Majesty said:

“I was told of her answer at the time, so I can let you know what it was. ‘Your young King will turn out a despot.’ That is what Madame la Presidente said to her husband.”

The bailiff, somewhat confused, admitted that this was exactly the case.

The huge bridge at Brisach, across the Rhine, had no railing; the planks were in a rickety condition, and through fissures one caught sight of the impetuous rush of waters below. We all got out of our coaches and crossed over with our eyes half shut, so dangerous did it seem; while the King rode across this wretched bridge,—one of the narrowest and loftiest that there is, and which is always in motion.

Next day the Bishop of Bale came to pay his respects to the Queen, and was accompanied by delegates from the Swiss cantons, and other notabilities. After this I heard the “General of the Capucins” announced, who had just been to pay a visit of greeting to the German Court. He was said to be by birth a Roman. Strange to say, for that Capucin the same ceremony and fuss was made as for a sovereign prince, and I heard that this was a time-honoured privilege enjoyed by his Order. The monk himself was a fine man, wearing several decorations; his carriage, livery, and train seemed splendid, nor did he lack ease of manner nor readiness of conversation. He told us that, at the imperial palace in Vienna, he had seen the Princesse d’Inspruck,—a relative of

the French Queen, and that the Emperor was bringing her up as if destined one day to be his seventh bride, according to a prediction. He also stated that the Emperor had made the young Princess sing to him,—a Capucin monk; and added genially that she was comely and graceful, and that he had been very pleased to see her.

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The King was very merry at this priest's expense. Not so the Queen, who was Spanish, and particularly devoted to Capucin friars of all nationalities.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Moliere.—Racine.—Their Mutual Esteem.—Racine in Mourning.

The King had not much leisure, yet occasionally he gave up half an hour or an hour to the society of a chosen few,—men famous for their wit and brilliant talents. One day he was so kind as to bring to my room the celebrated Moliere, to whom he was particularly attached and showed special favour. "Madame," said the King, "here you see the one man in all France who has most wit, most talent, and most modesty and good sense combined. I thank God for letting him be born during my reign, and I pray that He may preserve him to us for a long while yet."

As I hastened to add my own complimentary remarks to those of the King, I certainly perceived that about this illustrious person there was an air of modesty and simplicity such as one does not commonly find in Apollo's favourites who aspire to fame. Moreover, he was most comely.

Moliere told the King that he had just sketched out the plot of his "Malade Imaginaire," and assured us that hypochondriacs themselves would find something to laugh at when it was played. He spoke very little about himself, but at great length, and with evident admiration, about the young poet Racine.

The King asked if he thought that Racine had strength sufficient to make him the equal of Corneille. "Sire," said the comic poet, "Racine has already surpassed Corneille by the harmonious elegance of his versification, and by the natural, true sensibility of his dialogue; his situations are never fictitious; all his words, his phrases, come from the heart. Racine alone is a true poet, for he alone is inspired."

The King, continuing, said: "I cannot witness his tragedy of 'Berenice' without shedding tears. How comes it that Madame Deshoulieres and Madame de Sevigne, who have so much mind, refuse to recognise beauties which strike a genius such as yours?"

"Sire," replied Moliere, "my opinion is nothing compared to that which your Majesty has just expressed, such is your sureness of judgment and your tact. I know by experience that those scenes of my comedies which, at a first reading, are applauded by your Majesty, always win most applause from the public afterwards."

"Is Racine in easy circumstances?" asked the King.

"He is not well off," replied Moliere, "but the tragedies which he has in his portfolio will make a rich man of him some day; of that I have not the least doubt."

“Meanwhile,” said the King, “take him this draft of six thousand livres from me, nor shall this be the limit of my esteem and affection.”

Five or six months after this interview, poor Moliere broke a blood-vessel in his chest, while playing with too great fervour the title part in his “Malade Imaginaire.” When they brought the news to the King, he turned pale, and clasping his hands together, well-nigh burst into tears. “France has lost her greatest genius,” he said before all the nobles present. “We shall never have any one like him again; our loss is irreparable!”

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When they came to tell us that the Paris clergy had refused burial to “the author of ‘Tartuffe,’” his Majesty graciously sent special orders to the Archbishop, and with a royal wish of that sort they were obliged to comply, or else give good reasons for not doing so.

Racine went into mourning for Moliere. The King heard this, and publicly commended such an act of good feeling and grateful sympathy.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Madame de Montausier and the Phantom.—What She Exacts from the Marquise.—Her Reproaches to the Duke.—Bossuet’s Complacency.

Those spiteful persons who told the Queen how obliging the Duchesse de Montausier had shown herself towards me were also so extremely kind as to write an account of the whole affair to the Marquis de Montespan.

At that time he was still in Paris, and one day he went to the Duchess just as she was getting out of bed. In a loud voice he proceeded to scold her, daring to threaten her as if she were some common woman; in fact, he caught hold of her and endeavoured to strike her.

The King would not allow M. de Montausier to obtain redress from the Marquis for such an insult as this. He granted a large pension to the Duchess, and appointed her husband preceptor to the Dauphin.

Such honours and emoluments partly recompensed the Duchess, yet they scarcely consoled her. She considered that her good name was all but lost, and what afflicted her still more was that she never recovered her health. She used to visit me, as our duties brought us together, but it was easy to see that confidence and friendship no longer existed.

One day, when passing along one of the castle corridors, which, being so gloomy, need lamplight at all hours, she perceived a tall white phantom, which glared hideously at her, and then approaching, vanished. She was utterly prostrated, and on returning to her apartments was seized with fever and shivering. The doctors perceived that her brain was affected; they ordered palliatives, but we soon saw that there was no counting upon their remedies. She was gradually sinking.

Half an hour before she died the Duchess sent for me, having given instructions that we should be left alone, and that there should be no witnesses. Her intense emaciation was pitiful, and yet her face kept something of its pleasant expression.

“It is because of you, and through you,” she exclaimed in a feeble, broken voice, “that I quit this world while yet in the prime of life. God calls me; I must die.

“Kings are so horribly exacting. Everything that ministers to their passions seems feasible to them, and righteous folk must consent to do their pleasure, or suffer the penalty of being disgraced and neglected, and of seeing their long years of service lost and forgotten.

“During that unlucky journey in Brabant, you sought by redoubling your coquetry and fascinations to allure La Valliere’s lover. You managed to succeed; he became fond of you. Knowing my husband’s ambitious nature, he easily got him to make me favour this intrigue, and lend my apartments as a meeting-place.

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“At Court nothing long remains a secret. The Queen was warned, and for a while would not believe her informants. But your husband, with brutal impetuousness, burst in upon me. He insulted me in outrageous fashion. He tried to drag me out of bed and throw me out of the window. Hearing me scream, my servants rushed in and rescued me, in a fainting state, from his clutches. And you it is who have brought upon me such scandalous insults.

“Ready to appear before my God, who has already summoned me by a spectre, I have a boon to ask of you, Madame la Marquise. I beg it of you, as I clasp these strengthless, trembling hands. Do not deny me this favour, or I will cherish implacable resentment, and implore my Master and my Judge to visit you with grievous punishment.

“Leave the King,” she continued, after drying her tears. “Leave so sensual a being; the slave of his passions, the ravisher of others’ good. The pomp and grandeur which surround you and intoxicate you would seem but a little thing did you but look at them as now I do, upon my bed of death.

“The Queen hates me; she is right. She despises me, and justly, too. I shall elude her hatred and disdain, which weigh thus heavily upon my heart. Perhaps she may deign to pardon me when my lawyer shall have delivered to her a document, signed by myself, containing my confession and excuses.”

As she uttered these words, Madame de Montausier began to vomit blood, and I had to summon her attendants. With a last movement of the head she bade me farewell, and I heard that she called for her husband.

Next day she was dead. Her waiting-maid came to tell me that the Duchess, conscious to the last, had made her husband promise to resign his appointment as governor to the Dauphin, and withdraw to his estates, where he was to do penance. M. de Meaux, a friend of the family, read the prayers for the dying, to which the Duchess made response, and three minutes before the final death-throe, she consented to let him preach a funeral sermon in eulogy of herself and her husband.

When printed and published, this discourse was thought to be a fine piece of eloquence.

Over certain things the Bishop passed lightly, while exaggerating others. Some things, again, were entirely of his own invention; and if from the depths of her tomb the Duchess could have heard all that M. de Meaux said about her, she never would have borne me such malice, nor would her grief at leaving life and fortune have troubled her so keenly.

The King thought this funeral oration excellently well composed. Of one expression and of one whole passage, however, he disapproved, though which these were he did not do me the honour to say.

BOOK 4.

CHAPTER XLIX.

President de Nesmond.—Melladoro.—A Complacent Husband and His Love-sick Wife.—Tragic Sequel.

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President de Nesmond—upright, clear-headed magistrate as he was—was of very great service to me at the Courts of Justice. He always managed to oblige me and look after my interests and my rights in any legal dispute of mine, or when I had reason to fear annoyance on the part of my husband.

I will here relate the grief that his young wife caused him, and it will be seen that, by the side of this poor President, M. de Montespan might count himself lucky. Having long been a widower, he was in some measure accustomed to this state, until love laid a snare for him just at the age of sixty-five.

In the garden that lay below his windows—a garden owned by his neighbour, a farmer—he saw Clorinde. She was this yeoman's only daughter. He at once fell passionately in love with her, as David once loved Bathsheba.

The President married Clorinde, who was very pleased to have a fine name and a title. But her husband soon saw—if not with surprise, at least with pain—that his wife did not love him. A young and handsome Spaniard, belonging to the Spanish Legation, danced one day with Clorinde; to her he seemed as radiant as the god of melody and song. She lost her heart, and without further delay confessed to him this loss.

On returning home, the President said to his youthful consort, "Madame, every one is noticing and censuring your imprudent conduct; even the young Spaniard himself finds it compromising."

"Nothing you say can please me more," she replied, "for this proves that he is aware of my love. As he knows this, and finds my looks to his liking, I hope that he will wish to see me again."

Soon afterwards there was a grand ball given at the Spanish Embassy. Madame de Nesmond managed to secure an invitation, and went with one of her cousins. The young Spaniard did the honours of the evening, and showed them every attention.

As the President was obliged to attend an all-night sitting at the Tourelle,—[The parliamentary criminal court.]—and as these young ladies did not like going home alone,—for their residence was some way off,—the young Spaniard had the privilege of conducting them to their coach and of driving back with them. After cards and a little music, they had supper about daybreak; and when the President returned, at five o'clock, he saw Melladoro, to whom he was formally introduced by madame.

The President's welcome was a blend of surprise, anger, forced condescension, and diplomatic politeness. All these shades of feeling were easily perceived by the Spaniard, who showed not a trace of astonishment. This was because Clorinde's absolute sway over her husband was as patent as the fact that, in his own house, the President was powerless to do as he liked.

Melladoro, who was only twenty years old, thought he had made a charming conquest. He asked to be allowed to present his respects occasionally, when Clorinde promptly invited him to do so, in her husband's name as well as in her own.

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It was now morning, and he took leave of the ladies. Two days after this he reappeared; then he came five or six times a week, until at last it was settled that a place should be laid for him every day at the President's table.

That year it was M. de Nesmond's turn to preside at the courts during vacation-time. He pleaded urgent motives of health, which made it imperative for him to have country air and complete rest. Another judge consented to forego his vacation and take his place on the bench for four months; so M. de Nesmond was able to leave Paris.

When the time came to set out by coach, madame went off into violent hysterics; but the magistrate, backed up by his father-in-law, showed firmness, and they set out for the Chateau de Nesmond, about thirty leagues from Paris.

M. de Nesmond found the country far from enjoyable. His wife, who always sat by herself in her dressing-gown and seldom consented to see a soul, on more than one occasion left her guests at table in order to sulk and mope in her closet.

She fell ill. During her periods of suffering and depression, she continually mentioned the Spaniard's name. Failing his person, she desired to have his portrait. Alarmed at his wife's condition, the President agreed to write a letter himself to the author of all this trouble, who soon sent the lady a handsome sweetmeat-box ornamented with his crest and his portrait.

At the sight of this, Clorinde became like another woman. She had her hair dressed and put on a smart gown, to show the portrait how deeply enamoured she was of the original.

"Monsieur," she said to her husband, "I am the only daughter of a wealthy man, who, when he gave me to a magistrate older than himself, did not intend to sacrifice me. You have been young, no doubt, and you, therefore, ought to know how revolting to youth, all freshness and perfume, are the cuddlings and caresses of decrepitude. As yet I do not detest you, but it is absolutely impossible to love you. On the contrary, I am in love with Melladoro; perhaps in your day you were as attractive as he is, and knew how to make the most of what you then possessed. Now, will you please me by going back to Paris? I shall be ever so grateful to you if you will. Or must you spend the autumn in this gloomy abode of your ancestors? To show myself obedient, I will consent; only in this case you must send your secretary to the Spanish Legation, and your coach-and-six, to bring Melladoro here without delay."

At this speech M. de Nesmond could no longer hide his disgust, but frankly refused to entertain such a proposal for one moment. Whereupon, his wife gave way to violent grief. She could neither eat nor sleep, and being already in a weakly state, soon developed symptoms which frightened her doctors.

M. de Nesmond was frightened too, and at length sent his rival a polite and pressing invitation to come and stay at the chateau.

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This state of affairs went on for six whole years, during which time Madame de Nesmond lavished upon her comely paramour all the wealth amassed by her frugal, orderly spouse.

At last the President could stand it no longer, but went and made a bitter complaint to the King. His Majesty at once asked the Spanish Ambassador to have Melladoro recalled.

At this news, Clorinde was seized with violent convulsions; so severe, indeed, was this attack, that her wretched husband at once sought to have the order rescinded. But as it transpired, the King's wish had been instantly complied with, and the unwelcome news had to be told to Clorinde.

"If you love me," quoth she to her husband, "then grant me this last favour, after which, I swear it, Clorinde will never make further appeal to your kind-heartedness. However quick they have been, my young friend cannot yet have reached the coast. Let me have sight of him once more; let me give him a lock of my hair, a few loving words of advice, and one last kiss before he is lost to me forever."

So fervent was her pleading and so profuse her tears, that M. de Nesmond consented to do all. His coach-and-six was got ready there and then. An hour before sunset the belfries of Havre came in sight, and as it was high tide, they drove right up to the harbour wharf.

The ship had just loosed her moorings, and was gliding out to sea. Clorinde could recognise Melladoro standing amid the passengers on deck. Half fainting, she stretched out her arms and called him in a piteous voice. Blushing, he sought to hide behind his companions, who all begged him to show himself. By means of a wherry Clorinde soon reached the frigate, and the good-natured sailors helped her to climb up the side of the vessel. But in her agitation and bewilderment her foot slipped, and she fell into the sea, whence she was soon rescued by several of the pluckiest of the crew.

As she was being removed to her carriage, the vessel sailed out of harbour. M. de Nesmond took a large house at Havre, in order to nurse her with greater convenience, and had to stop there for a whole month, his wife being at length brought back on a litter to Paris.

Her convalescence was but an illusion after all. Hardly had she reached home when fatal symptoms appeared; she felt that she must die, but showed little concern thereat. The portrait of the handsome Spaniard lay close beside her on her couch. She smiled at it, besought it to have pity on her loneliness, or scolded it bitterly for indifference, and for going away.

A short time before her death, she sent for her husband and her father, to whom she entrusted the care of her three children.

“Monsieur,” said she to the President de Nesmond, “be kind to my son; he has a right to your name and arms, and though he is my living image, dearest Theodore is your son.” Then turning to her father, who was weeping, she said briefly, “All that to-day remains to you of Clorinde are her two daughters.

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“Pray love them as you loved me, and be more strict with them than you were with me. M. de Nesmond owes these orphans nothing. All that Melladoro owes them is affection. Tell him, I pray you, of my constancy and of my death.”

Such was the sad end of a young wife who committed no greater crime than to love a man who was agreeable and after her own heart. M. de Nesmond was just enough to admit that, in ill-assorted unions, good sense or good nature must intervene, to ensure that the one most to be pitied receive indulgent treatment at the hands of the most culpable, if the latter be also the stronger of the two.

CHAPTER L.

Madame de Montespan’s Children and Those of La Valliere.—Monsieur le Dauphin.

I had successively lost the first and second Comte de Vegin; God also chose to take Mademoiselle de Tours from me, who (in what way I know not) was in features the very image of the Queen. Her Majesty was told so, and desired to see my child, and when she perceived how striking was the resemblance, she took a fancy to the charming little girl, and requested that she might frequently be brought to see her. Such friendliness proved unlucky, for the Infanta, as is well known, has never been able to rear one of her children,—a great pity, certainly, for she has had five, all handsome, well-made, and of gracious, noble mien, like the King.

In the case of Mademoiselle de Tours, the Queen managed to conquer her dislike, and also sent for the Duc du Maine. Despite her affection for M. le Dauphin, she herself admitted that if Monseigneur had the airs of a gentleman, M. le Duc du Maine looked the very type of a king’s son.

The Duc du Maine, Madame de Maintenon’s special pupil, was so well trained to all the exigencies of his position and his rank, that such premature perfection caused him to pass for a prodigy. Than his, no smile could be more winning and sweet; no one could carry himself with greater dignity and ease. He limps slightly, which is a great pity, especially as he has such good looks, and so graceful a figure; his lameness, indeed, was entirely the result of an accident,—a sad accident, due to teething. To please the King, his governess took him once to Auvez, and twice to the Pyrenees, but neither the waters nor the Auvez quack doctors could effect a cure. At any rate, I was fortunate enough to bring up this handsome prince, who, if he treat me with ceremony, yet loves me none the less.

Brought up by the Duc de Montausier, a sort of monkish soldier, and by Bossuet, a sort of military monk, Monsieur le Dauphin had no good examples from which to profit. Crammed as he is with Latin, Greek, German, Spanish, and Church history, he knows all that they teach in colleges, being totally ignorant of all that can only be learnt at the

Court of a king. He has no distinction of manner, no polish or refinement of address; he laughs in loud guffaws, and even raises his voice in the presence of his father. Having been born at Court, his way of bowing is not altogether awkward; but what a difference between his salute and that of the King! "Monseigneur looks just like a German prince." That speech exactly hits him off,—a portrait sketched by no other brush than that of his royal father.

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Monseigneur, who does not like me, pays me court the same as any one else. Being very jealous of the pretty Comte de Vermandois and his brother, the Duc du Maine, he tries to imitate their elegant manner, but is too stiff to succeed. The Duc du Maine shows him the respect inspired by his governess, but the Comte de Vermandois, long separated from his mother, has been less coached in this respect, and being thoroughly candid and sincere, shows little restraint. Often, instead of styling him “Monseigneur,” he calls him merely “Monsieur le Dauphin,” while the latter, as if such a title were common or of no account, looks at his brother and makes no reply.

When I told the King about such petty fraternal tiffs, he said, “With age, all that will disappear; as a man grows taller, he gets a better, broader view of his belongings.”

M. le Dauphin shows a singular preference for Mademoiselle de Nantes, but my daughter, brimful of wit and fun, often makes merry at the expense of her exalted admirer.

Mademoiselle de Blois, the eldest daughter of Madame de la Valliere, is the handsomest, most charming person it is possible to imagine. Her slim, graceful figure reminds one of the beautiful goddesses, with whom poets entertain us; she abounds in accomplishments and every sort of charm. Her tender solicitude for her mother, and their constant close companionship, have doubtless served to quicken her intelligence and penetration.

Like the King, she is somewhat grave; she has the same large brown eyes, and just his Austrian lip, his shapely hand and well-turned leg, almost his selfsame voice. Madame de la Valliere, who, in the intervals of pregnancy, had no bosom to speak of, has shown marked development in this respect since living at the convent. The Princess, ever since she attained the age of puberty, has always seemed adequately furnished with physical charms. The King provided her with a husband in the person of the Prince de Conti, a nephew of the Prince de Conde. They are devotedly attached to each other, being both as handsome as can be. The Princesse de Conti enjoys the entire affection of the Queen, who becomes quite uneasy if she does not see her for five or six days.

Certain foreign princes proposed for her hand, when the King replied that the presence of his daughter was as needful to him as daylight or the air he breathed.

I have here surely drawn a most attractive portrait of this princess, and I ought certainly to be believed, for Madame de Conti is not fond of me at all. Possibly she looks upon me as the author of her mother’s disgrace; I shall never be at pains to undeceive her. Until the moment of her departure, Madame de la Valliere used always to visit me. The evening before her going she took supper with me, and I certainly had no cause to read in her looks either annoyance or reproach. Mademoiselle de Montpensier, who happened to call, saw us at table, and stayed to have some dessert with us. She has often told me afterwards how calm and serene the Duchess looked. One would never

have thought she was about to quit a brilliant Court for the hair shirt of the ascetic, and all the death-in-life of a convent. I grieved for her, I wept for her, and I got her a grand gentleman as a husband.

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[This statement is scarcely reconcilable with the fact that Madame de la Valliere remained in a convent until her death. This may refer to Mademoiselle de Blois, La Valliere's daughter, who was given in marriage to the Prince de Conti.—*Editor's note*.]

CHAPTER LI.

Madame de Maintenon's Character.—The Queen Likes Her.—She Revisits Her Family.—Her Grandfather's Papers Restored to Her.

As Madame de Maintenon's character happened to please the King, as I have already stated, he allotted her handsome apartments at Court while waiting until he could keep her there as a fixture, by conferring upon her some important appointment. She had the honour of being presented to the Queen, who paid her a thousand compliments respecting the Duc du Maine's perfections, being so candid and so good natured as to say:

"You would have been just the person to educate Monseigneur."

Unwilling to appear as if she slighted the Dauphin's actual tutors, Madame de Maintenon adroitly replied that, as it seemed to her, M. le Dauphin had been brought up like an angel.

It is said that I have special talent for sustaining and enlivening a conversation; there is something in that, I admit, but to do her justice, I must say that in this respect Madame de Maintenon is without a rival. She has quite a wealth of invention; the most arid subject in her hands becomes attractive; while for transitions, her skill is unequalled. Far simpler than myself, she gauges her whole audience with a single glance. And as, since her misfortunes, her rule has been never to make an enemy, since these easily crop up along one's path, she is careful never to utter anything which could irritate the feelings or wound the pride of the most sensitive. Her descriptions are so varied, so vivacious, that they fascinate a whole crowd. If now and again some little touch of irony escapes her, she knows how to temper and even instantly to neutralise this by terms of praise at once natural and simple.

Under the guise of an extremely pretty woman, she conceals the knowledge and tact of a statesman. I have, moreover, noticed that latterly the King likes to talk about matters of State when she is present. He rarely did this with me.

I think she is at the outset of a successful career. The King made persistent inquiries with regard to her whole family. He has already conferred a petty governorship upon the Comte d'Aubigne, her brother, and the Marquis de la Gallerie, their cousin, has just received the command of a regiment, and a pension.

Madame de Maintenon readily admits that she owes her actual good fortune to myself. I also saw one of her letters to Madame de Saint-Geran, in which she refers to me in terms of gratitude. Sometimes, indeed, she goes too far, even siding with my husband, and condemning what she dares to term my conduct; however, this is only to my face. I have always liked her, and in spite of her affronts, I like her still; but there are times when I am less tolerant, and then we are like two persons just about to fall out.

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The Comte de Toulouse and Mademoiselle de Blois were not entrusted to her at their birth as the others were. The King thought that the additional responsibility of their education would prove too great for the Marquise. He preferred to enjoy her society and conversation, so my two youngest children were placed in the care of Madame d'Arbon, a friend or stewardess of M. de Colbert. Not a great compliment, as I take it.

When, for the second time, Madame de Maintenon took the Duc du Maine to Barege, she returned by way of the Landes, Guienne, and Poitou. She wished to revisit her native place, and show her pupil to all her relations. Perceiving that she was a marquise, the instructress of princes, and a personage in high favour, they were lavish of their compliments and their praise, yet forebore to give her back her property.

Knowing that she was a trifle vain about her noble birth, they made over to her the great family pedigree, as well as a most precious manuscript. These papers, found to be quite correct, included a most spirited history of the War of the League, written by Baron Agrippa d'Aubigne, who might rank as an authority upon the subject, having fought against the Leaguers for over fifteen years. Among these documents the King found certain details that hitherto had been forgotten, or had never yet come to light. And as the Baron was Henri IV.'s favourite aide-decamp, every reference that he makes to that good king is of importance and interest.

This manuscript, in the simplest manner possible, set forth the governess's ancestors. I am sure she was more concerned about this document than about her property.

CHAPTER LII.

The Young Flemish Lady.—The Sainte-Aldegonde Family.—The Sage of the Sepulchres.

Just at the time of the conquest of Tournai, a most amusing thing occurred, which deserves to be chronicled. Another episode may be recorded also, of a gloomier nature.

Directly Tournai had surrendered, and the new outposts were occupied, the King wished to make his entry into this important town, which he had long desired to see. The people and the burghers, although mute and silent, willingly watched the French army and its King march past, but the aristocracy scarcely showed themselves at any of the windows, and the few folk who appeared here and there on the balconies abstained from applauding the King.

Splendidly apparelled, and riding the loveliest of milk-white steeds, his Majesty proceeded upon his triumphant way, surrounded by the flower of French nobility, and scattering money as he went.

Before the Town Hall the procession stopped, when the magistrates delivered an address, and gave up to his Majesty the keys of the city in a large enamelled bowl.

When the King, looking calmly contented, was about to reply, he observed a woman who had pushed her way through the French guardsmen, and staring hard at him, appeared anxious to get close up to him. In fact, she advanced a step or two, and the epithet that crossed her lips struck the conqueror as being coarsely offensive.

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“Arrest that woman,” cried the King. She was instantly seized and brought before him.

“Why do you insult me thus?” he asked quickly, but with dignity.

“I have not insulted you,” replied the Flemish lady. “The word that escaped me was rather a term of flattery and of praise, at least if it has the meaning which it conveys to us here, in these semi-French parts.”

“Say that word again,” added the King; “for I want everybody to bear witness that I am just in punishing you for such an insult.”

“Sire,” answered this young woman, “your soldiers have destroyed my pasture-lands, my woods, and my crops. Heart-broken, I came here to curse you, but your appearance at once made me change my mind. On looking closer at you, in spite of my grief, I could not help exclaiming, ‘So that’s the handsome b-----, is it!’”

The grenadiers, being called as witnesses, declared that such was in fact her remark. Then the King smiled, and said to the young Flemish lady:

“Who are you? What is your name?”

With readiness and dignity she replied, “Sire, you see before you the Comtesse de Sainte-Aldegonde.”

“Pray, madame,” quoth the King, “be so good as to finish your toilet; I invite you to dine with me to-day.”

Madame de Sainte-Aldegonde accepted the honour, and did in fact dine with his Majesty that day. She was clever, and made herself most agreeable, so that the King, whose policy it was to win hearts by all concessions possible, indemnified her for all losses sustained during the war, besides granting favours to all her relatives and friends.

The Sainte-Aldegonde family appeared at Court, being linked thereto by good services. It is already a training-ground for excellent officers and persons of merit.

But for that somewhat neat remark of the Countess’s, all those gentlemen would have remained in poverty and obscurity within the walls or in the suburbs of Tournai.

Some days after this, the King was informed of the arrest of a most dangerous individual, who had been caught digging below certain ancient aqueducts “with a view to preparing a mine of some sort.” This person was brought in, tied and bound like a criminal; they hustled him and maltreated him. I noticed how he trembled and shed tears.

He was a learned man—an antiquary. A few days before our invasion he had commenced certain excavations, which he had been forced to discontinue, and now so great was his impatience that he had been obliged to go on in spite of the surrounding troops. By means of an old manuscript, long kept by the Druids, as also by monks, this man had been able to discover traces of an old Roman highroad, and as in the days of the Romans the tombs of the rich and the great were always placed alongside these broad roads, our good antiquary had been making certain researches there, which for him had proved to be a veritable gold-mine.

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Having made confession of all this to the King, his Majesty set him free, granting him, moreover, complete liberty as regarded the execution of his enterprise.

A few days afterwards he begged to have the honour of presenting to his Majesty some of the objects which he had collected during his researches. I was present, and the following are the funereal curiosities which he showed us:

Having broken open a tomb, he had extracted therefrom a large alabaster vase, which still contained the ashes of the deceased. Next this urn, carefully sealed up, there was another vase, containing three gold rings adorned with precious stones, two gold spurs, the bit of a battle-horse, very slightly rusted, and chased with silver and gold, a sort of seal with rough coat-of-arms, a necklace of large and very choice pearls, a stylet or pencil for calligraphy, and a hundred gold and silver coins bearing the effigy of Domitian, a very wicked emperor, who reigned over Rome and over Gaul in those days.

When the King had amused himself with examining these trinkets, he turned to the antiquary and said, “Is that all, sir? Why, where is Charon’s flask of wine?”

“Here, your Majesty,” replied the old man, producing a small flask. “See, the wine has become quite clear.”

With great difficulty the flask was opened; the wine it contained was pale and odourless, but by those bold enough to taste it, was pronounced delicious.

When overturning the urn in order to empty out the ashes and bury them, they noticed an inscription, which the King instantly translated. It ran thus:

“May the gods who guard tombs punish him who breaks open this mausoleum. The troubles and misfortunes of Aurelius Silvius have been cruel enough during his lifetime; in this tomb at least let him have peace.”

The worthy antiquary offered me his pearl necklace and one of the antique rings, but I refused these with a look of horror. He sold the coins to the King, and informed us that his various excavations and researches had brought him in about one hundred thousand livres up to the present time.

The King said to him playfully, “Mind what you are about, monsieur; that sentence which I translated for you is not of a very, reassuring nature.”

“Yet it will not serve to hinder me in my scientific researches,” replied the savant. “Charon, who by now must be quite a rich man, evidently disdains all such petty hidden treasures as these. To me they are most useful.”

Next time we passed through Tournai, I made inquiries as to this miser, and afterwards informed the King. It appears that he was surprised by robbers when despoiling one of

these tombs. After robbing him of all that he possessed, they buried him alive in the very, grave where he was digging, so as to save expense. What a dismal sort of science! What a life, and what a death!

CHAPTER LIII.

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The Monks of Sainte Amandine.—The Prince of Orange Entrapped.—The Drugged Wine.—The Admirable Judith.

After the furious siege of Conde, which lasted only four days, the King, who had been present, left for Sebourg, whence he sent orders for the destruction of the principal forts of Liege, and for the ravaging of the Juliers district. He treated the Neubourg estates in the same ruthless fashion, as the Duke had abandoned his attitude of neutrality, and had joined the Empire, Holland and Spain. All the Cleves district, and those between the Meuse and the Vahal, were subjected to heavy taxation. Everywhere one saw families in flight, castles sacked, homesteads and convents in flames.

The Duc de Villa-Hermosa, Governor-General in Flanders for the King of Spain, and William of Orange, the Dutch leader, went hither and thither all over the country, endeavouring to rouse the people, and spur them on to offer all possible resistance to the King of France.

These two noble generalissimi even found their way into monasteries and nunneries, and carried off their silver plate, actually, seizing the consecrated vessels used for the sacrament, saying that all such things would help the good cause.

One day they entered a wealthy Bernardine monastery, where the miraculous tomb of Sainte Amandine was on view. The great veneration shown for this saint in all the country thereabouts had served greatly to enrich the community and bring them in numerous costly offerings. The chapel wherein the saint's heart was said to repose was lighted by a huge gold lamp, and on the walls and in niches right up to the ceiling were thousands of votive offerings in enamel, silver, and gold. The Duc de Villa-Hermosa (a good Catholic) dared not give orders for the pillage of this holy chapel, but left that to the Prince of Orange (a good Huguenot).

One evening they came to ask the prior for shelter, who, seeing that he was at the mercy of both armies, had to show himself pleasant to each.

During supper, when the two generals informed him of the object of their secret visit, he clearly perceived that the monastery was about to be sacked, and like a man of resource, at once made up his mind. When dessert came, he gave his guests wine that had been drugged. The generals, growing drowsy, soon fell asleep, and the prior at once caused them to be carried off to a cell and placed upon a comfortable bed.

This done, he celebrated midnight mass as usual, and at its close he summoned the whole community, telling them of their peril and inviting counsel and advice.

"My brethren," asked he, "ought we not to look upon our prisoners as profaners of holy places, and serve them in secret and before God as once the admirable Judith served Holofernes?"

At this proposal there was a general murmur. The assembly grew agitated, but seeing how perilous was the situation, order was soon restored.

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The old monks were of opinion that the two generals ought not yet to be sacrificed, but should be shut up in a subterranean dungeon, a messenger being sent forthwith to the French King announcing their capture.

The young monks protested loudly against such an act, declaring it to be treacherous, disgraceful, felonious. The prior endeavoured to make them listen to reason and be silent, but the young monks, though in a minority, got the upper hand. They deposed the prior, abused and assaulted him, and finally flung him into prison. One of them was appointed prior without ballot, and this new leader, followed by his adherents, roused the generals and officiously sent them away.

The prior's nephew, a young Bernardine, accompanied by a lay brother and two or three servants, set out across country that night, and brought information to the King of all this disorder, begging his Majesty to save his worthy uncle's life.

At the head of six hundred dragoons, the King hastened to the convent and at once rescued the prior, sending the good old monks of Sainte Amandine to Citeaux, and dispersing the rebellious young ones among the Carthusian and Trappist monasteries. All the treasures contained in the chapel he had transferred to his camp, until a calmer, more propitious season.

That priceless capture, the Prince of Orange, escaped him, however, and he was inconsolable thereat, adding, as he narrated the incident, "Were it not that I feared to bring dishonour upon my name, and sully the history of my reign and my life, I would have massacred those young Saint-Bernard monks."

"What a vile breed they all are!" I cried, losing all patience.

"No, no, madame," he quickly rejoined, "you are apt to jump from one extreme to the other. It does not do to generalise thus. The young monks at Sainte Amandine showed themselves to be my enemies, I admit, and for this I shall punish them as they deserve, but the poor old monks merely desired my success and advantage. When peace is declared, I shall take care of them and of their monastery; the prior shall be made an abbot. I like the poor fellow; so will you, when you see him."

I really cannot see why the King should have taken such a fancy to this old monk, who was minded to murder a couple of generals in his convent because, forsooth, Judith once slew Holofernes! Judith might have been tempted to do that sort of thing; she was a Jewess. But a Christian monk! I cannot get over it!

CHAPTER LIV.

The Chevalier de Rohan.—He is Born Too Late.—His Debts.—Messina Ceded to the French.—The King of Spain Meditates Revenge.—The Comte de Monterey.—Madame

de Villars as Conspirator.—The Picpus Schoolmaster.—The Plot Fails.—Discovery and Retribution.—Madame de Soubise's Indifference to the Chevalier's Fate.

Had he been born fifty or sixty years earlier, the Chevalier de Rohan might have played a great part. He was one of those men, devoid of restraint and of principle, who love pleasure above all things, and who would sacrifice their honour, their peace of mind, aye, even the State itself, if such a sacrifice were really needed, in order to attain their own personal enjoyment and satisfaction.

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The year before, he once invited himself to dinner at my private residence at Saint Germain, and he then gave me the impression of being a madman, or a would-be conspirator. My sister De Thianges noticed the same thing, too.

The Chevalier had squandered his fortune five or six years previously; his bills were innumerable.

Each day he sank deeper into debt, and the King remarked, “The Chevalier de Rohan will come to a bad end; it will never do to go on as he does.”

Instead of keeping an eye upon him, and affectionately asking him to respect his family’s honour, the Prince and Princesse de Soubise made as if it were their duty to ignore him and blush for him.

Profligacy, debts, and despair drove this unfortunate nobleman to make a resolve such as might never be expected of any high-born gentleman.

Discontented with their governor, Don Diego de Soria, the inhabitants of Messina had just shaken off the Spanish yoke, and had surrendered to the King of France, who proffered protection and help.

Such conduct on the part of the French Government seemed to the King of Spain most disloyal, and he desired nothing better than to revenge himself. This is how he set about it.

On occasions of this kind it is always the crafty who are sought out for such work. Comte de Monterey was instructed to sound the Chevalier de Rohan upon the subject, offering him safety and a fortune as his reward. Pressed into their service there was also the Marquise de Villars,—a frantic gambler, a creature bereft of all principle and all modesty,—to whom a sum of twenty thousand crowns in cash was paid over beforehand, with the promise of a million directly success was ensured. She undertook to manage Rohan and tell him what to do. Certain ciphers had to be used, and to these the Marquise had the key. They needed a messenger both intelligent and trustworthy, and for this mission she gave the Chevalier an ally in the person of an ex-teacher in the Flemish school at Picpus, on the Faubourg Saint Antoine. This man and the Chevalier went secretly to the Comte de Monterey in Flanders, and by this trio it was settled that on a certain day, at high tide, Admiral van Tromp with his fleet should anchor off Honfleur or Quillebceuf in Normandy, and that, at a given signal, La Truaumont, the Chevalier de Preaux, and the Chevalier de Rohan were to surrender to him the town and port without ever striking a single blow, all this being for the benefit of his Majesty the King of Spain.

But all was discovered. The five culprits were examined, when the. Marquise de Villars stated that the inhabitants of Messina had given them an example which the King of France had not condemned!

The Marquise and the two Chevaliers were beheaded, while the ex-schoolmaster was hanged. As for young La Truaumont, son of a councillor of the Exchequer, he escaped the block by letting himself be throttled by his guards or gaolers, to whom he offered no resistance.

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Despite her influence upon the King's feelings, the Princess de Soubise did not deign to take the least notice of the trial, and they say that she drove across the Pont-Neuf in her coach just as the Chevalier de Rohan, pinioned and barefooted, was marching to his doom.

CHAPTER LV.

The Prince of Orange Captures Bonn.—The King Captures Orange.—The Calvinists of Orange Offer Resistance.

Since Catiline's famous hatred for Consul Cicero, there has never been hatred so deep and envenomed as that of William of Orange for the King. For this loathing, cherished by a petty prince for a great potentate, various reasons have been given. As for myself, I view things closely and in their true light, and I am convinced that Prince William was actuated by sheer jealousy and envy.

It was affirmed that the King, when intending to give him as bride Mademoiselle de Blois, his eldest daughter and great favourite, had offered to place him on the Dutch throne as independent King, and that to such generous proposals the petty Stadtholder replied, "I am not pious enough to marry the daughter of a Carmelite nun." So absurd a proposal as this, however, was never made, for the simple reason that Mademoiselle de Blois has never yet been offered in marriage to any prince or noble man in this wide world. Rather than to be parted from her, the King would prefer her to remain single. He has often said as much to me, and there is no reason to doubt his word.

The little Principality of Orange, which once formed the estate of this now outlandish family, is situate close to the Rhone, amid French territory. Though decorated with the title of Sovereignty, like its neighbour the Principality of Dombes, it is no less a fief-land of the Crown. In this capacity it has to contribute to the Crown revenues, and owes homage and fealty to the sovereign.

Such petty, formal restrictions are very galling to the arrogant young Prince of Orange, for he is one of those men who desire, at all cost, to make a noise in the world, and who would set fire to Solomon's Temple or to the Delphian Temple, it mattered not which, so long as they made people talk about them.

After Turenne's death, there was a good deal of rivalry among our generals. This proved harmful to the service. The Goddess of Victory discovered this, and at times forsook us. Many possessions that were conquered had to be given up, and we had to bow before those whom erst we had humiliated. But Orange was never restored.—-[This was written in 1677.]

When, in November, 1673, the Prince of Orange had the audacity to besiege Bonn, the residence of our ally, the Prince Elector of Cologne, and to reduce that prelate to the last extremity, the King promptly seized upon the Principality of Orange; and having planted the French flag upon every building, he published a general decree, strictly forbidding the inhabitants to hold any communication whatever with “their former petty sovereign,” and ordering prayers to be said for him, Louis, in all their churches. This is a positive fact.

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The Roman Catholics readily complied with this royal decree, which was in conformity with their sympathies and their interests; but the Protestants waxed furious thereat. Some of them even carried their devotion to such a pitch that they paid taxes to two masters; that is to say, to Stadtholder William, as well as to his Majesty the King.

The Huguenot “ministers,” or priests, issued pastoral letters in praise of the Calvinist Prince and in abuse of the Most Christian King. They also preached against the new oath of fealty, and committed several most imprudent acts, which the Jesuits were not slow to remark and report in Court circles.

Such audacity, and the need for its repression, rankled deep in the King’s heart; and I believe he is quite disposed to pass measures of such extreme severity as will soon deprive the Protestants and Lutherans of any privileges derived from the Edict of Nantes.

From various sources I receive the assurance that he is preparing to deal a heavy blow anent this; but the King’s character is impenetrable. Time alone will show.

CHAPTER LVI

The Castle of Bleink-Elmeink.—Romantic and Extraordinary Discovery.—An Innocent and Persecuted Wife.—Madame de Bleink-Elmeink at Chaillot.

After the siege and surrender of Maestricht, when the King had no other end in view than the entire conquest of Dutch Brabant, he took us to this country, which had suffered greatly by the war. Some districts were wholly devastated, and it became increasingly difficult to find lodging and shelter for the Court.

The grooms of the chambers one day found for us a large chateau, situated in a woody ravine, old-fashioned in structure, and surrounded by a moat. There was only one drawbridge, flanked by two tall towers, surmounted by turrets and culverins. Its owner was in residence at the time. He came to the King and the Queen, and greeting them in French, placed his entire property at their disposal.

It had rained in torrents for two days without ceasing. Despite the season, everybody was wet through and benumbed with cold. Large fires were made in all the huge fireplaces; and when the castle’s vast rooms were lighted up by candles, we agreed that the architect had not lacked grandeur of conception nor good taste when building such large corridors, massive staircases, lofty vestibules, and spacious, resounding rooms. That given to the Queen was like an alcove, decorated by six large marble caryatides, joined by a handsome balustrade high enough to lean upon. The four-post bed was of azure blue velvet, with flowered work and rich gold and silver tasselling. Over the

chimneypiece was the huge Bleink-Elmeink coat-of-arms, supported by two tall Templars.

The King's apartment was an exact reproduction of a room existing at Jerusalem in the time of Saint Louis; this was explained by inscriptions and devices in Gothic or Celtic.

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My room was supposed to be an exact copy of the famous Pilate's chamber, and it was named so; and for three days my eyes were rejoiced by the detailed spectacle of our Lord's Passion, from His flagellation to His agony on Calvary.

The Queen came to see me in this room, and did me the honour of being envious of so charming an apartment.

The fourth day, when the weather became fine, we prepared to change our quarters and take to our carriages again, when an extraordinary event obliged us to send a messenger for the King, who had already left us, and had gone forward to join the army.

An old peasant, still robust and in good health, performed in this gloomy castle the duties of a housekeeper. In this capacity she frequently visited our rooms to receive our orders and satisfy our needs.

Seeing that the Queen's boxes were being closed, and that our departure was at hand, she came to me and said:

"Madame, the sovereign Lord of Heaven has willed it thus; that the officers of the French King should have discovered as the residence of his Court this castle amid gloomy forests and precipices. The great prince has come hither and has stayed here for a brief while, and we have sought to welcome him as well as we could. He gave the Comte de Bleink-Elmeink, lord of this place and my master, his portrait set in diamonds; he had far better have cut his throat."

"Good heavens, woman! What is this you tell me?" I exclaimed. "Of what crime is your master guilty? He seems to me to be somewhat moody and unsociable; but his family is of good renown, and all sorts of good things have been, told concerning it to the King and Queen."

"Madame," replied the old woman, drawing me aside into a window-recess, and lowering her voice, "do you see at the far end of yonder court an old dungeon of much narrower dimensions than the others? In that dungeon lies the good Comtesse de Bleink-Elmeink; she has languished there for five years."

Then this woman informed me that her master, formerly page of honour to the Empress Eleanor, had wedded, on account of her great wealth, a young Hungarian noblewoman, by whom he had two children, both of whom were living. Such was his dislike of their mother, on account of a slight deformity, that for four or five years he shamefully maltreated her, and at last shut her up in this dungeon-keep, allowing her daily the most meagre diet possible.

"When, some few days since, the royal stewards appeared in front of the moat, and claimed admittance, the Count was much alarmed," added the peasant woman. "He

thought that all was discovered, and that he was going to suffer for it. It was not until the King and Queen came that he was reassured, and he has not been able to hide his embarrassment from any of us."

"Where are the two children of his marriage?" I asked the old woman, before deciding to act.

"The young Baron," she answered, "is at Vienna or Ohnutz, at an academy there. His sister, a graceful, pretty girl, has been in a convent from her childhood; the nuns have promised to keep her there, and as soon as she is fourteen, she will take the veil."

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My first impulse was to acquaint the Queen with these astounding revelations, but it soon struck me that, to tackle a man of such importance as the Count, we could not do without the King. I at once sent my secretary with a note, imploring his Majesty to return, but giving no reason for my request. He came back immediately, post-haste, when the housekeeper repeated to him, word for word, all that I have set down here. The King could hardly believe his ears.

When coming to a decision, his Majesty never does so precipitately. He paced up and down the room twice or thrice, and then said to me, “The matter is of a rather singular nature; I am unacquainted with law, and what I propose to do may one day serve as an example. It is my duty to rescue our unfortunate hostess, and requite her nobly for her hospitality.”

So saying, he sent for the Count, and assuming a careless, almost jocular air, thus addressed him:

“You were formerly page to the Empress Eleanor, I believe, M. le Bleink-Elmeink?”

“Yes, Sire.”

“She is dead, but the Emperor would easily recognise you, would he not?”

“I imagine so, Sire.”

“I have thought of you as a likely person to be the bearer of a message, some one of your age and height being needed, and of grave, secretive temperament, such as I notice you to possess. Get everything in readiness, as I intend to send you as courier to his Imperial Majesty. I am going to write to him from here, and you shall bring me back his reply to my proposals.”

To be sent off like this was most galling to the Count, but his youth and perfect health allowed him not the shadow of a pretext. He was obliged to pack his valise and start. He pretended to look pleased and acquiescent, but in his eyes I could detect fury and despair.

Half an hour after his departure, the King had the drawbridge raised, and then went to inform the Queen of everything.

“Madame,” said he, “you have been sleeping in this unfortunate lady’s nuptial bed. She is now about to be presented to you. I ask that you will receive her kindly, and afterwards act as her protector, should anything happen to me.”

Tears filled the Queen’s eyes, and she trembled in amazement. The King instantly made for the dungeon, and in default of a key, broke open all the gates. In a few minutes Madame de Bleink-Elmeink, supported by two guards, entered the Queen’s

presence, and was about to fling herself at her feet; but the King prevented this. He himself placed her in an armchair, and we others at once formed a large semicircle round her.

She seemed to breathe with difficulty, sighing and sobbing without being able to utter a word. At, length she said to the King in fairly good French, “May my Creator and yours reward you for this, great and unexpected boon! Do not forsake me, Sire, now that you have broken my fetters, but let your might protect me against the unjust violence of my husband; and permit me to reside in France in whatever convent it please you to choose. My august liberator shall become my lawful King, and under his rule I desire to live and die.”

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In spite of her sorrow, Madame de Bleink-Elmeink did not appear to be more than twenty-eight or thirty years old. Her large blue eyes, though she had wept, much, were still splendid, and her high-bred features denoted nobility and beauty of soul. To such a charming countenance her figure scarcely corresponded; one side of her was slightly deformed, yet. this did not interfere with the grace of her attitude when seated, nor her agreeable deportment.

Directly she saw her, the Queen liked her. She looked half longingly at the Countess, and then rising approached her and held out her hand to be kissed, saying, “I mean to love you as if you were one of my own family; you shall be placed at Val-de-Grace, and I will often come and see you.”

Recovering herself somewhat, the Countess sank on her knees and kissed the Queen’s hand in a transport of joy. We, led her to her room, where she took a little refreshment and afterwards slept until the following day. All her servants and gardeners came to express their gladness at her deliverance; and in order to keep her company, the Queen decided to stay another week at the castle. The Countess then set out for Paris, and it was arranged that she should have the apartments at Chaillot, once constructed by the Queen of England.

As for her dreadful husband, the King gave him plenty to do, and he did not see his wife again for a good long while.

CHAPTER LVII.

The Silver Chandelier.—The King Holds the Ladder.—The Young Dutchman.

One day the King was passing through some of the large rooms of the palace, at a time of the morning when the courtiers had not yet made their appearance, and when carpenters and workmen were about, each busy in getting his work done.

The King noticed a workman of some sort standing tiptoe on a double ladder, and reaching up to unhook a large chandelier from the ceiling. The fellow seemed likely to break his neck.

“Be careful,” cried the King; “don’t you see that your ladder is a short one and is on castors? I have just come in time to help you by holding it.”

“Monsieur,” said the man, “a thousand pardons, but if you will do so, I shall be much obliged. On account of this ambassador who is coming today, all my companions have lost their heads and have left me alone.”

Then he unhooked the large crystal and silver chandelier, stepped down carefully, leaning on the King's shoulder, who graciously allowed him to do so. After humbly thanking him, the fellow made off.

That night in the chateau every one was talking about the hardihood of some thief who in sight of everybody had stolen a handsome chandelier; the Lord High Provost had already been apprised of the matter. The King began to smile as he said out loud before every one, "I must request the Lord High Provost to be good enough to hush the matter up, as in cases of theft accomplices are punished as well, and it was I who held the ladder for the thief."

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Then his Majesty told us of the occurrence, as already narrated, and every one was convinced that the thief could not be a novice or an apprentice at his craft. Inquiries were instantly made, since so bold an attempt called for exemplary punishment. All the upholsterers of the castle wished to give themselves up as prisoners; their honour was compromised. It would be hard to describe their consternation, being in truth honest folk.

When the Provost respectfully asked the King if he had had time to notice the culprit's features, his Majesty replied that the workman in question was a young fellow of about five-and-twenty, fair complexioned, with chestnut hair, and pleasant features of delicate, almost feminine cast.

At this news, all the dark, plain men-servants were exultant; the good-looking ones, however, were filled with fear.

Among the feutiers, whose sole duty it is to attend to the fires and candles in the royal apartments, there was a nice-looking young Dutchman, whom his companions pointed out to the Provost. They entered his room while he was asleep, and found in his cupboard the following articles: Two of the King's lace cravats, two shirts marked with a double L and the crown, a pair of pale blue velvet shoes embroidered with silver, a flowered waistcoat, a hat with white and scarlet plumes, other trifles, and splendid portrait of the King, evidently part of some bracelet. As regarded the chandelier, nothing was discovered.

When this young foreigner was taken to prison, he refused to speak for twenty-four hours, and in all Versailles there was but one cry,—"They've caught the thief!"

Next day matters appeared in a new light. The Provost informed his Majesty that the young servant arrested was not a Dutchman, but a very pretty Dutch woman.

At the time of the invasion, she was so unlucky as to see the King close to her father's house, and conceived so violent a passion for him that she at once forgot country, family, friends,—everything. Leaving the Netherlands with the French army, she followed her conqueror back to his capital, and by dint of perseverance managed to secure employment in the royal palace. While there, her one delight was to see the King as often as possible, and to listen to praise of his many noble deeds.

"The articles found in my possession," said she to the Provost, "are most dear and precious to me; not for their worth, but because they have touched the King's person. I did not steal them from his Majesty; I could not do such a thing. I bought them of the valets de chambre, who were by right entitled to such things, and who would have sold them indiscriminately to any one else. The portrait was not sold to me, I admit, but I got it from Madame la Marquise de Montespan, and in this way: One day, in the parterres, madame dropped her bracelet. I had the good fortune to pick it up, and I kept it for

three or four days in my room. Then bills were posted up in the park, stating that whoever brought the bracelet to madame should receive a reward of ten louis. I took back the ornament, for its pearls and diamonds did not tempt me, but I kept the portrait instead of the ten louis offered."

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When the King asked me if I recollected the occurrence, I assured him that everything was perfectly true. Hereupon the King sent for the girl, who was immediately brought to his chamber. Such was her modesty, and confusion that she dared not raise her eyes from the ground. The King spoke kindly to her, and gave her two thousand crowns to take her back to her own home. The Provost was instructed to restore all these different articles to her, and as regarded myself, I willingly let her have the portrait, though it was worth a good deal more than the ten louis mentioned.

When she got back to her own country and the news of her safe arrival was confirmed, the King sent her twenty thousand livres as a dowry, which enabled her to make a marriage suitable to her good-natured disposition and blameless conduct.

She made a marked impression upon his Majesty, and he was often wont to speak about the chandelier on account of her, always alluding to her in kindly, terms. If ever he returns to Holland, I am sure he will want to see her, either from motives of attachment or curiosity. Her name, if I remember rightly, was Flora.

CHAPTER LVIII.

The Observatory.—The King Visits the Carthusians.—How a Painter with His Brush May Save a Convent.—The Guilty Monk.—Strange Revelations.—The King's Kindness.—-The Curate of Saint Domingo.

When it was proposed to construct in Paris that handsome building called the Observatory, the King himself chose the site for this. Having a map of his capital before him, he wished this fine edifice to be in a direct line of perspective with the Luxembourg, to which it should eventually be joined by the demolition of the Carthusian Monastery, which filled a large gap.

The King was anxious that his idea should be carried out, but whenever he mentioned it to M. Mansard and the other architects, they declared that it was a great pity to lose Lesueur's admirable frescos in the cloisters, which would have to be destroyed if the King's vast scheme were executed.

One day his Majesty resolved to see for himself, and without the least announcement of his arrival, he went to the Carthusian Monastery in the Rue d'Enfer. The King has great knowledge of art; he admired the whole series of wall-paintings, in which the life of Saint Bruno is divinely set forth.

[By a new process these frescos were subsequently transferred to canvas in 1800 or 1802, at which date the vast property of the Carthusian monks became part of the Luxembourg estates.—*Editor's note*.]

“Father,” said he to the prior who showed him round, “these simple, touching pictures are far beyond all that was ever told me. My intention, I admit, was to move your institution elsewhere, so as to connect your spacious property with my palace of the Luxembourg, but the horrible outrage which would have to be committed deters me; to the marvellous art of Lesueur you owe it that your convent remains intact.”

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The monk, overjoyed, expressed his gratitude to the King, and promised him the love and guardianship of Saint Bruno in heaven.

Just then, service in the chapel was over, and the monks filed past two and two, never raising their eyes from the gloomy pavement bestrewn with tombstones. The prior, clapping his hands, signalled them to stop, and then addressed them:

“My brethren, stay your progress a moment; lift up your heads, bowed down by penance, and behold with awe the descendant of Saint Louis, the august protector of this convent. Yes, our noble sovereign himself has momentarily quitted his palace to visit this humble abode. On these quiet walls which hide our cells, he has sought to read the simple, touching story, of the life of our saintly founder. The august son of Louis the Just has taken our dwelling-place and community under his immediate protection. Go to your cells and pray to God for this magnanimous prince, for his children and successors in perpetuity.”

As he said these flattering words, a monk, with flushed cheeks and mouth agape, flung himself down at the King’s feet, beating his brow repeatedly upon the pavement, and exclaiming:

“Sire, forgive me, forgive me, guilty though I be. I crave your royal pardon and pity.”

The prior, somewhat confused, saw that some important confession was about to be made, so he dismissed the others, and sent them back to their devotions. The prostrate monk, however, never thought of moving from his position. Perceiving that he was alone with the King, whose calm, gentle demeanour emboldened him, he begged anew for pardon with great energy, and fervour. The King clearly saw that the penitent was some great evil-doer, and he promised forgiveness in somewhat ambiguous fashion. Then the monk rose and said:

“Your Majesty reigns to-day, and reigns gloriously. That is an amazing miracle, for countless incredible dangers of the direst sort have beset your cradle and menaced your youth. A prince of your house, backed up by ambitious inferiors, resolved to wrest the crown from you, in order to get it for himself and his descendants. The Queen, your mother, full of heroic resolution, herself had energy enough to resist the cabal; but more than once her feet touched the very brink of the precipice, and more than once she nearly fell over it with her children.

“Noble qualities did this great Queen possess, but at times she had too overweening a contempt for her enemies. Her disdain for my master, the young Cardinal, was once too bitter, and begot in this presumptuous prelate’s heart undying hatred. Educated under the same roof as M. le Cardinal, with the same teachers and the same doctrines, I saw, as it were, with his eyes when I went out into the world, and marched beneath his banner when civil war broke out.

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“Dreading the punishment for his temerity, this prelate decided that the sceptre should pass into other hands, and that the elder branch should become extinct. With this end in view, he made me write a pamphlet showing that you and your brother, the Prince, were not the King’s sons; and subsequently he induced me to issue another, in which I affirmed on oath that the Queen, your mother, was secretly married to Cardinal Mazarin. Unfortunately, these books met with astounding success, nor, though my tears fall freely, can they ever efface such vile pages.

“I am also guilty of another crime, Sire, and this weighs more heavily upon my heart. When the Queen-mother dexterously arranged for your removal to Vincennes, she left in your bed at the Louvre a large doll. The rebels were aware of this when it was too late. I was ordered to ride post-haste with an escort in pursuit of your carriage; and I had to swear by the Holy Gospels that, if I could not bring you back to Paris, I would stab you to the heart.

“The enormity of my offence weighed heavily upon my spirit and my conscience. I conceived a horror for the Cardinal and withdrew to this convent. For many years I have undergone the most grievous penances, but I shall never make thorough expiation for my sins, and I hold myself to be as great a criminal as at first, so long as I have not obtained pardon from my King.”

“Are you in holy orders?” asked the King gently.

“No, Sire; I feel unworthy to take them,” replied the Carthusian, in dejected tones.

“Let him be ordained as soon as possible,” said his Majesty to the prior. “The monk’s keen repentance touches me; his brain is still excitable; it needs fresh air and change. I will appoint him to a curacy at Saint Domingo, and desire him to leave for that place at the earliest opportunity. Do not forget this.”

The monk again prostrated himself before the King, overwhelming him with blessings, and these royal commands were in due course executed. So it came about that Lesueur’s frescos led to startling revelations, and enabled the Carthusians to keep their splendid property intact, ungainly though this was and out of place.

CHAPTER LIX.

Journey to Poitou.—The Mayor and the Sheriffs of Orleans.—The Marquise’s Modesty.—The Serenade.—The Abbey of Fontevrault.—Family Council.—Duchomania.—A Letter to the King.—The Bishop of Poitiers.—The Young Vicar.—Rather Give Him a Regiment.—The Fete at the Convent.—The Presentation.—The Revolt.—A Grand Example.

The Abbess of Fontevrault, who, when a mere nun, could never bear her profession, now loved it with all her heart, doubtless because of the authority and freedom which she possessed, being at liberty to go or come at will, and as absolute mistress of her actions, accountable to no one for these.

She sent me her confidential woman, one of the “travelling sisters” of the community, to tell me privately that the Principality of Talmont was going to be sold, and to offer me her help at this important juncture.

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Her letter, duly tied up and sealed, begged me to be bold and use my authority, if necessary, in order to induce the King at last to give his approval and consent. "What!" she wrote, "my dear sister; you have given birth to eight children, the youngest of which is a marvel, and you have not yet got your reward. All your children enjoy the rank of prince, and you, their mother, are exempt from such distinction! What is the King thinking about? Does it add to his dignity, honour, and glory that you should still be merely a petty marquise? I ask again, what is the King thinking of?"

In conclusion my sister invited me to pay a visit to her charming abbey. "We have much to tell you," said she, and "such brief absence is needful to you, so as to test the King's affection. Your sort of temperament suits him, your talk amuses him; in fact, your society is absolutely essential to him; the distance from Versailles to Saumur would seem to him as far off as the uttermost end of his kingdom. He will send courier upon courier to you; each of his letters will be a sort of entreaty, and you have only just got to express your firm intention and desire to be created a duchess or a princess, and, my dear sister, it will forthwith be done."

For two days I trained the travelling nun from Fontevrault in her part, and then I suddenly presented her to the King. She had the honour of explaining to his Majesty that she had left the Abbess sick and ailing, and informed him that my sister was most anxious to see me again, and that she hoped his Majesty would not object to my paying her a short visit. For a moment the King hesitated; then he asked me if I thought such a change of urgent necessity. I replied that the news of Madame de Mortemart's ill-health had greatly affected me, and I promised not to be away more than a week.

The King accordingly instructed the Marquis de Louvois—[Minister of War, and inspector-General of Posts and Relays.]—to make all due arrangements for my journey, and two days afterwards, my sister De Thianges, her daughter the Duchesse de Nevers, and myself, set out at night for Poitiers.

The royal relays took us as far as Orleans, after which we had post-horses, but specially chosen and well harnessed. Couriers in advance of us had given all necessary orders to the officials and governors, so that we were provided with an efficient military escort along the road, and were as safe as if driving through Paris.

At Orleans, the mayor and sheriffs in full dress presented themselves at our carriage window, and were about to deliver an address "to please the King;" but I thought such a proceeding ill-timed, and my niece De Nevers told these magnates that we were travelling incognito.

Crowds collected below our balcony. Madame de Thianges thought they were going to serenade me, but I distinctly heard sounds of hissing. My niece De Nevers was greatly upset; she would eat no supper, but began to cry. "What are you worrying about?" quoth I to this excitable young person. "Don't you see that we are stopping the night on

the estates of the Princess Palatine,—[The boorish Bavarian princess, the Duc d'Orleans's second wife. *Editor's note*.]—and that it is to her exquisite breeding that we owe compliments of this kind?"

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Next morning at daybreak we drove on, and the day after we reached Fontevrault. The Abbess, accompanied by her entire community, came to welcome us at the main gate, and her surpliced chaplains offered me holy water.

After rest and refreshment, we made a detailed survey of her little empire, and everywhere observed traces of her good management and tact. Rules had been made more lenient, while not relaxed; the revenues had increased; everywhere embellishments, contentment, and well-being were noticeable.

After praising the Abbess as she deserved, we talked a little about the Talmont principality. My sister was inconsolable. The Tremouilles had come into property which restored their shattered fortunes; the principality was no longer for sale; all thought of securing it must be given up.

Strange to say, I at once felt consoled by such news. Rightly to explain this feeling, I ought, perhaps, to make an avowal. A grand and brilliant title had indeed ever been the object of my ambition; but I thought that I deserved such a distinction personally, for my own sake, and I was always wishing that my august friend would create a title specially in my favour. I had often hinted at such a thing in various ways, and full as he is of wit and penetration, he always listened to my covert suggestions, and was perfectly aware of my desire. And yet, magnificently generous as any mortal well could be, he never granted my wish. Any one else but myself would have been tired, disheartened even; but at Court one must never be discouraged nor give up the game. The atmosphere is rife with vicissitude and change. Monotony would seem to have made there its home; yet no day is quite like another. What one hopes for is too long in coming; and what one never foresees on, a sudden comes to pass.

We took counsel together as to the best thing to be done. Madame de Thianges said to me: “My dear Athenais, you have the elegance of the Mortemarts, the fine perception and ready wit that distinguishes them, but strangely enough you have not their energy, nor the firm will necessary for the conduct of weighty matters. The King does not treat you like a great friend, like a distinguished friend, like the mother of his son, the Duc du Maine; he treats you like a province that he has conquered, on which he levies tax after tax; that is all. Pray recollect, my sister, that for ten years you have played a leading part on the grand stage. Your beauty, to my surprise, has been preserved to you, notwithstanding your numerous confinements and the fatigues of your position. Profit by the present juncture, and do not let the chance slip. You must write to the King, and on some pretext or other, ask for another week’s leave. You must tell him plainly that you have been marquise long enough, and that the moment has come at last for you to have the ‘imperiale’,

[The distinctive mark of duchesses was the ‘imperiale’; that is, a rich and costly hammer-cloth of embroidered velvet, edged with gold, which covered the roofs of ducal equipages.—*Editor’s note*.]

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and sign your name in proper style."

Her advice was considered sound, but the Abbess, taking into account the King's susceptibility, decided that it would not do for me to write myself about a matter so important as this. The Marquise de Thianges, in some way or other, had got the knack of plain speaking, so that a letter of hers would be more readily excused. Thus it was settled that she should write; and write she did. I give her letter verbatim, as it will please my readers; and they will agree with me that I could never have touched this delicate subject so happily myself.

Sire:—Madame de Montespan had the honour of writing one or two notes to you during our journey, and now she rests all day long in this vast and pleasant abbey, where your Majesty's name is held in as great veneration as elsewhere, being beloved as deeply as at Versailles. Madame de Mortemart has caused one of the best portraits of your Majesty, done by Mignard, to be brought hither from Paris, and this magnificent personage in royal robes is placed beneath an amaranth-coloured dais, richly embroidered with gold, at the extreme end of a vast hall, which bears the name of our illustrious and well-beloved monarch. Your privileges are great, in truth, Sire. Here you are, installed in this pious and secluded retreat, where never mortal may set foot. Before you, beside you daily, you may contemplate the multitude of modest virgins who look at you and admire you, becoming all of them attached to you without wishing it, perhaps without knowing it, even.

Surely, Sire, your penetration is a most admirable thing. After your first interview with her, you considered our dear Abbess to be a woman of capacity and talent. You rightly appreciated her, for nothing can be compared to the perfect order that prevails in her house. She is active and industrious without sacrificing her position and her dignity in the slightest. Like yourself, she can judge of things in their entirety, and examine them in every little detail; like yourself, she knows how to command obedience and affection, desiring nothing but that which is just and reasonable. In a word, Sire, Madame de Mortemart has the secret of convincing her subordinates that she is acting solely in their interests, a supreme mission, in sooth, among men; and my sister really has no other desire nor ambition,—to this we can testify.

Upon our return, which for our liking can never be too soon, we will acquaint your Majesty with the slight authorised mortification which we had to put up with at Orleans. We are in possession of certain information regarding this, and your Majesty will have ample means of throwing a light upon the subject. As for the magistrates, they behaved most wonderfully; they had an address all ready for us, but Madame de Montespan would not listen to it, saying that "such honours are meet only for you and for your children." Such modesty on my sister's part is in keeping

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with her great intelligence; I had almost said her genius. But in this matter I was not wholly of her opinion. It seemed to me, Sire, that, in refusing the homage offered to her by these worthy magnates, she, so to speak, disowned the rank ensured to her by your favour. While the Marquise enjoys your noble affection, she is no ordinary personage. She has her seat in your own Chapel Royal, so in travelling she has a right to special honour. By your choice of her, you have made her notable; in giving her your heart, you have made her a part of yourself. By giving birth to your children, she has acquired her rank at Court, in society, and in history. Your Majesty intends her to be considered and respected; the escorts of cavalry along the highroads are sufficient proof of that.

All France, Sire, is aware of your munificence and of your princely generosity: Shall I tell you of the amazement of the provincials at noticing that the ducal housings are absent from my sister's splendid coach? Yes, I have taken upon myself to inform you of this surprise, and knowing how greatly Athenais desires this omission to be repaired, I went so far as to promise that your Majesty would cause this to be done forthwith. It must be done, Sire; the Marquise loves you as much as it is possible for you to be loved; of this, all that she has sacrificed is a proof. But while dearly loving you, she fears to appear importunate, and were it not for my respectful freedom of speech, perhaps you would still be ignorant of that which she most fervently desires.

What we all three of us ask is but a slight thing for your Majesty, who, with a single word, can create a thousand nobles and princes. The kings, your ancestors, used their glory in making their lovers illustrious. The Valois built temples and palaces in their honour. You, greater than all the Valois, should not let their example suffice. And I am sure that you will do for the mother of the Duc du Maine what the young prince himself would do for her if you should happen to forget.

Your Majesty's most humble servant, "*Marquise de Thianges*."

To the Abbess and myself; this ending seemed rather too sarcastic, but Madame de Thianges was most anxious to let it stand. There was no way of softening or glossing it over; so the letter went off, just as she had written it.

It so happened that the Bishop of Poitiers was in his diocese at the time. He came to pay me a visit, and ask me if I could get an abbey for his nephew, who, though extremely young, already acted as vicar-general for him. "I would willingly get him a whole regiment," I replied, "provided M. de Louvois be of those that are my friends. As for the benefices, they depend, as you know, upon the Pere de la Chaise, and I don't think he would be willing to grant me a favour."

"Permit me to assure you, madame, that in this respect you are in error," replied the Bishop. "Pere de la Chaise respects you and honours you, and only speaks of you in

such terms. What distresses him is to see that you have an aversion for him. Let me write to him, and say that my nephew has had the honour of being presented to you, and that you hoped he might have a wealthy abbey to enable him to bear the privations of his calling."

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The young vicar-general was good-looking, and of graceful presence. He had that distinction of manner which causes the priesthood to be held in honour, and that amenity of address which makes the law to be obeyed. My sisters began to take a fancy to him, and recommended him to me. I wrote to Pere de la Chaise myself, and instead of a mere abbey, we asked for a bishopric for him.

It was my intention to organise a brilliant fete for the Fontevrault ladies, and invite all the nobility of the neighbourhood. We talked of this to the young vicar, who highly approved of my plan, and albeit monsieur his uncle thought such a scheme somewhat contrary to rule and to what he termed the proprieties, we made use of his nephew, the young priest, as a lever; and M. de Poitiers at last consented to everything.

The Fontevrault gardens are one of the most splendid sights in all the country round. We chose the large alley as our chief entertainment-hall, and the trees were all illuminated as in my park at Clagny, or at Versailles. There was no dancing, on account of the nuns, but during our repast there was music, and a concert and fireworks afterwards. The fete ended with a performance of “Genevieve de Brabant,” a grand spectacular pantomime, played to perfection by certain gentry of the neighbourhood; it made a great impression upon all the nuns and novices.

Before going down into the gardens, the Abbess wished to present me formally to all the nuns, as well as to those persons it had pleased her to invite. Imagine her astonishment! Three nuns were absent, and despite our entreaties and the commands of their superiors, they persisted in their rebellion and their refusal. They set up to keep rules before all things, and observe the duties of their religion, lying thus to their Abbess and their conscience. It was all mere spite. Of this there can be no doubt, for one of these refractory creatures, as it transpired, was a cousin of the Marquis de Lauzun, my so-called victim; while the other two were near relatives of Mademoiselle de Mauldon, an intimate friend of M. de Meaux.

In spite of these three silly absentees, we enjoyed ourselves greatly, and had much innocent amusement; while they, who could watch us from their windows, were probably mad with rage to think they were not of our number.

My sister complained of them to the Bishop of Poitiers, who severely blamed them for such conduct; and seeing that he could not induce them to offer me an apology, sent them away to three different convents.

CHAPTER LX.

The Page-Dauphin.—A Billet from the King.—Madame de Maintenon’s Letter.—The King as Avenger.—His Sentence on the Murderers.

The great liberty which we enjoyed at Fontevrault, compared with the interminable bondage of Saint Germain or Versailles, made the abbey ever seem more agreeable to me; and Madame de Thianges asked me in sober earnest “if I no longer loved the King.”

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“Of course I do,” was my answer; “but may one not love oneself just a little bit, too? To me, health is life; and I assure you, at Fontevrault, my dear sister, I sleep most soundly, and have quite got rid of all my nervous attacks and headaches.”

We were just talking thus when Madame de Mortemart entered my room, and introduced young Chamilly, the Page-Dauphin,—[The chief page-in-waiting bore the title of Page-Dauphin]—who brought with him a letter from the King. He also had one for me from Madame de Maintenon, rallying me upon my absence and giving me news of my children. The King’s letter was quite short, but a king’s note such as that is worth a whole pile of commonplace letters. I transcribe it here:

I am jealous; an unusual thing for me. And I am much vexed, I confess, with Madame de Mortemart, who might have chosen a very different moment to be ill. I am ignorant as to the nature of her malady, but if it be serious, and of those which soon grow more dangerous, she has played me a very sorry trick in sending for you to act as her nurse or her physician. Pray tell her, madame, that you are no good whatever as a nurse, being extremely hasty and impatient in everything; while as regards medical skill, you are still further from the mark, since you have never yet been able to understand your own ailments, nor even explain these with the least clearness. I must ask the Abbess momentarily to suspend her sufferings and come to Versailles, where all my physicians shall treat her with infinite skill; and, to oblige me, will cure her, as they know how much I esteem and like her. Farewell, my ladies three, who in your friendship are but as one. I should like to be there to make a fourth. Madame de Maintenon, who loves you sincerely, will give you news of your little family and of Saint Germain. Her letter and mine will be brought to you and delivered by the young Comte de Chamilly. Send him back to me at once, and don’t let him, see your novices or your nuns, else he will not want to return to me. *Louis*.

Madame de Maintenon’s letter was not couched in the same playfully mocking tone; though a marquise, she felt the distance that there was between herself and me; besides, she always knows exactly what is the proper thing to do. The Abbess, who is an excellent judge, thought this letter excellently written. She wanted to have a copy of it, which made me determine to preserve it. Here it is, a somewhat more voluminous epistle than that of the King:

I promised you, madame, that I would inform you as often as possible of all that interests you here, and now I keep my promise, being glad to say that I have only pleasant news to communicate. His Majesty is wonderfully well, and though annoyed at your journey, he has hardly lost any of his gaiety, as seemingly he hopes to have you back again in a day or two.

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Mademoiselle de Nantes declares that she would have behaved very well in the coach, and that she is a nearer relation to you than the Duchesse de Nevers, and that it was very unfair not to take her with you this time. In order to comfort her, the Duc du Maine has discovered an expedient which greatly amuses us, and never fails of its effect. He tells her how absolutely necessary it is for her proper education that she should be placed in a convent, and then adds in a serious tone that if she had been taken to Fontevrault she would never have come back!

“Oh, if that is the case,” she answered, “why, I am not jealous of the Duchesse de Nevers.”

The day after your departure the Court took up its quarters at Saint Germain, where we shall probably remain for another week. You know, madame, how fond his Majesty is of the Louis Treize Belvedere, and the telescope erected by this monarch,—one of the best ever made hitherto. As if by inspiration, the King turned this instrument to the left towards that distant bend which the Seine makes round the verge of the Chatou woods. His Majesty, who observes every thing, noticed two bathers in the river, who apparently were trying to teach their much younger companion, a lad of fourteen or fifteen, to swim; doubtless, they had hurt him, for he got away from their grasp, and escaped to the river-bank, to reach his clothes and dress himself. They tried to coax him back into the water, but he did not relish such treatment; by his gestures it was plain that he desired no further lessons. Then the two bathers jumped out of the river, and as he was putting on his shirt, dragged him back into the water, and forcibly held him under till he was drowned.

When they had committed this crime, and their victim was murdered, they cast uneasy glances at either river-bank, and the heights of Saint Germain. Believing that no one had knowledge of their deed, they put on their clothes, and with all a murderer’s glee depicted on their evil countenances, they walked along the bank in the direction of the castle. The King instantly rode off in pursuit, accompanied by five or six musketeers; he got ahead of them, and soon turned back and met them.

“Messieurs,” said he to them, “when you went away you were three in number; what have you done with your comrade?” This question, asked in a firm voice, disconcerted them somewhat at first, but they soon replied that their companion wanted to have a swim in the river, and that they had left him higher up the stream near the corner of the forest, close to where his clothes and linen made a white spot on the bank.

On hearing this answer the King gave orders for them to be bound and brought back by the soldiery to the old chateau, where they were shut up in separate rooms. His Majesty, filled with indignation, sent for the High Provost, and recounting to him what took place before his eyes, requested him to try the culprits there and then. The Marquis, however, is always scrupulous to excess; he begged the King to reflect that at such a great distance, and viewed through a telescope, things might have seemed

somewhat different from what they actually were, and that, instead of forcibly holding their companion under the water, perhaps the two bathers were endeavouring to bring him to the surface.

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“No, monsieur, no,” replied his Majesty; “they dragged him into the river against his will, and I saw their struggles and his when they thrust him under the water.”

“But, Sire,” replied this punctilious personage, “our criminal law requires the testimony of two witnesses, and your Majesty, all-powerful though you be, can only furnish that of one.”

“Monsieur,” replied the King gently, “I authorise you in passing sentence to state that you heard the joint testimony of the King of France and the King of Navarre.”

Seeing that this failed to convince the judge, his Majesty grew impatient and said to the old Marquis, “King Louis IX., my ancestor, sometimes administered justice himself in the wood at Vincennes; I will to-day follow his august example and administer justice at Saint Germain.”

The throne-room was at once got ready by his order. Twenty notable burgesses of the town were summoned to the castle, and the lords and ladies sat with these upon the benches. The King, wearing his orders, took his seat when the two prisoners were placed in the dock.

By their contradictory statements, ever-increasing embarrassment, and unveracious assertions, the jury were soon convinced of their guilt. The unhappy youth was their brother, and had inherited property from their mother, he being her child by a second husband. So these monsters murdered him for revenge and greed. The King sentenced them to be bound hand and foot, and flung into the river in the selfsame place “where they killed their young brother Abel.”

When they saw his Majesty leaving his throne, they threw themselves at his feet, implored his pardon, and confessed their hideous crime. The King, pausing a moment, thanked God that their conscience had forced such confession from them, and then remitted the sentence of confiscation only. They were executed before the setting of that sun which had witnessed their crime, and the next day, that is, yesterday evening, the three bodies, united once more by fate, were found floating about two leagues from Saint Germain, under the willows at the edge of the river near Poisay.

Orders were instantly given for their separate interment. The youngest was brought back to Saint Germain, where the King wished him to have a funeral befitting his innocence and untimely fate. All the military attended it.

Forgive me, madams, for all these lengthy details; we have all been so much upset by this dreadful occurrence, and can talk of nothing else,—in fact, it will furnish matter for talk for a long while yet.

I sincerely hope that by this time Madame de Mortsmart has completely recovered. I agree with his Majesty that, in doctoring, you have not had much experience; still, friendship acts betimes as a most potent talisman, and the heart of the Abbess is of those that in absence pines, but which in the presence of some loved one revives.

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She has deigned to grant me a little place in her esteem; pray tell her that this first favour has somewhat spoiled me, and that now I ask for more than this, for a place in her affections. Madame de Thianges and Madame de Nevers are aware of my respect and attachment for them, and they approve of this, for they have engraved their names and crests on my plantain-trees at Maintenon. Such inscriptions are a bond to bind us, and if no mischance befall, these trees, as I hope, will survive me.

I am, madame, *etc*., *Maintenon*.

CHAPTER LXI.

Mademoiselle d'Amurande.—The Married Nun.—The Letter to the Superior.—-Monseigneur's Discourse.—The Abduction.—A Letter from the King.—Beware of the Governess.—We Leave Fontevrault.

Amoung the novices at Fontevrault there was a most interesting, charming young person, who gave Madame de Mortemart a good deal of anxiety, as she thought her still undecided as to the holy profession she was about to adopt. This interested me greatly, and evoked my deepest sympathy.

The night of our concert and garden fete she sang to please the Abbess, but there were tears in her voice. I was touched beyond expression, and going up to her at the bend of one of the quickset-hedges, I said, "You are unhappy, mademoiselle; I feel a deep interest for you. I will ask Madame de Mortemart to let you come and read to me; then we can talk as we like. I should like to help you if I can."

She moved away at once, fearing to be observed, and the following day I met her in my sister's room.

"Your singing and articulation are wonderful, mademoiselle," said I, before the Abbess; "would you be willing to come and read to me for an hour every day? I have left my secretary at Versailles, and I am beginning to miss her much."

Madame de Mortemart thanked me for my kindly intentions towards the young novice, who, from that time forward, was placed at my disposal.

The reading had no other object than to gain her confidence, and as soon as we were alone I bade her tell me all. After brief hesitation, the poor child thus began:

"In a week's time, a most awful ceremony takes place in this monastery. The term of my novitiate has already expired, and had it not been for the distractions caused by your visit, I should have already been obliged to take this awful oath and make my vows.

“Madame de Mortemart is gentle and kind (no wonder! she is your sister), but she has decided that I am to be one of her nuns, and nothing on earth can induce her to change her mind. If this fatal decree be executed, I shall never live to see this year of desolation reach its close. Perhaps I may fall dead at the feet of the Bishop who ordains us.

“They would have me give to God—who does not need it—my whole life as a sacrifice. But, madame, I cannot give my God this life of mine, as four years ago I surrendered it wholly to some one else. Yes, madame,” said she, bursting into tears, “I am the lawful wife of the Vicomte d’Olbruze, my cousin german.

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“Of this union, planned and approved by my dear mother herself, a child was born, which my ruthless father refuses to recognise, and which kindly peasants are bringing up in the depths of the woods.

“My dear, good mother was devotedly fond of my lover, who was her nephew. From our very cradles she had always destined us for each other. And she persisted in making this match, despite her husband, whose fortune she had immensely increased, and one day during his absence we were legally united by our family priest in the castle chapel. My father, who, was away at sea, came back soon afterwards: He was enraged at my mother’s disobedience, and in his fury attempted to stab her with his own hand. He made several efforts to put an end to her existence, and the general opinion in my home is that he was really the author of her death.

“Devotedly attached to my husband by ties of love no less than of duty, I fled with him to his uncle’s, an old knight-commander of Malta, whose sole heir he was. My father, with others, pursued us thither, and scaled the walls of our retreat by night, resolved to kill his nephew first and me afterwards. Roused by the noise of the ruffians, my husband seized his firearms. Three of his assailants he shot from the balcony, and my father, disguised as a common man, received a volley in the face, which destroyed his eyesight. The Parliament of Rennes took up the matter. My husband thought it best not to put in an appearance, and after the evidence of sundry witnesses called at random, a warrant for his arrest as a defaulter was issued, a death penalty being attached thereto.

“Ever since that time my husband has been wandering about in disguise from province to province. Doomed to solitude in our once lovely chateau, my, father forced me to take the veil in this convent, promising that if I did so, he would not bring my husband to justice.

“Perhaps, madame, if the King were truly and faithfully informed of all these things, he would have compassion for my grief, and right the injustice meted out to my unlucky husband.”

After hearing this sad story, I clearly saw that, in some way or other, we should have to induce Madame de Mortemart to postpone the ceremony of taking the vow, and I afterwards determined to put these vagaries on the part of the law before my good friend President de Nesmond, who was the very man to give us good advice, and suggest the right remedy.

As for the King, I did not deem it fit that he should be consulted in the matter. Of course I look upon him as a just and wise prince, but he is the slave of form. In great families, he does not like to hear of marriages to which the father has not given formal consent; moreover, I did not forget about the gun-shot which blinded the gentleman, and made him useless for the rest of his life. The King, who is devoted to his nobles, would never

have pronounced in favour of the Vicomte, unless he happened to be in a particularly good humour. Altogether, it was a risky thing.

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I deeply sympathised with Mademoiselle d'Amurande in her trouble, and assured her of my good-will and protection, but I begged her to approve my course of action, though taken independently of the King. She willingly left her fate in my hands, and I bade her write my sister the following note:

Madame:—You know the vows that bind me; they are sacred, having been plighted at the foot of the altar. Do not persist, I entreat you, do not persist in claiming the solemn declaration of my vows. You are here to command the Virgins of the Lord, but among these I have no right to a place. I am a mother, although so young, and the Holy Scriptures tell me every day that Hagar, the kindly hearted, may not forsaken her darling Ishmael.

I happened to be with Madame de Mortemart when one of the aged sisters brought her this letter. On reading it she was much affected. I feigned ignorance, and asked her kindly what was the reason of her trouble. She wished to hide it; but I insisted, and at last persuaded her to let me see the note. I read it calmly and with reflection, and afterwards said to the Abbess:

"What! You, sister, whose distress and horror I witnessed when our stern parents shut you up in a cloister,—are you now going to impose like fetters upon a young and interesting person, who dreads them, and rejects them as once you rejected them?"

Madame de Mortemart replied, "I was young then, and without experience, when I showed such childish repugnance as that of which you speak. At that age one knows nothing of religion nor of the eternal verities. Only the world, with its frivolous pleasures, is then before one's eyes; and the spectacle blinds our view, even our view of heaven. Later on I deplored such resistance, which so grieved my family; and when I saw you at Court, brilliant and adored, I assure you, my dear Marquise, that this convent and its solitude seemed to me a thousand times more desirable than the habitation of kings."

"You speak thus philosophically," I replied, "only because your lot happens to have undergone such a change. From a slave, you have become an absolute and sovereign mistress. The book of rules is in your hands; you turn over its leaves wherever you like; you open it at whatever page suits you; and if the book should chance to give you a severe rebuke, you never let others know this. Human nature was ever thus. No, no, madame; you can never make one believe that a religious life is in itself such an attractive one that you would gladly resume it if the dignities of your position as an abbess were suddenly wrested from you and given to some one else."

"Well, well, if that is so," said the Abbess, reddening, "I am quite ready to send in my resignation, and so return you your liberality."

“I don’t ask you for an abbey which you got from the King,” I rejoined, smiling; “but the favour, which I ask and solicit you can and ought to grant. Mademoiselle d’Amurande points out to you in formal and significant terms that she cannot enrol herself among the Virgins of the Lord, and that the gentle Hagar of Holy Writ may not forsake Ishmael. Such a confession plainly hints at an attachment which religion cannot violate nor destroy, else our religion would be a barbarous one, and contrary to nature.

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“Since God has brought me to this convent, and by chance I have got to know and appreciate this youthful victim, I shall give her my compassion and help,—I, who have no necessity to make conversions by force in order to add to the number of my community. If I have committed any grave offence in the eyes of God, I trust that He will pardon me in consideration of the good work that I desire to do. I shall write to the King, and Mademoiselle d’Amurande shall not make her vows until his Majesty commands her to do so.”

This last speech checkmated my sister. She at once became gentle, sycophantic, almost caressing in manner, and assured me that the ceremony of taking the vow would be indefinitely postponed, although the Bishop of Lugon had already prepared his homily, and invitations had been issued to the nobility.

Madame de Mortemart is the very embodiment of subtlety and cunning. I saw that she only wanted to gain time in order to carry out her scheme. I did not let myself be hoodwinked by her promises, but went straight to work, being determined to have my own way.

Hearing from Mademoiselle d’Amurande that her friend and ally, the old commander, was still living, I was glad to know that she had in him such a stanch supporter. “It is the worthy commander,” said I, “who must be as a father to you, until I have got the sentence of the first Parliament cancelled.” Then we arranged that I should get her away with me from the convent, as there seemed to be little or no difficulty about this.

Accordingly, three days afterwards I dressed her in a most elegant costume of my niece’s. We went out in the morning for a drive, and the nuns at the gateway bowed low, as usual, when my carriage passed, never dreaming of such a thing as abduction.

That evening the whole convent seemed in a state of uproar. Madame de Mortemart, with flaming visage, sought to stammer out her reproaches. But as there was no law to prevent my action, she had to hide her vexation, and behave as if nothing had happened.

The following year I wrote and told her that the judgment of the Rennes Parliament had been cancelled by the Grand Council, as it was based on conflicting evidence. The blind Comte d’Amurande had died of rage, and the young couple, who came into all his property, were eternally grateful to me, and forever showered blessings upon my head.

The Abbess wrote back to say that she shared my satisfaction at so happy a conclusion, and that Madame d’Olbruse’s disappearance from Fontevrault had scarcely been noticed.

The Marquise de Thianges, whose ideas regarding such matters were precisely the same as my own, confined herself to stating that I had not told her a word about it. She

spoke the truth; for the enterprise was not of such difficulty that I needed any one to help me.

On the twelfth day, as we were about to leave Fontevrault, I received another letter from the King, which was as follows:

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As the pain in your knee continues, and the Bourbonne waters have been recommended to you, I beg you, madame, to profit by being in their vicinity, and to go and try their effect. Mademoiselle de Nantes is in fairly good health, yet it looks as if a return of her fluxion were likely. Five or six pimples have appeared on her face, and there is the same redness of the arms as last year. I shall send her to Bourbonne; your maids and the governess will accompany her. The Prince de Conde, who is in office there, will show you every attention. I would rather see you a little later on in good health, than a little sooner, and ailing.

My kindest messages to Madame de Thianges, the Abbess, and all those who show you regard and sympathy. Madame de Nevers might invite you to stay with her; on her return I will not forget such obligation.

Louis.

We left Fontevrault after a stay of fifteen days; to the nuns and novices it seemed more like fifteen minutes, but to Madame de Mortemart, fifteen long years. Yet that did not prevent her from tenderly embracing me, nor from having tears in her eyes when the time came for us to take coach and depart.

BOOK 5.

CHAPTER I.

The Prince de Mont-Beliard.—He Agrees to the Propositions Made Him.—The King's Note.—Diplomacy of the Chancellor of England.—Letter from the Marquis de Montespan.—The Duchy in the Air.—The Domain of Navarre, Belonging to the Prince de Bouillon, Promised to the Marquise.

There was but a small company this year at the Waters of Bourbonne,—to begin with, at any rate; for afterwards there appeared to be many arrivals, to see me, probably, and Mademoiselle de Nantes.

The Chancellor Hyde was already installed there, and his establishment was one of the most agreeable and convenient; he was kind enough to exchange it for mine. A few days afterwards he informed me of the arrival of the Prince de Mont-Beliard, of Wurtemberg, who was anxious to pay his respects to me, as though to the King's daughter. In effect, this royal prince came and paid me a visit; I thought him greatly changed for such a short lapse of years.

We had seen each other—as, I believe, I have already told—at the time of the King's first journey in Flanders. He recalled all the circumstances to me, and was amiable enough to tell me that, instead of waning, my beauty had increased.

“It is you, Prince, who embellish everything,” I answered him. “I begin to grow like a dilapidated house; I am only here to repair myself.”

Less than a year before, M. de Mont-Billiard had lost that amiable princess, his wife; he had a lively sense of this loss, and never spoke of it without tears in his eyes.

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“You know, madame,” he told me, “my states are, at present, not entirely administered, but occupied throughout by the officers of the King of France. Those persons who have my interests at heart, as well as those who delight at my fears, seem persuaded that this provisional occupation will shortly become permanent. I dare not question you on this subject, knowing how much discretion is required of you; but I confess that I should pass quieter and more tranquil nights if you could reassure me up to a certain point.”

“Prince,” I replied to him, “the King is never harsh except with those of whom he has had reason to complain. M. le Duc de Neubourg, and certain other of the Rhine princes, have been thick-witted enough to be disloyal to him; he has punished them for it, as Caesar did, and as all great princes after him will do. But you have never shown him either coldness, or aversion, or indifference. He has commanded the Marechal de Luxembourg to enter your territory to prevent the Prince of Orange from reaching there before us, and your authority has been put, not under the domination, but under the protection, of the King of France, who is desirous of being able to pass from there into the Brisgau.”

Madame de Thianges, Madame de Nevers, and myself did all that lay in our power to distract or relieve the sorrows of the Prince; but the loss of Mademoiselle de Chatillon, his charming spouse, was much more present with him than that of his states; the bitterness which he drew from it was out of the retch of all consolation possible. The Marquise de Thianges procured the Chancellor of England to approach the Prince, and find out from him, to a certain extent, whether he would consent to exchange the County of Mont-Beliard for some magnificent estates in France, to which some millions in money would be added.

M. de Wurtemberg asked for a few days in which to reflect, and imagining that these suggestions emanated from Versailles, he replied that he could refuse nothing to the greatest of kings. My sister wrote on the day following to the Marquis de Louvois, instead of asking it of the King in person. M. de Luvois, who, probably, wished to despoil M. de Mont-Beliard without undoing his purse-strings, put this overture before the King maliciously, and the King wrote me immediately the following letter:

Leave M. de Mont-Beliard alone, and do not speak to him again of his estates. If the matter which occupies Madame de Thianges could be arranged, it would be of the utmost propriety that a principality of such importance rested in the Crown, at least as far as sovereignty. The case of the Principality of Orange is a good enough lesson to me; there must be one ruler only in an empire. As for you, my dear lady, feel no regret for all that. You shall be a duchess, and I am pleased to give you this title which you desire. Let M. de Montespan be informed that his marquisate is to be elevated into a duchy with a peerage, and that I will add to it the number of seigniories that is proper, as I do not wish to deviate from the usage which has become a law, *etc*.

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The prince's decision was definite, and as his character was, there was no wavering. I wrote to him immediately to express my lively gratitude, and we considered, the Marquise and I, as to the intermediary to whom we could entrust the unsavoury commission of approaching the Marquis de Montespan. He hated all my family from his having obtained no satisfaction from it for his wrath. We begged the Chancellor Hyde, a personage of importance, to be good enough to accept this mission; he saw no reason to refuse it, and, after ten or eleven days, he received the following reply, with which he was moderately amused:

Chateau saint Elix . . . . At the world's end.

I am sensible, my Lord, as I should be, of the honour which you have wished to do me, whilst, notwithstanding, permit me to consider it strange that a man of your importance has cared to meddle in such a negotiation. His Majesty the King of France did not consult me when he wished to make my wife his mistress; it is somewhat remarkable that so great a prince expects my intervention today to recompense conduct that I have disapproved, that I disapprove, and shall disapprove to my last breath. His Majesty has got eight or ten children from my wife without saying a word to me about it; this monarch can surely, therefore, make her a present of a duchy without summoning me to his assistance. According to all laws, human and divine, the King ought to punish Madame de Montespan, and, instead of censuring her, he wishes to make her a duchess! . . . Let him make her a princess, even a highness, if he likes; he has all the power in his hands. I am only a twig; he is an oak.

If madame is fostering ambition, mine has been satisfied for forty years; I was born a marquis; a marquis—apart from some unforeseen catastrophe—I will die; and Madame la Marquise, as long as she does not alter her conduct, has no need to alter her degree.

I will, however, waive my severity, if M. le Duc du Maine will intervene for his mother, and call me his father, however it may be. I am none the less sensible, my lord, of the honour of your acquaintance, and since you form one of the society of Madame la Marquise, endeavour to release yourself from her charms, for she can be an enchantress when she likes.... It is true that, from what they tell me, you were not quite king in your England.

I am, from out my exile (almost as voluntary as yours), the most obliged and grateful of your servants,

De Gondrin Montespan.

The Marquise de Thianges felt a certain irritation at the reading of this letter; she offered all our excuses for it to the English Chancellor, and said to me: "I begin to fear that the King of Versailles is not acting with good faith towards you, when he makes your

advancement depend on the Marquis de Montespan; it is as though he were giving you a duchy in the moon."

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I sent word to the King that the Marquis refused to assist his generous projects; he answered me:

“Very well, we must look somewhere else.”

Happily, this domestic humiliation did not transpire at Bourbonne; for M. de la Bruyere had arrived there with Monsieur le Prince, and that model satirist would unfailingly have made merry over it at my expense.

The best society lavished its attentions on me; Coulanges, whose flatteries are so amusing, never left us for a moment.

The Prince, after the States were over, had come to relax himself at Bourbonne, which was his property. After having done all in his power formerly to dethrone his master, he is his enthusiastic servitor now that he sees him so strong. He was fascinated with Mademoiselle de Nantes, and asked my permission to seek her hand for the Duc de Bourbon, his grandson; my reply was, that the alliance was desirable on both sides, but that these arrangements were settled only by the King.

In spite of the insolent diatribe of M. de Montespan, the waters proved good and favourable; my blood, little by little, grew calm; my pains, passing from one knee to the other, insensibly faded away in both; and, after having given a brilliant fete to the Prince de Mont-Beliard, the English Chancellor, and our most distinguished bathers, I went back to Versailles, where the work seemed to me to have singularly advanced.

The King went in advance of us to Corbeil; Madame de Maintenon, her pretty nieces, and my children were in the carriage. The King received me with his ordinary kindness, and yet said no word to me of the harshness which I had suffered from my husband. Two or three months afterwards he recollected his royal word, and gave me to understand that the Prince de Bourbon was shortly going to give up Navarre, in Normandy, and that this vast and magnificent estate would be raised to a duchy for me.

It has not been yet, at the moment that I write. Perhaps it is written above that I shall never be a duchess. In such a case, the King would not deserve the inward reproaches that my sensibility addresses him, since his good-will would be fettered by destiny.

It is my kindness which makes me speak so.

CHAPTER II.

The Venetian Drummer.—The Little Olivier.—Adriani’s Love.—His Ingratitude.—His Punishment.—His Vengeance.—Complaint on This Account.

At the great slaughter of Candia, M. de Vivonne had the pleasure of saving a young Venetian drummer whom he noticed all covered with blood, and senseless, amongst the dead and dying, with whom the field was covered far and wide. He had his wounds dressed and cared for by the surgeons of the French navy, with the intention of giving him me, either as a valet de chambre or a page, so handsome and agreeable this young Italian was. Adriani was his name. He presented him to me after the return of the expedition to France, and I was sensible of this amiable attention of my brother, for truly the peer of this young drummer did not exist.

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Adrien was admirable to see in my livery, and when my carriage went out, he attracted alone all the public attention. His figure was still not all that it might be; it developed suddenly, and then one was not wrong in comparing him with a perfect model for the Academy. He took small time in losing the manners which he had brought with him from his original calling. I discovered the best 'ton' in him; he would have been far better seated in the interior than outside my equipage. Unfortunately, this young impertinent gave himself airs of finding my person agreeable, and of cherishing a passion for me; my first valet de chambre told me of it at once. I gave him to the King, who had sometimes noticed him in passing.

Adrien was inconsolable at first at this change, for which he was not prepared, but his vanity soon came uppermost; he understood that it was an advancement, and took himself for a great personage, since he had the honour of approaching and serving the King.

The little Olivier—the first assistant in the shop of Madame Camille, my dressmaker—-saw Adrien, inspired him with love, and herself with much, and they had to be married. I was good-natured enough to be interested in this union, and as I had never any fault to find with the intelligent services and attentions of the little modiste, I gave her two hundred louis, that she might establish herself well and without any waiting.

She had a daughter whom she was anxious to call Athenais. I thought this request excessive; I granted my name of Francoise only.

The young couple would have succeeded amply with their business, since my confidence and favour were sufficient to give them vogue; but I was not slow in learning that cruel discord had already penetrated to their household, and that Adrien, in spite of his adopted country, had remained at heart Italian. Jealous without motive, and almost without love, he tormented with his suspicions, his reproaches, and his harshness, an attentive and industrious young wife, who loved him with intense love, and was unable to succeed in persuading him of it. From her condition, a modiste cannot dispense with being amiable, gracious, engaging. The little Olivier, as pretty as one can be, easily secured the homage of the cavaliers. For all thanks she smiled at the gentlemen, as a well brought up woman should do. Adrien disapproved these manners,—too French, in his opinion. One day he dared to say to his wife, and that before witnesses: "Because you have belonged to Madame de Montespan, do you think you have the same rights that she has?" And with that he administered a blow to her.

This indecency was reported to me. I did not take long in discovering what it was right to do with Adrien. I had him sent to Clagny, where I happened to be at the time.

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“Monsieur the Venetian drummer,” I said to him, with the hauteur which it was necessary to oppose to his audacity, “Monsieur le Marechal de Vivonne, who is always too good, saved your life without knowing you. I gave you to the King, imagining that I knew you. Now I am undeceived, and I know, without the least possibility of doubt, that beneath the appearance of a good heart you hide the ungrateful and insolent rogue. The King needs persons more discreet, less violent, and more polite. Madame de Montespan gave you up to the King; Madame de Montespan has taken you back this morning to her service. You depend for the future on nobody but Madame de Montespan, and it is her alone that you are bound to obey. Your service in her house has commenced this morning; it will finish this evening, and, before midnight, you will leave her for good and all. I have known on all occasions how to pardon slight offences; there are some that a person of my rank could not excuse; yours is of that number. Go; make no answer! Obey, ingrate! Disappear, I command you!”

At these words he tried to throw himself at my feet. “Go, wretched fellow!” I cried to him; and, at my voice, my lackeys ran up and drove him from the room and from the chateau.

Almost always these bad-natured folks have cowardly souls. Adrien, his head in a whirl, presented himself to my Suisse at Versailles, who, finding his look somewhat sinister, refused to receive him. He retired to my hotel in Paris, where the Suisse, being less of a physiognomist, delivered him the key of his old room, and was willing to allow him to pass the night there.

Adrien, thinking of naught but how to harm me and give me a memorable proof of his vengeance, ran and set fire to my two storehouses, and, to put a crown on his rancour, went and hanged himself in an attic.

About two o’clock in the morning, a sick-nurse, having perceived the flames, gave loud cries and succeeded in making herself heard. Public help arrived; the fire was mastered. My Suisse sought everywhere for the Italian, whom he thought to be in danger; he stumbled against his corpse. What a scene! What an affliction! The commissary having had his room opened, on a small bureau a letter was found which he had been at the pains of writing, and in which he accused me of his despair and death.

The people of Paris have been at all times extravagance and credulity itself. They looked upon this young villain as a martyr, and at once dedicated an elegy to him, in which I was compared with Medea, Circe, and Fredegonde.

It is precisely on account of this elegy that I have cared to set down this cruel anecdote. My readers, to whom I have just narrated the facts with entire frankness, can see well that, instead of having merited reproaches, I should only have received praise for my restraint and moderation.

It is, assuredly, most painful to have to suffer the abuse of those for whom we have never done aught; but the outrages of those whom we have succoured, maintained, and favoured are insupportable injuries.

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CHAPTER III.

The Equipage at Full Speed.—The Poor Vine-grower.—Sensibility of Madame de Maintenon.—Her Popularity.—One Has the Right to Crush a Man Who Will Not Get Out of the Way.—What One Sees.—What They Tell You.—All Ends at the Opera.—One Can Be Moved to Tears and Yet Like Chocolate.

Another event with a tragical issue, and one to which I contributed even less, served to feed and foster that hatred, mixed with envy, which the rabble populace guards always so persistently towards the favourites of kings or fortune.

Naturally quick and impatient, I cannot endure to move with calm and state along the roads. My postilions, my coachmen know it, driving in such fashion that no equipage is ever met which cleaves the air like mine.

I was descending one day the declivity of the Coeur-Volant, between Saint Germain and Marly. The Marquises de Maintenon and d'Hudicourt were in my carriage with M. le Duc du Maine, so far as I can remember. We were going at the pace which I have just told, and my outriders, who rode in advance, were clearing the way, as is customary. A vine-grower, laden with sticks, chose this moment to cross the road, thinking himself, no doubt, agile enough to escape my six horses. The cries of my people were useless. The imprudent fellow took his own course, and my postilions, in spite of their efforts with the reins, could not prevent themselves from passing over his body; the wheels followed the horses; the poor man was cut in pieces.

At the lamentations of the country folk and the horrified passers-by, we stopped. Madame de Maintenon wished to alight, and when she perceived the unfortunate vine-grower disfigured with his wounds, she clasped her hands and fell to weeping. The Marquise d'Hudicourt, who was always simplicity itself, followed her friend's example; there was nothing but groans and sorrowful exclamations. My coachman blamed the postilions, the postilions the man's obstinacy.

Madame de Maintenon, speaking as though she were the mistress, bade them be silent, and dared to say to them before all the crowd: "If you belonged to me, I would soon settle you." At these words all the spectators applauded, and cried: "Vive Madame de Maintenon!"

Irritated at what I had just heard, I put my head out of the door, and, turning to these sentimental women, I said to them: "Be good enough to get in, mesdames; are you determined to have me stoned?"

They mounted again, after having left my purse with the poor relations of the dead man; and as far as Ruel, which was our destination, I was compelled to listen to their complaints and litanies.

“Admit, madame,” I declared to Madame de Maintenon, “that any person except myself could and would detest you for the harm you have done me. Your part was to blame the postilions lightly and the rustic very positively. My equipage did not come unexpectedly, and my two outriders had signalled from their horses.”

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“Madame,” she replied, “you have not seen, as I did, those eyes of the unhappy man forced violently from their sockets, his poor crushed head, his palpitating heart, from which the blood soaked the pavement; such a sight has moved and broken my own heart. I was, as I am still, quite beside myself, and, in such a situation, it is permissible to forget discretion in one’s speech and the proprieties. I had no intention of giving you pain; I am distressed at having done so. But as for your coachmen I loathe them, and, since you undertake their defence, I shall not for the future show myself in your equipage.”

[In one of her letters, Madame de Maintenon speaks of this accident, but she does not give quite the same account of it. It is natural that Madame de Montespan seeks to excuse her people and herself if she can.—*Editor’s note*.]

At Ruel, she dared take the same tone before the Duchesse de Richelieu, who rebuked her for officiousness, and out of spite, or some other reason, Madame de Maintenon refused to dine. She had two or three swooning fits; her tears started afresh four or five times, and the Marquise d’Hudicourt, who dined only by snatches, went into a corner to sob and weep along with her.

“Admit, madame,” I said then to Madame de Maintenon, “your excessive grief for an unknown man is singular. He was, perhaps, actually a dishonest fellow. The accident which you come back to incessantly, and which distresses me also, is doubtless deplorable; but, after all, it is not a murder, an ambush, a premeditated assassination. I imagine that if such a catastrophe had happened elsewhere, and been reported to us in a gazette or a book, you would have read of it with interest and commiseration; but we should not have seen you clasp your hands over your head, turn red and pale, utter loud cries, shed tears, sob, and scold a coachman, postilions, perhaps even me. The event, would, nevertheless, be actually the same. Admit, then, madame, and you, too, Madame d’Hudicourt, that there is an exaggeration in your sorrow, and that you would have made, both of you, two excellent comedians.”

Madame de Maintenon, piqued at these last words, sought to make us understand, and even make us admit, that there is a great difference between an event narrated to you by a third party, and an event which one has seen. Madame de Richelieu shut her mouth pleasantly with these words: “We know, Madame la Marquise, how much eloquence and wit is yours. We approve all your arguments, past and to be. Let us speak no further of an accident which distresses you; and since you require to be diverted, let us go to the Opera, which is only two leagues off.”

She consented to accompany us, for fear of proving herself entirely ridiculous; but to delay us as much as possible, she required a cup of chocolate, her favourite dish, her appetite having returned as soon as she had exhausted the possibilities of her grief.

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CHAPTER IV.

Charles II., King of England.—How Interest Can Give Memory.—His Grievances against France.—The Two Daughters of the Duke of York.—William of Orange Marries One, in Spite of the Opposition of the King.—Great Joy of the Allies.—How the King of England Understands Peace.—Saying of the King.—Preparations for War.

The King, Charles Stuart, who reigned in England since the death of the usurper, Cromwell, was a grandson of Henri IV., just as much as our King. Charles II. displayed the pronounced penchant of Henri IV. for the ladies and for pleasure; but he had neither his energy, nor his genial temper, nor his amiable frankness. After the death of Henrietta of England, his beloved sister, he remained for some time longer our ally, but only to take great advantage from our union and alliance. He had made use of it against the Dutch, his naval and commercial rivals, and had compelled them, by the aid of the King of France (then his friend), to reimburse him a sum of twenty-six millions, and to pay him, further, an annual tribute of twelve or fifteen thousand livres for the right of fishing round his island domains.

All these things being obtained, he seemed to recollect that Cardinal de Richelieu had not protected his father, Stuart; that the Cardinal Mazarin had declared for Cromwell in his triumph; that the Court of France had indecently gone into mourning for that robber; that there had been granted neither guards, nor palace, nor homages of state to the Queen, his mother, although daughter and sister of two French kings; that this Queen, in a modest retirement—sometimes in a cell in the convent of Chaillot, sometimes in her little pavilion at Colombesl—had died, poisoned by her physician, without the orator, Bossuet, having even frowned at it in the funeral oration;

[Mademoiselle de Montpensier, in her Memoirs, says that this Queen, already languishing, had lost her sleep, and was given soporific pills, on account of which Henrietta of France awoke no more; but it is probable that the servants, and not the doctors, committed this blunder.]

that the unfortunate Henrietta daughter of this Queen and first wife of Monsieur had succumbed to the horrible tortures of a poisoning even more visible and manifest; whilst her poisoners, who were well known, had never been in the least blamed or disgraced.

On all these arguments, with more or less foundation, Charles II. managed to conclude that he ought to detach himself from France, who was not helpful enough; and, by deserting us, he excited universal joy amongst his subjects, who were constantly jealous of us.

Charles Stuart had had children by his mistresses; he had had none by the Queen, his wife. The presumptive heir to the Crown was the Duke of York, his Majesty's only brother.

The Duke of York, son-in-law—as I have noticed already—of our good Chancellor, Lord Hyde, had himself only two daughters, equally beautiful, who, according to the laws of those islanders, would bear the sceptre in turn.

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Our King, who read in the future, was thinking of marrying these two princesses conformably with our interests, when the Prince of Orange crossed the sea, and went formally to ask the hand of the elder of his uncle.

Informed of this proceeding, the King at once sent M. de Croissy-Colbert to the Duke of York, to induce him to interfere and refuse his daughter; but, in royal families, it is always the head who makes and decides marriages. William of Orange obtained his charming cousin Mary, and acquired that day the expectation of the Protestant throne, which was his ambition.

At the news of this marriage, the allies, that is to say, all the King's enemies, had an outburst of satisfaction, and gave themselves up to puerile jubilations. The King of Great Britain stood definitely on their side; he made common cause with them, and soon there appeared in the political world an audacious document signed by this prince, in which, from the retreat of his island, the empire of fogs, he dared to demand peace from Louis of Bourbon, his ancient ally and his cousin german, imposing on him the most revolting conditions.

According to the English monarch, France ought to restore to the Spaniards, first Sicily, and, further, the towns of Charleroi, Ath, Courtrai, Condo, Saint Guilain, Tournai, and Valenciennes, as a condition of retaining Franche-Comte; moreover, France was compelled to give up Lorraine to the Duke Charles, and places in German Alsace to the Emperor.

The King replied that "too much was too much." He referred the decision of his difficulties to the fortune of war, and collected fresh soldiers.

Then, without further delay, England and the States General signed a particular treaty at La Hague, to constrain France (or, rather, her ruler) to accept the propositions that his pride refused to hear.

CHAPTER V.

The Great Mademoiselle Buys Choisy.—The President Gonthier.—The Indemnity.—The Salmon.—The Harangue as It Is Not Done in the Academy.

The King had only caused against his own desire the extreme grief which Mademoiselle felt at the imprisonment of Lauzun. His Majesty was sensible of the wisdom of the resolution which she had made not to break with the Court, and to show herself at Saint Germain, or at Versailles, from time to time, as her rank, her near kinship, her birth demanded. He said to me one day: "My cousin is beginning to look up. I see with pleasure that her complexion is clearing, that she laughs willingly at this and that, and that her good-will for me is restored. I am told that she is occupied in building a country-

house above Vitry. Let us go to-day and surprise her, and see what this house of Choisy is like."

We arrived at a sufficiently early hour, and had time to see everything. The King found the situation most agreeable; those lovely gardens united high up above the Seine, those woods full of broad walks, of light and air, those points of view happily chosen and arranged, gave a charming effect; the house of one story, raised on steps of sixteen stairs, appeared to us elegant from its novelty; but the King blamed his cousin for not having put a little architecture and ornament on the facade.

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“Princes,” said he, “have no right to be careless; since universal agreement has made us Highnesses, we must know how to carry our burden, and to lay it down at no time, and in no place.”

Mademoiselle excused herself on the ground of her remoteness from the world, and on the expense, which she wished to keep down.

“From the sight of the country,” said the King, “you must have a hundred to a hundred and twelve, acres here.”

“A hundred and nine,” she answered.

“Have you paid dear for this property?” went on the King. “It is the President Gonthier who has sold it?”

“I paid for this site, and the old house which no longer exists, forty thousand livres,” she said.

“Forty thousand livres!” cried the King. “Oh, my cousin, there is no such thing as conscience! You have not paid for the ground. I was assured that poor President Gonthier had only got rid of his house at Choisy because his affairs were embarrassed; you must indemnify him, or rather I will indemnify him myself, by giving him a pension.”

Mademoiselle bit her lip and added:

“The President asked sixty thousand first; my men of business offered him forty, and he accepted it.”

Mademoiselle has no generosity, although she is immensely rich; she pretended not to hear, and it was M. Colbert who sent by order the twenty thousand livres to the President.

Mademoiselle, vain and petty, as though she were a bourgeoise of yesterday, showed us her gallery, where she had already collected the selected portraits of all her ancestors, relations, and kindred; she pointed out to us in her winter salon the portrait of the little Comte de Toulouse, painted, not as an admiral, but as God of the Sea, floating on a pearl shell; and his brother, the Duc du Maine, as Colonel-General of the Swiss and Grisons. The full-length portrait of the King was visible on three chimneypieces; she was at great pains to make a merit of it, and call for thanks.

Having followed her into her state chamber, where she had stolen in privately, I saw that she was taking away the portrait of Lauzun. I went and told it to the King, who shrugged his shoulders and fell to laughing.

“She is fifty-two years old,” he said to me.

A very pretty collation of confitures and fruits was served us, to which the King prayed her to add a ragout of peas and a roasted fowl.

During the repast, he said to her: “For the rest, I have not noticed the portrait of Gaston, your father; is it a distraction on my part, or an omission on yours?”

“It will be put there later,” she answered. “It is not time.”

“What! your father!” added the King. “You do not think that, cousin!”

“All my actions,” added the Princess, “are weighed in the balance beforehand; if I were to exhibit the portrait of my father at the head of these various pictures, I should have to put my stepmother, his wife, there too, as a necessary pendant. The harm which she has done me does not permit of that complacence. One opens one’s house only to one’s friends.”

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“Your stepmother has never done you any other harm,” replied the King, “than to reclaim for her children the funds or the furniture left by your father. The character of Margaret of Lorraine has always been sweetness itself; seeing your irritation, she begged me to arbitrate myself; and you know all that M. Colbert and the Chancellor did to satisfy you under the circumstances. But let us speak of something else, and cease these discussions. I have a service to ask of you: here is M. le Duc du Maine already big; everybody knows of your affection for him, and I have seen his portrait with pleasure, in one of your salons. I am going to establish him; would it be agreeable to you if I give him your livery?”

“M. le Duc du Maine,” said the Princess, “is the type of what is gracious, and noble, and beautiful; he can only do honour to my livery; I grant it him with all my heart, since you do me the favour of desiring it. Would I were in a position to do more for him!”

The King perfectly understood these last words; he made no reply to them, but he understood all that he was meant to understand. We went down again into the gardens.

The fishermen of Choisy had just caught a salmon of enormous size, which they had been pursuing for four or five days; they had intended to offer it to Mademoiselle; the presence of the King inspired them with another design. They wove with great diligence a large and pretty basket of reeds, garnished it with foliage, young grass, and flowers, and came and presented to the King their salmon, all leaping in the basket.

The fisherman charged with the address only uttered a few words; they were quite evidently improvised, so that they gave more pleasure and effect than those of academicians, or persons of importance. The fisherman expressed himself thus:

“You have brought us good fortune, Sire, by your presence, as you bring fortune to your generals. You arrive on the Monday; on the Tuesday the town is taken. We come to offer to the greatest of kings the greatest salmon that can be caught.”

The King desired this speech to be instantly transcribed; and, after having bountifully rewarded the sailors, his Majesty said to Mademoiselle:

“This man was born to be a wit; if he were younger, I would place him in a college. There is wit at Choisy in every rank of life.”

CHAPTER VI.

Departure of the King.—Ghent Reduced in Five Days.—Taking of Ypres.—Peace Signed.—The Prince of Orange Is at Pains Not to Know of It.—Horrible Cruelties.

I have related in what manner Charles II., suddenly pronouncing in favour of his nephew, the Prince of Orange, had signed a league with his old enemies, the Dutch, in

order to counteract the success of the King of France and compel him to sign a humiliating and entirely inadmissible peace.

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The King left Versailles suddenly on the 4th of February, 1678, taking, with his whole Court, the road to Lorraine, while waiting for the troops which had wintered on the frontiers, and were investing at once Luxembourg, Charlemont, Namur, Mons, and Ypres, five of the strongest and best provisioned places in the Low Countries. By this march and manoeuvre, he wished to hoodwink the allied generals, who were very far from imagining that Ghent was the point towards which the Conqueror's intentions were directed.

In effect, hardly had the King seen them occupied in preparing the defence of the above named places, when, leaving the Queen and the ladies in the agreeable town of Metz, he rapidly traversed sixty leagues of country, and laid siege to the town of Ghent, which was scarcely expecting him.

The Spanish governor, Don Francisco de Pardo, having but a weak garrison and little artillery, decided upon releasing the waters and inundating the country; but certain heights remained which could not be covered, and from here the French artillery started to storm the ramparts and the fort.

The siege was commenced on the 4th of March; upon the 9th the town opened its gates, and two days later the citadel. Ypres was carried at the end of a week, in spite of the most obstinate resistance. Our grenadiers performed prodigies, and lost all their officers, without exception. I lost there one of my nephews, the one hope of his family; my compliments to the King, therefore, were soon made.

He went to Versailles to take back the Queen, and returned to Ghent with the speed and promptitude of lightning. The same evening he sent an order to a detachment of the garrison of Maestricht to hasten and seize the town and citadel of Leuwe, in Brabant, which was executed on the instant. It was then that the Dutch sent their deputation, charged to plead for a suspension of hostilities for six weeks. The King granted it, although these blunderers hardly merited it. They undertook that Spain should join them in the peace, and finally, after some difficulties, settled more or less rightly, the treaty was signed on the 10th of August, just as the six weeks were about to expire.

The Prince of Orange, naturally bellicose, and, above all things, passionately hostile to France, pretended to ignore the existence of this peace, which he disapproved. The Marechal de Luxembourg, informed of the treaty, gave himself up to the security of the moment; he was actually at table with his numerous officers when he was warned that the Prince of Orange was advancing against him. The alarm was quickly sounded; such troops and cavalry as could be were assembled, and a terrible action ensued.

At first we were repulsed, but soon the Marshal rallied his men; he excited their indignation by exposing to them the atrocity of M. d'Orange, and after a terrible massacre, in which two thousand English bit the dust, the Marechal de Luxembourg remained master of the field.

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He was victorious, but in this unfortunate action we lost, ourselves, the entire regiment of guards, that of Feuquieres, and several others besides, with an incredible quantity of officers, killed or wounded.

The name of the Prince of Orange, since that day, was held in horror in both armies, and he would have fallen into disgrace with the States General themselves had it not been for the protection of the King of England, to whom the Dutch were greatly bound.

On the following day, this monster sent a parliamentary officer to the French generals to inform them that during the night official news of the peace had reached him.

CHAPTER VII.

Mission of Madame de Maintenon to Choisy.—Mademoiselle Gives the Principalities of Eu and Dombes in Exchange for M. de Lauzun.—He Is Set at Liberty.

The four or five words which had escaped Mademoiselle de Montpensier had remained in the King's recollection. He said to me: "If you had more patience, and a sweeter and more pliant temper, I would employ you to go and have a little talk with Mademoiselle, in order to induce her to explain what intentions she may have relative to my son."

"I admit, Sire," I answered him, "that I am not the person required for affairs of that sort. Your cousin is proud and cutting; I would not endure what she has made others endure. I cannot accept such a commission. But Madame de Maintenon, who is gentleness itself, is suitable—no one more so for this mission; she is at once insinuating and respectful; she is attached to the Duc du Maine. The interests of my son could not be in better hands."

The King agreed with me, and both he and I begged the Marquise to conduct M. du Maine to Choisy.

Mademoiselle de Montpensier received him with rapture. He thanked her for what she had done for him, in granting him her colours, and upon that Mademoiselle asked his permission to embrace him, and to tell him how amiable and worthy of belonging to the King she found him. She led him to the hall, in which he was to be seen represented as a colonel-general of Swiss.

"I have always loved the Swiss," she said, "because of their great bravery, their fidelity, and their excellent discipline. The Marechal de Bassompierre made his corps the perfection which it is; it is for you, my cousin, to maintain it."

She passed into another apartment, where she was to be seen represented as Bellona. Two Loves were presenting her, one with his helm adorned with martial plumes, the other with his buckler of gold, with the Orleans-Montpensier arms. The laurel crown,

with which Triumphs were ornamenting her head, and the scaled cuirass of Pallas completed her decoration. M. le Duc du Maine praised, without affectation, the intelligence of the artist; and as for the figure and the likeness, he said to the Princess: “You are good, but you are better.” The calm and the naivety of this compliment made Mademoiselle shed tears. Her emotion was visible; she embraced my son anew.

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“You have brought him up perfectly,” she said to Madame de Maintenon. “His urbanity is of good origin; that is how a king’s son ought to act and speak:

“His Majesty,” said Madame de Maintenon, “has been enchanted with your country-house; he spoke of it all the evening. He even added that you had ordered it all yourself, without an architect, and that M. le Notre would not have done better.”

“M. le Notre,” replied the Princess, “came here for a little; he wanted to cut and destroy, and upset and disarrange, as with the King at Versailles. But I am of a different mould to my cousin; I am not to be surprised with big words. I saw that Le Notre thought only of expenditure and tyranny; I thanked him for his good intentions, and prayed him not to put himself out for me. I found there thickets already made, of an indescribable charm; he wanted, on the instant, to clear them away, so that one could testify that all this new park was his. If you please, madame, tell his Majesty that M. le Notre is the sworn enemy of Nature; that he sees only the pleasures of proprietorship in the future, and promises us cover and shade just at that epoch of our life when we shall only ask for sunshine in which to warm ourselves.”

She next led her guests towards the large apartments. When she had come to her bedroom, she showed the Marquise the mysterious portrait, and asked if she recognised it.

“Ah, my God! ’tis himself!” said Madame de Maintenon at once. “He sees, he breathes, he regards us; one might believe one heard him speak. Why do you give yourself this torture?” continued the ambassadress. “The continual presence of an unhappy and beloved being feeds your grief, and this grief insensibly undermines you. In your place, Princess, I should put him elsewhere until a happier and more favourable hour.”

“That hour will never come,” cried Mademoiselle.

“Pardon me,” resumed Madame de Maintenon; “the King is never inhuman and inexorable; you should know that better than any one. He punishes only against the protests of his heart, and, as soon as he can relent without impropriety or danger, he pardons. M. de Lauzun, by refusing haughtily the marshal’s baton, which was offered him in despite of his youth, deeply offended the King, and the disturbance he allowed himself to make at Madame de Montespan’s depicted him as a dangerous and wrong-headed man. Those are his sins. Rest assured, Princess, that I am well informed. But as I know, at the same time, that the King was much attached to him,—and is still so, to some extent, and that a captivity of ten years is a rough school, I have the assurance that your Highness will not be thought importunate if you make today some slight attempt towards a clemency.”

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“I will do everything they like,” Mademoiselle de Montpensier said then; “but shall I have any one near his Majesty to assist and support my undertaking? I have no more trust in Madame de Montespan; she has betrayed us, she will betray us again; the offence of M. de Lauzun is always present in her memory, and she is a lady who does not easily forgive. As for you, madame, I know that the King considers you for the invaluable services of the education given to his children. Deign to speak and act in favour of my unhappy husband, and I will make you a present of one of my fine titled territories.”

Madame de Maintenon was too acute to accept anything in such a case; she answered the Princess that her generosities, to please the King, should be offered to M. le Duc du Maine, and that, by assuring a part of her succession to that young prince, she had a sure method of moving the monarch, and of turning his paternal gratitude to the most favourable concessions. The Princess, enchanted, then said to the negotiatrix:

“Be good enough to inform his Majesty, this evening, that I offer to give, at once, to his dear and amiable child the County of Eu and my Sovereignty of Dombes, adding the revenues to them if it is necessary.”

Madame de Maintenon, who worships her pupil, kissed the hand of Mademoiselle, and promised to return and see her immediately.

That very evening she gave an account to the King of her embassy; she solicited the liberty of the Marquis de Lauzun, and the King commenced by granting “the authorisation of mineral waters.”

Meanwhile, Mademoiselle, presented by Madame de Maintenon, went to take counsel with the King. She made a formal donation of the two principalities which I have named. His Majesty, out of courtesy, left her the revenues, and, in fine, she was permitted to marry her M. de Lauzun, and to assure him, by contract, fifty thousand livres of income.

CHAPTER VIII.

M. de Brisacier and King Casimir.—One Is Never so Well Praised as by Oneself.—He Is Sent to Get Himself Made a Duke Elsewhere.

The Abbe de Brisacier, the famous director of consciences, possessed enough friends and credit to advance young Brisacier, his nephew, to the Queen’s household, to whom he had been made private secretary. Slanderers or impostors had persuaded this young coxcomb that Casimir, the King of Poland, whilst dwelling in Paris in the quality of a simple gentleman, had shown himself most assiduous to Madame Brisacier, and that he, Brisacier of France, was born of these assiduities of the Polish prince.

When he saw the Comte Casimir raised to the elective throne of Poland, he considered himself as the issue of royal blood, and it seemed to him that his position with the Queen, Maria Theresa, was a great injustice of fortune; he thought, nevertheless, that he ought to remain some time longer in this post of inferiority, in order to use it as a ladder of ascent.

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The Queen wrote quantities of letters to different countries, and especially to Spain, but never, or hardly ever, in her own hand. One day, whilst handling all this correspondence for the princess's signature, the private secretary slipped one in, addressed to Casimir, the Polish King.

In this letter, which from one end to the other sang the praises of the Seigneur Brisacier, the Queen had the extreme kindness to remind the Northern monarch of his old liaison with the respectable mother of the young man, and her Majesty begged the prince to solicit from the King of France the title and rank of duke for so excellent a subject.

King Casimir was not, as one knows, distrust and prudence personified; he walked blindfold into the trap; he wrote with his royal hand to his brother, the King of France, and asked him a brevet as duke for young Brisacier. Our King, who did not throw duchies at people's heads, read and re-read the strange missive with astonishment and suspicion. He wrote in his turn to the suppliant King, and begged him to send him the why and the wherefore of this hieroglyphic adventure. The good prince, ignorant of ruses, sent the letter of the Queen herself.

Had this princess ever given any reason to be talked about, there is no doubt that she would have been lost on this occasion; but there was nothing to excite suspicion. The King, no less, approached her with precaution, in order to observe the first results of her answers.

"Madame," he said, "are you still quite satisfied with young Brisacier, your private secretary?"

"More or less," replied the Infanta; "a little light, a little absent; but, on the whole, a good enough young man."

"Why have you recommended him to the King of Poland, instead of recommending him to me directly?"

"To the King of Poland!—I? I have not written to him since I congratulated him on his succession."

"Then, madame, you have been deceived in this matter, since I have your last letter in my hands. Here it is; I return it to you."

The princess read the letter with attention; her astonishment was immense.

"My signature has been used without authority," she said. "Brisacier alone can be guilty, being the only one interested."

This new kind of ambitious man was summoned; he was easily confounded. The King ordered him to prison, wishing to frighten him for a punishment, and at the end of some days he was commanded to quit France and go and be made duke somewhere else.

This event threw such ridicule upon pretenders to the ducal state, that I no longer dared speak further to the King of the hopes which he had held out to me; moreover, the things which supervened left me quite convinced of the small success which would attend my efforts.

CHAPTER IX.

Compliment from Monsieur to the New Prince de Dombes.—Roman History.—The Emperors Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, and Verus.—The Danger of Erudition.

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Monsieur, having learnt what his cousin of Montpensier had just done for my Duc du Maine, felt all possible grief and envy at it. He had always looked to inherit from her, and the harshest enemy whom M. de Lauzun met with at his wedding was, undoubtedly, Monsieur. When M. le Duc du Maine received the congratulations of all the Court on the ground of his new dignity of Prince de Dombes, his uncle was the last to appear; even so he could not refrain from making him hear these disobliging words,—who would believe it?—"If I, too, were to give you my congratulation, it would be scarcely sincere; what will be left for my children?"

Madame de Maintenon, who is never at a loss, replied: "There will be left always, Monseigneur, the remembrance of your virtues; that is a fair enough inheritance."

We complained of it to the King; he reprimanded him in a fine fashion. "I gave you a condition so considerable," said he, "that the Queen, our mother, herself thought it exaggerated and dangerous in your hands. You have no liking for my children, although you feign a passionate affection for their father; the result of your misbehaviour will be that I shall grow cool to your line, and that your daughter, however beautiful and amiable she may be, will not marry my Dauphin."

At this threat Monsieur was quite overcome, and anxious to make his apologies to the King; he assured him of his tender affection for M. le Duc du Maine, and would give him to understand that Madame de Maintenon had misunderstood him.

"It is not from her that your compliment came to us; it is from M. le Duc du Maine, who is uprightness itself, and whose mouth has never lied."

Monsieur then started playing at distraction and puerility; the medal-case was standing opened, his gaze was turned to it. Then he came to me and said in a whisper: "I pray you, come and look at the coin of Marcus Aurelius; do you not find that the King resembles that emperor in every feature?"

"You are joking," I answered him. "His Majesty is as much like him as you are like me."

He insisted, and his brother, who witnessed our argument, wished to know the reason. When he understood, he said to Monsieur: "Madame de Montespan is right; I am not in the least like that Roman prince in face. The one to whom I should wish to be like in merit is Trajan."

"Trajan had fine qualities," replied Monsieur; "that does not prevent me from preferring Marcus Aurelius."

"On what grounds?" asked his Majesty.

"On the grounds that he shared his throne with Verus," replied Monsieur, unhesitatingly.

The King flushed at this reply, and answered in few words: “Marcus Aurelius’s action to his brother may, be called generous; it was none the less inconsiderate. By his own confession, the Emperor Verus proved, by his debauchery and his vices, unworthy, of the honour which had been done him. Happily, he died from his excesses during the Pannonian War, and Marcus Aurelius could only do well from that day on.”

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Monsieur, annoyed with his erudition and confused at his escapade, sought to change the conversation. The King, passing into his cabinet, left him entirely, in my charge. I scolded him for his inconsequences, and he dared to implore me to put his daughter “in the right way,” to become one day Queen of France by marrying Monsieur le Dauphin, whom she loved already with her whole heart.

CHAPTER X.

The Benedictines of Fontevrault.—The Head in the Basin.—The Unfortunate Delivery.—The Baptism of the Monster.—The Courageous Marriage.—Foundation of the Royal Abbey of Fontevrault.

Two or three days after our arrival at Fontevrault, the King, who loves to know all the geographical details of important places, asked me of the form and particulars of the celebrated abbey. I gave him a natural description of it.

“They are two vast communities,” I told him, “which the founder, for some inexplicable whim, united in one domain, of an extent which astonishes the imagination.”

The Community of Benedictine Nuns is regarded as the first, because of the abbotorial dignity it possesses. The Community of Benedictine Monks is only second,—a fact which surprises greatly strangers and visitors. Both in the monastery and the convent the buildings are huge and magnificent, the courts spacious, the woods and streams well distributed and well kept.

“Every morning you may see a hundred and fifty to two hundred ploughs issue from both establishments; these spread over the plain and till an immense expanse of land. Carts drawn by bullocks, big mules, or superb horses are ceaselessly exporting the products of the fields, the meadows, or the orchards. Innumerable cows cover the pastures, and legions of women and herds are employed to look after these estates.

“The aspect of Fontevrault gives an exact idea of the ancient homes of the Patriarchs, in their remote periods of early civilisation, which saw the great proprietors delighting in their natal hearth, and finding their glory, as well as their happiness, in fertilising or assisting nature.

“The abbess rules like a sovereign over her companion nuns, and over the monks, her neighbours. She appoints their officers and their temporal prince. It is she who admits postulants, who fixes the dates of ordinations, pronounces interdictions, graces, and penances. They render her an account of their administration and the employment of their revenues, from which she subtracts carefully her third share, as the essential right of her crosier of authority.”

“Have you invited the Benedictine Fathers to your fete in the wood?” the King asked me, smiling.

“We had no power, Sire,” I answered. “There are many young ladies being educated with the nuns of Fontevrault. The parents of these young ladies respectful as they are to these monks, would have looked askance at the innovation. The Fathers never go in there. They are to be seen at the abbey church, where they sing and say their offices. Only the three secular chaplains of the abbess penetrate into the house of the nuns; the youngest of the three cannot be less than fifty.

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“The night of the feast the monks draw near our cloister by means of a wooden theatre, which forms a terrace, and from this elevation they participate by the eye and ear in our amusements; that is enough.”

“Has Madame de Mortemart ever related to you the origin of her abbey?” resumed the King. “Perhaps she is ignorant of it. I am going to tell you of it, for it is extremely curious; it is not as it is related in the books, and I take the facts from good authority. You must hear of it, and you will see.

“There was once a Comtesse de Poitiers, named Honorinde, to whom fate had given for a husband the greatest hunter in the world. This man would have willingly passed his life in the woods, where he hunted, night and day, what we call, in hunter’s parlance, ‘big game.’ Having won the victory over a monstrous boar, he cut off the head himself, and this quivering and bleeding mask he went to offer to his lady in a basin. The young woman was in the first month of her pregnancy. She was filled with repugnance and fright at the sight of this still-threatening head; it troubled her to the prejudice of her fruit.

“Eight, or seven and a half, months afterwards, she brought into the world a girl who was human in her whole body, but above had the horrible head of a wild boar! Imagine what cries, what grief, what despair! The cure of the place refused baptism, and the Count, broken down and desolate, ordered the child to be drowned.

“Instead of throwing it into the water, his servant scrupulously went straight to the monastery where your sister rules. He laid down his closed packet in the church of the monks, and then returned to his lord, who never had any other child.

“The religious Benedictines, not knowing whence this monster came, believed there was some prodigy in it. They baptised in this little person all that was not boar, and left the surplus to Providence. They brought up the singular creature in the greatest secrecy; it drank and lapped after the manner of its kind. As it grew up it walked on its feet, and that without the least imperfection; it could sit down, go on its knees, and even make a courtesy. But it never articulated any distinct words, and it had always a harsh and rough voice which howled and grunted. Its intelligence never reached the knowledge of reading or writing; but it understood easily all that could be said to it, and the proof was that it replied by its actions.

“The Comte de Poitiers having died whilst hunting, Honorinde learnt of her old serving-man in what refuge, in what asylum, he had long ago deposited the little one. This good mother proceeded there, and the monks, after some hesitation, confessed what had become of it. She wished to see it; they showed it her. At its aspect she felt the same inward commotion which had, years before, perverted nature. She groaned, fainted, burst into tears, and never had the courage and firmness to embrace what she had seen.

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“Her gratitude was not less lively and sincere; she handed a considerable sum to the Benedictines of Fontevrault, charging them to continue their good work and charity.

“The reverend Prior, reflecting that his hideous inmate came of a great family, and of a family of great property, resolved to procure it as a wife for his nephew. He sounded the young man, who looked fixedly at his future bride, and avowed that he was satisfied.

“She is a good Christian,” he replied to his uncle, since you have baptised her here. She is of a good family, since Honorinde has recognised her. There are many as ugly as she is to be seen who still find husbands. I will put a pretty mask on her, and the mask will give me sufficient illusion. Benedicte, so far as she goes, is well-made; I hope to have fine children who will talk.

“The Prior commenced by marrying them; he then confided in Honorinde, who, not daring to noise abroad this existence, was compelled to submit to what had been done.

“The marriage of the young she-monster was not happy. She bit her husband from morning to night. She did not know how to sit at table, and would only eat out of a trough. She needed neither an armchair, a sofa, nor a couch; she stretched herself out on the sand or on the pavement.

“Her husband, in despair, demanded the nullification of his marriage; and as the courts did not proceed fast enough for his impatience, he killed his companion, Benedicte, with a pistol-shot, at the moment when she was biting and tearing him before witnesses.

“Honorinde had her buried at Fontevrault, and over her tomb, at the end of the year, she built a convent, to which her immense property was given, where she retired herself as a simple nun, and of which she was appointed first abbess by the Pope who reigned at the time.

“There, madame,” added the King, “is the somewhat singular origin of the illustrious abbey which your sister rules with such eclat. You must have remarked the boar’s head, perfectly imitated in sculpture, in the dome; that mask is the speaking history of the noble community of Fontevrault, where more than a hundred Benedictine monks obey an abbess.”

CHAPTER XI.

Fine Couples Make Fine Children.—The Dauphine of Bavaria.—She Displeases Madame de Montespan.—First Debut Relating to Madame de Maintenon, Appointed Lady-in-waiting.—Conversation between the Two Marquises.

The King, in his moments of effusion and abandonment (then so full of pleasantness), had said more than once: “If I have any physical beauty, I owe it to the Queen, my mother; if my daughters have any beauty, they owe it to me: it is only fine couples who get fine children.”

When I saw him decided upon marrying Monseigneur le Dauphin, I reminded him of his maxim. He fell to smiling, and answered me: “Chance, too, sometimes works its miracles. My choice for my son is a decided thing; my politics come before my taste, and I have asked for the daughter of the Elector of Bavaria, whose portrait I will show you. She is not beautiful, like you; she is prettier than Benedicte, and I hope that she will not bite Monseigneur le Dauphin in her capricious transports.”

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The portrait that the King showed me was a flattering one, as are, in general, all these preliminary samples. For all that, the Princess seemed to me hideous, and even disagreeable, especially about her eyes, that portion of the face which confirms the physiognomy and decides everything.

“Monseigneur will never love that woman,” I said to the King. “That constrained look in the pupil, those drooping eyes,—they make my heart ache.”

“My son, happily,” his Majesty answered, “is not so difficult as you and I. He has already seen this likeness, and at the second look he was taken; and as we have assured him that the young person is well made, he cries quits with her face, and proposes to love her as soon as he gets her.”

“God grant it!” I added; and the King told me, more or less in detail, of what important personages he was going to compose his household. The eternal Abbe Bossuet was to become first chaplain, as being the tutor-in-chief to the Dauphin; the Duchesse de Richelieu, for her great name, was going to be lady of honour; and the two posts of ladies in waiting were destined for the Marquise de Rochefort, wife of the Marshal, and for Madame de Maintenon, ex-governess of the Duc du Maine. The gesture of disapproval which escaped me gave his Majesty pain.

“Why this air of contempt or aversion?” he said, changing colour. “Is it to the Marechale de Rochefort or the Marquise de Maintenon that you object? I esteem both the one and the other, and I am sorry for you if you do not esteem them too.”

“The Marechale de Rochefort,” I replied, without taking any fright, “is aged, and almost always sick; a lady of honour having her appearance will make a contrast with her office. As to the other, she still has beauty and elegance; but do you imagine, Sire, that the Court of Bavaria and the Court of France have forgotten, in so short a time, the pleasant and burlesque name of the poet Scarron?”

“Every one ought to forget what I have forgotten,” replied the King, “and what my gratitude will not, and cannot forget, I am surprised that you, madame, should take pleasure in forgetting.”

“She has taken care of my children since the cradle, I admit it with pleasure,” said I to his Majesty, without changing my tone; “you have given her a marquisate for recompense, and a superb hotel completely furnished at Versailles. I do not see that she has any cause for complaint, nor that after such bounty there is more to add.”

“Of eight children that you have brought into the world, madame, she has reared and attended perfectly to six,” replied the King. “The estate of Maintenon has, at the most, recompensed the education of the Comtes de Vegin, whose childhood was so onerous. And for the remainder of my little family, what have I yet done that deserves mention?”

“Give her a second estate and money,” I cried, quite out of patience, “since it is money which pays all services of that nature; but what need have you to raise her to great office, and keep her at Court? She dotes, she says, on her old chateau of Maintenon; do not deprive her of this delight. By making her lady in waiting, you would be disobliging her.”

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“She will accept out of courtesy,” he said to me, putting on an air of mockery. And as the time for the Council was noted by him on my clock, he went away without adding more.

Since M. le Duc du Maine had grown up, and Mademoiselle de Nantes had been confided to the Marquise de Montchevreuil, Madame de Maintenon continued to occupy her handsome apartment on the Princes’ Court. There she received innumerable visits, she paid assiduous court to the Queen, who had suddenly formed a taste for her, and took her on her walks and her visits to the communities; but this new Marquise saw me rarely. Since the affair of the vine-grower, killed on the road, she declared that I had insulted her before everybody, and that I had ordered her imperiously to return to my carriage, as though she had been a waiting-maid, or some other menial. Her excessive sensibility readily afforded her this pretext, so that she neglected and visibly overlooked me.

As she did not come to me, I betook myself to her at a tolerably early hour, before the flood of visitors, and started her on the history of the lady in waiting.

“His Majesty has spoken of it to me,” she said, “as of a thing possible; but I do not think there is anything settled yet in the matter.”

“Will you accept,” I asked her, “supposing the King to insist?”

“I should like a hundred times better,” she replied, “to go and live in independence in my little kingdom of Maintenon, and with my own hands gather on my walls those velvet, brilliant peaches, which grow so fine in those districts. But if the King commands me to remain at Court, and form our young Bavarian Princess in the manners of this country, have I the right, in good conscience, to refuse?”

“Your long services have gained you the right to desire and take your retirement,” I said to her; “in your place, I should insist upon the necessities of my health. And the Court of France will not fall nor change its physiognomy, even if a German or Iroquois Dauphine should courtesy awry, or in bad taste.”

Madame de Maintenon began to laugh, and assured me that “her post as lady in waiting would be an actual burden, if the King had destined her for it in spite of herself, and there should be no means of withdrawing from it.”

At this speech I saw clearly that things were already fixed. Not wishing to call upon me the reproaches of my lord, I carried the conversation no further.

CHAPTER XII.

The “Powder of Inheritance.”—The Chambre Ardente.—The Comtesse de Soissons’s Arrest Decreed.—The Marquise de Montespan Buys Her Superintendence of the Queen’s Council.—Madame de Soubise.—Madame de Maintenon and the King.

At the time of the poisonings committed by Madame de Brinvilliers, the Government obtained evidence that a powder, called “the powder of inheritance,” was being sold in Paris, by means of which impatient heirs shortened the days of unfortunate holders, and entered into possession before their time.

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Two obscure women, called La Vigoureuse and La Voisine, were arrested, having been caught redhanded. Submitted to the question, they confessed their crime, and mentioned several persons, whom they qualified as “having bought and made use of the said powder of inheritance.”

We saw suddenly the arrest of the Marechal de Luxembourg, the Princesse de Tingry, and many others. The ’Chambre Ardente’—[The French Star Chamber.]—issued a warrant also to seize the person of the Duchesse de Bouillon and the Comtesse de Soissons, the celebrated nieces of the Cardinal Mazarin, sisters-in-law, both, of my niece De Nevers, who was dutifully afflicted thereby.

The Comtesse de Soissons had possessed hitherto an important office, whose functions suited me in every respect,—that of the superintendence of the Queen’s household and council. I bought this post at a considerable price. The Queen, who had never cared for the Countess, did me the honour of assuring me that she preferred me to the other, when I came to take my oath in her presence.

Madame la Princesse de Rohan-Soubise had wished to supplant me at that time, and I was aware of her constant desire to obtain a fine post at Court. She loved the King, who had shown her his favours in more than one circumstance; but, as she had a place neither in his esteem nor in his affection, I did not fear her. I despatched to her, very adroitly, a person of her acquaintance, who spoke to her of the new household of a Dauphine, and gave her the idea of soliciting for herself the place of lady in waiting, destined for Madame de Maintenon.

The Princesse de Soubise put herself immediately amongst the candidates. She wrote to the King, her friend, a pressing and affectionate letter, to which he did not even reply. She wrote one next in a more majestic and appropriate style. It was notified to her that she was forbidden to reappear at Court.

The prince had resolutely taken his course. He wished to put Madame de Maintenon in evidence, and what he has once decided he abandons never.

I was soon aware that costumes of an unheard-of magnificence were being executed for the Marquise. Gold, silver, precious stones abounded. I was offered a secret view of her robe of ceremony, with a long mantle train. I saw this extraordinarily rich garment, and was sorry in advance for the young stranger, whose lady in waiting could not fail to eclipse her in everything.

I then put some questions to myself,—asked myself severely if my disapproval sprang from natural haughtiness, which would have been possible, and even excusable, or whether, mingled with all that, was some little agitation of jealousy and emulation.

I collected together a crowd of slight and scattered circumstances; and in this union of several small facts, at first neglected and almost unperceived, I distinguished on the part of the King a gradual and increasing attachment for the governess, and at the same time a negligence in regard to me,—a coldness, a cooling-down, at least, and that sort of familiarity, close parent of weariness, which comes to sight in the midst of courtesies and attentions the most satisfying and the most frequent.

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The King, in the old days, never glanced towards my clock till as late as possible, and always at the last moment, at the last extremity. Now he cast his eyes on it a score of times in half an hour. He contradicted me about trifles. He explained to me ingeniously the faults, or alleged faults, of my temper and character. If it was a question of Madame de Maintenon, she was of a birth equal and almost superior to the rest of the Court. He forgot himself so far as to quote before me the subtilty of her answers or the delight of her most intimate conversation. Did he wish to describe a noble carriage, an attitude at once easy and distinguished, it was Madame de Maintenon's. She possessed this, she possessed that, she possessed everything.

Soon there was not the slightest doubt left to me; and I knew, as did the whole Court, that he openly visited the Marquise, and was glad to pass some moments there.

These things, in truth, never lacked some plausible pretext, and he chose the time when Madame de Montchevreuil and Mademoiselle de Nantes were presenting their homages to Madame de Maintenon.

CHAPTER XIII.

Marie Louise, Daughter of Henrietta of England, Betrothed to the King of Spain.—Her Affliction.—Jealousy of the King, Her Husband.

The unfortunate lady, Henrietta of England, had left, at her death, two extremely young girls, one of them, indeed, being still in the cradle. The new Madame was seized with good-will for these two orphans to such an extent as to complain to the King. They were brought up with the greatest care; they were, both of them, pretty and charming.

The elder was named Marie Louise. It was this one whom Monsieur destined in his own mind for Monseigneur le Dauphin; and the Princess, accustomed early to this prospect, had insensibly adapted to it her mind and hope. Young, beautiful, agreeable, and charming as her mother, she created already the keenest sensation at Court, and the King felt an inclination to cherish her as much as he had loved Madame. But the excessive freedom which this alliance would not have failed to give his brother, both with his son-in-law and nephew, and with the Ministry, prevented his Majesty from giving way to this penchunt for Marie Louise. On the contrary, he consented to her marriage with the King of Spain, and the news of it was accordingly carried to Monsieur le Duc d'Orleans. He and his wife felt much annoyance at it. But after communications of that kind there was scarcely any course open to be taken than that of acquiescence. Monsieur conveyed the news to his beloved daughter, and, on hearing that she was to be made Queen of Spain, this amiable child uttered loud lamentations.

When she went to Versailles to thank the King, her uncle, her fine eyes were still suffused with tears. The few words which she uttered were mingled with sighing and

weeping; and when she saw the indifference of her cousin, who felicitated her like the rest, she almost fainted with grief and regret.

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“My dear cousin,” said this dull-witted young lord, “I shall count the hours until you go to Spain. You will send me some ‘touru’, for I am very fond of it?”

The King could not but find this reflection of his son very silly and out of place. But intelligence is neither to be given nor communicated by example. His Majesty had to support to the end this son, legitimate as much as you like, but altogether in degree, and with a person which formed a perpetual contrast with the person of the King. It was my Duc du Maine who should have been in the eminent position of Monseigneur. Nature willed it so. She had proved it sufficiently by lavishing all her favours on him, all her graces; but the laws of convention and usage would not have it. His Majesty has made this same reflection, groaning, more than once.

Marie Louise, having been married by proxy, in the great Chapel of Saint Germain, where the Cardinal de Bouillon blessed the ring in his quality of Grand Almoner of France, left for that Spain which her young heart distrusted.

Her beauty and charms rendered her precious to the monarch, utterly melancholy and devout as he was. He did not delay subjecting her to the wretched, petty, tiresome, and absurd etiquette of that Gothic Court. Mademoiselle submitted to all these nothings, seeing she had been able to submit to separation from France. She condemned herself to the most fastidious observances and the most sore privations, which did not much ameliorate her lot.

A young Castilian lord, almost mad himself, thought fit to find this Queen pretty, and publicly testify his love for her. The jealousy of the religious King flared up like a funeral torch. He conceived a hatred of his wife, reserved and innocent though she was. She died cruelly by poison. And Monseigneur le Dauphin probably cried, after his manner:

“What a great pity! She won’t send me the touru!”

CHAPTER XIV.

The Dauphine of Bavaria.—The Confessor with Spurs.—Madame de Maintenon Disputes with Bossuet.—He Opposes to Her Past Ages and History.—The Military Absolution.

Eight months after the wedding of Marie Louise, we witnessed the arrival of Anne Marie Christine, Princess of Bavaria, daughter of the Elector Ferdinand. The King and Monseigneur went to receive her at Vitry-le-Francais, and then escorted her to Chalons, where the Queen was awaiting her.

The Cardinal de Bouillon celebrated the marriage in the cathedral church of this third-class town. The festivities and jubilations there lasted a week.

The King had been very willing to charge me with the arrangement of the baskets of presents destined for the Dauphine; I acquitted myself of this commission with French taste and a sentiment of what was proper. When the Queen saw all these magnificent gifts placed and spread out in a gallery, she cried out, and said:

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“Things were not done so nobly for me; and yet, I can say without vanity, I was of a better house than she.”

This remark paints the Queen, Maria Theresa, better than anything which could be said. Can one wonder, after that, that she should have brought into the world an hereditary prince who so keenly loves ‘touru’, and asks for it!

Madame de Maintenon and M. Bossuet had gone to receive the Princess of Schelestadt. When she was on her husband’s territory, and it was necessary, to confess her for the sacrament of matrimony, she was strangely embarrassed. They had not remembered to bring a chaplain of her own nation for her; and she could not confess except in the German tongue.

Madame de Maintenon, who is skilled in all matters of religion, said to the prelate: “I really think, monsieur, that, having educated Monsieur le Dauphin, you ought to know a little German,—you who have composed the treatise on universal history.”

The Bishop of Meaux excused himself, saying that he knew Greek, Syriac, and even Hebrew; but that, through a fatality, he was ignorant of the German language. A trumpeter was then sent out to ask if there was not in the country a Catholic priest who was a German, or acquainted with the German tongue. Luckily one was found, and Madame de Maintenon, who is very, pedantic, even in the matter of toilet and ornaments, trembled with joy and thanked God for it. But what was her astonishment when they came to bring her the priest! He was in coloured clothes, a silk doublet, flowing peruke, and boots and spurs. The lady in waiting rated him severely, and was tempted to send him back. But Bossuet—a far greater casuist than she—decided that in these urgent cases one need hold much less to forms. They were contented with taking away the spurs from this amphibious personage; they pushed him into a confessional,—the curtain of which he was careful to draw before himself,—and they brought the Bavarian Princess, who, not knowing the circumstances, confessed the sins of her whole life to this sort of soldier.

Madame de Maintenon always had this general confession on her conscience; she scolded Bossuet for it as a sort of sacrilege, and the latter, who was only difficult and particular with simple folk, quoted historical examples in which soldiers, on the eve of battle, had confessed to their general.

“Yes,” said the King, on hearing these quotations from the imperturbable man; “that must have been to the Bishop of Puy or the Bishop of Orange, who, in effect, donned the shield and cuirass at the time of the crusades against the Saracens; or perhaps, again, to the Cardinal de la Valette d’Epernon, who commanded our armies under Richelieu successfully.”

“No, Sire,” replied the Bishop; “to generals who were simply soldiers.”

“But,” said the King, “were the confessions, then, null?”

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“Sire,” added the Bishop of Meaux, “circumstances decide everything. Of old, in the time of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, and much later still, confessions of Christians were public,—made in a loud voice; sometimes a number together, and always in the open air. Those of soldiers that I have quoted to madame were somewhat of the kind of these confessions of the primitive Church; and to-day, still, at the moment when battle is announced, a military almoner gives the signal for confession. The regiments confess on their knees before the Most High, who hears them; and the almoner, raised aloft on a pile of drums, holds the crucifix in one hand, and with the other gives the general absolution to eighty thousand soldiers at once.”

This clear and precise explanation somewhat calmed Madame de Maintenon, and Madame la Dauphine,—displeased at what she had done on arriving,—in order to be regular, learned to confess in French.

CHAPTER XV.

Pere de la Chaise.—The Jesuits.—The Pavilion of Belleville.—The Handkerchief.

Pere de la Chaise has never done me good or ill; I have no motives for conciliating him, no reason to slander him. I am ignorant if he were the least in the world concerned, at the epoch of the Grand Jubilee, with those ecclesiastical attempts of which Bossuet had constituted himself spokesman. Pere de la Chaise has in his favour a great evenness of temper and character; an excellent tone, which comes to him from his birth; a conciliatory philosophy, which renders him always master of his condition and of his metier. He is, in a single individual, the happy combination of several men, that is to say, he is by turns, and as it may be needful, a man indulgent or severe in his preaching; a man of abstinence, or a good feeder; a man of the world, or a cenobite; a man of his breviary, or a courtier. He knows that the sins of woodcutters and the sins of kings are not of the same family, and that copper and gold are not weighed in the same scales.

He is a Jesuit by his garb; he is much more so than they are by his ‘savoir-vivre’. His companions love the King because he is the King; he loves him, and pities him because he sees his weakness. He shows for his penitent the circumspection and tenderness of a father, and in the long run he has made of him a spoiled child.

This Pere de la Chaise fell suddenly ill, and with symptoms so alarming that the cabals each wished to appropriate this essential post of confessor.

The Jansenists would have been quite willing to lay hold of it. The Jesuits, and principally the cordons bleus, did not quit the pillow of the sick man for an instant.

The King had himself informed of his condition every half-hour. There was a bulletin, as there is for potentates. One evening, when the doctors were grave on his account, I saw anxiety and affliction painted on the visage of his Majesty.

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“Where shall I find his like?” said he to me. “Where shall I find such knowledge, such indulgence, such kindness? The Pere de la Chaise knew the bottom of my heart; he knew, as an intelligent man, how to reconcile religion with nature; and when duty brings me to the foot of his tribunal, as a humble Christian, he never forgets that royalty, cannot be long on its knees, and he accompanies with his attentions and with deference the religious commands which he is bound to impose on me.”

“I hope that God will preserve him to you,” I replied to his Majesty; “but let us suppose the case in which this useful and precious man should see his career come to an end; will you grant still this mark of confidence and favour to the Jesuits? All the French being your subjects, would it not be fitting to grant this distinction sometimes to the one and sometimes to the other? You would, perhaps, extinguish by this that hate or animosity by which the Jesuits see themselves assailed, which your preference draws upon them.”

“I do not love the Jesuits with that affection that you seem to suggest,” replied the monarch. “I look upon them as men of instruction, as a learned and well-governed corporation; but as for their attachment for me, I know how to estimate it. This kind of people, strangers to the soft emotions of nature, have no affection or love for anything. Before the triumph of the King my grandfather, they intrigued and exerted themselves to bring about his fall; he opened the gates of Paris, and the Jesuits, like the Capuchins, at once recognised him and bowed down before him. King Henri, who knew what men are, pretended to forget the past; he pronounced himself decidedly in favour of the Jesuits because this body of teachers, numerous, rich, and of good credit, had just pronounced itself in favour of him.

“It was, then, a reconciliation between power and power, and the politics of my grandfather were to survive him and become mine, since the same elements exist and I am encamped on the same ground. If God takes away from me my poor Pere de la Chaise, I shall feel this misfortune deeply, because I shall lose in him, not a Jesuit, not a priest, but a good companion, a trusty and proved friend. If I lose him, I shall assuredly be inconsolable for him; but it will be very necessary for me to take his successor from the Grand Monastery of the Rue Saint Antoine. This community knows me by heart, and I do not like innovations.”

The successor of the Pere de la Chaise was already settled with the Jesuit Fathers; but this man of the vanguard was spared marching and meeting danger. The Court was not condemned to see and salute a new face; the old confessor recovered his health. His Majesty experienced a veritable joy at it, a joy as real as if the Prince of Orange had died.

Wishing to prove to the good convalescent how dear his preservation was to him, the King released him from his function for the rest of the year, and begged him to watch over his health, the most important of his duties and his possessions.

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Having learnt that they had neither terraces nor gardens at the grand monastery of the Rue Saint Antoine, his Majesty made a present to his confessor of a very agreeable house in the district of Belleville, and caused to be transported thither all kinds of orange-trees, rare shrubs, and flowers from Versailles. These tasteful attentions, these filial cares, diverted the capital somewhat; but Paris is a rich soil, where the strangest things are easily received and naturalised without an effort.

The Pare de la Chaise had his chariot with his arms on it, and his family livery; and as the income from his benefices remained to him, joined to his office of confessor, he continued to have every day a numerous court of young abbes, priests well on in years, barons, countesses, marquises, magistrates and colonels, who came to Belleville in anxiety about his health, to congratulate themselves upon his convalescence, to ask of him, with submission and reverence, a bishopric, an archbishopric, a cardinal's hat, an important priory, a canonry, or an abbey.

Having myself to place the three daughters of one of my relatives, I went to see the noble confessor at his pavilion of Belleville. He received me with the most marked distinction, and was lavish in acts of gratitude for all the benefits of the King.

As he crossed his salon, in order to accompany me and escort me out, he let his white handkerchief fall; three bishops at once flung themselves upon it, and there was a struggle as to who should pick it up to give it back to him.

I related to the King what I had seen. He said to me: "These prelates honour my confessor, looking upon him as a second me." In fact, the sins of the King could only throw his confessor into relief and add to his merit.

CHAPTER XVI.

Mademoiselle de Fontanges.—The Pavilions of the Garden of Flora.—Rapid Triumph of the Favourite.—Her Retreat to Val-de-grace.—Her Death.

Madame de Maintenon was already forty-four years old, and appeared to be only thirty. This freshness, that she owed either to painstaking care or to her happy and quite peculiar constitution, gave her that air of youth which fascinated the eyes of the courtiers and those of the monarch himself. I wished one day to annoy her by bringing the conversation on this subject, which could not be diverting to her. I began by putting the question generally, and I then named several of our superannuated beauties who still fluttered in the smiling gardens of Flora without having the youth of butterflies.

"There are butterflies of every age and colour in the gardens of Flora," said she, catching the ball on the rebound. "There are presumptuous ones, whom the first breath of the zephyr despoils of their plumage and discolours; others, more reserved and less

frivolous, keep their glamour and prestige for a much longer time. For the rest, the latter seem to me to rejoice without being vain in their advantages. And at bottom, what should any insect gain by being proud?"

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“Very little,” I answered her, “since being dressed as a butterfly does not prevent one from being an insect, and the best sustained preservation lasts at most till the day after to-morrow.”

The King entered. I started speaking of a young person, extremely beautiful, who had just appeared at Court, and would eclipse, in my opinion, all who had shone there before her.

“What do you call her?” asked his Majesty. “To what family does she belong?”

“She comes from the provinces,” I continued, “just like silk, silver, and gold. Her parents desire to place her among the maids of honour of the Queen. Her name is Fontanges, and God has never made anything so beautiful.”

As I said these words I watched the face of the Marquise. She listened to this portrayal with attention, but without appearing moved by it, such is her power of suppressing her natural feeling. The King only added these words:

“This young person needs be quite extraordinary, since Madame de Montespan praises her, and praises her with so much vivacity. However, we shall see.”

Two days afterwards, Mademoiselle de Fontanges was seen in the salon of the grand table. The King, in spite of his composure, had looks and attentions for no one else.

This excessive preoccupation struck the Queen, who, marking the blandishments of the young coquette and the King’s response, guessed the whole future of this encounter; and in her heart was almost glad at it, seeing that my turn had come.

Mademoiselle de Fontanges, given to the King by her shameless family, feigned love and passion for the monarch, as though he had returned by enchantment to his twentieth year.

As for him, he too appeared to us to forget all dates. I know that he was only now forty-one years old, and having been the finest man in the world, he could not but preserve agreeable vestiges of a once striking beauty. But his young conquest had hardly entered on her eighteenth year, and this difference could not fail to be plain to the most inattentive, or most indulgent eyes.

The King, with a sort of anticipatory resignation, had for six or seven years greatly simplified his appearance. We had seen him, little by little, reform that Spanish and chivalric costume with which he once embellished his first loves. The flowing plumes no longer floated over his forehead, which had become pensive and quite serious. The diagonal, scarf was suppressed, and the long boots, with gold and silver embroidery, were no longer seen. To please his new divinity, the monarch suddenly enough

rejuvenated his attire. The most elegant stuffs became the substance of his garments; feathers reappeared. He joined to them emeralds and diamonds.

Allegorical comedies, concerts on the waters recommenced. Triumphant horse-races set the whole Court abob and in movement. There was a fresh carousal; there was all that resembles the enthusiasms of youthful affection, and the deliriums of youth. The youth alone was not there, at least in proportion, assortment, and similarity.

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All that I was soliciting for twelve years, Mademoiselle de Fontanges had only to desire for a week. She was created duchess at her debut; and the lozenge of her escutcheon was of a sudden adorned with a ducal coronet, and a peer's mantle.

I did not deign to pay attention to this outrage; at least, I made a formal resolution never to say a single word on it.

The King came no less from time to time, to pay me a visit, and to talk to me, as of old, of operas and his hunting. I endured his conversation with a philosophical phlegm. He scarcely suspected the change in me.

At the chase, one day, his nymph, whom nothing could stop, had her knot of riband caught and held by a branch; the royal lover compelled the branch to restore the knot, and went and offered it to his Amazon. Singular and sparkling, although lacking in intelligence, she carried herself this knot of riband to the top of her hair, and fixed it there with a long pin.

Fortune willed it that this coiffure, without order or arrangement, suited her face, and suited it greatly. The King was the first to congratulate her on it; all the courtiers applauded it, and this coiffure of the chase became the fashion of the day.

All the ladies, and the Queen herself, found themselves obliged to adopt it. Madame de Maintenon submitted herself to it, like the others. I alone refused to sacrifice to the idol, and my knee, being once more painful, would not bend before Baal.

With the exception of the general duties of the sovereignty, the prince appeared to have forgotten everything for his flame. The Pere de la Chaise, who had returned to his post, regarded this fresh incident with his philosophic calm, and congratulated himself on seeing the monarch healed of at least one of his passions.

I had always taken the greatest care to respect the Queen; and since my star condemned me to stand in her shoes, I did not spare myself the general attentions which two well-born people owe one another, and which, at least, prove a lofty education.

The Duchesse de Fontanges, doubtless, believed herself Queen, because she had the public homage and the King. This imprudent and conceited schoolgirl had the face to pass before her sovereign without stopping, and without troubling to courtesy.

The Infanta reddened with disapproval, and persuaded herself, by way of consolation, that Fontanges had lost her senses or was on the road to madness.

Beautiful and brilliant as the flowers, the Duchess, like them, passed swiftly away. Her pregnancy, by reason of toilsome rides, hunting parties, and other agitations, became complicated. From the eighth month she fell into a fever, into exhaustion and languor.

The terror that took possession of her imagination caused her to desire a sojourn in a convent as a refuge of health, where God would see her nearer and, perhaps, come to her aid.

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She had herself transported during the night to the House of the Ladies of Val-de-Grace, and desired that they should place in her chamber several relics from their altars.

Her confinement was not less laboured and sinister. When she saw that all the assistance of art could not stop the bleeding, with which her deep bed was flooded, she caused the King to be summoned, embraced him tenderly, in the midst of sobs and tears, and died in the night, pronouncing the name of God and the name of the King, the objects of her love and of fears.

CHAPTER XVII.

Madame de Sevigne.—Madame de Grignan.—Madame de Montespan at the Carmelites.—Madame de la Valliere.—These Two Great Ruins Console One Another. —An Angel of Sweetness, Goodness, and Kindness.

Fifteen or twenty days before the death of Mademoiselle de Fontanges, my sister and I were taking a walk in the new woods of Versailles. We met the Marquise de Sevigne near the canal; she was showing these marvellous constructions to her daughter, the Comtesse de Grignan. They greeted us with their charming amiability, and, after having spoken of several indifferent matters, the Marquise said to me: “We saw, five or six days ago, a person, madame, of whom you were formerly very fond, and who charged us to recall her to the memory of her friends. You are still of that number,—I like to think so, and our commission holds good where you are concerned, if you will allow it.”

Then she mentioned to me that poor Duchesse de la Valliere, to whom I was once compelled by my unhappy star to give umbrage, and whom, in my fatal thoughtlessness, I had afflicted without desiring it.

Tears came into my eyes; Madame de Sevigne saw them, and expressed her regret at having caused me pain. Madame de Thianges and I asked her if my old friend was much changed. She and Madame de Grignan assured us that she was fresh, in good health, and that her face appeared more beautiful. On the next day I wished absolutely to see her, and drove to the Carmelites.

On seeing my pretty cripple, who hobbled among us with so great a charm, I uttered a cry, which for a moment troubled her. She sank down to salute the crucifix, as custom demands, and, after her short prayer, she came to me. “I did not mention your name to Mesdames de Sevigne,” said she; “but, however, I am obliged to them, since they have been able to procure me the pleasure of seeing you once more.”

“The general opinion of the Court, and in the world, my dear Duchess,” answered I, “is that I brought about your disgrace myself; and the public, that loved you, has not ceased to reproach me with your misfortune.”

“The public is very kind still to occupy itself with me,” she answered; “but it is wrong in that, as in so many other matters. My retirement from the world is not a misfortune, and I never suspected that the soul could find such peace and satisfaction in these silent solitudes.

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“The first days were painful to me, I admit it, owing to the inexpressible difference which struck me between what I found here and what I had left elsewhere. But just as the eye accustoms itself, little by little, to the feeble glimmer of a vault, in the same way my body has accustomed itself to the roughness of my new existence, and my heart to all its great privations.

“If life had not to finish, in fulfilment of a solemn, universal, and inevitable decree, the constraint that I have put upon myself might at length become oppressive, and my yoke prove somewhat heavy. But all that will finish soon, for all undertakings come to an end. I left you young, beautiful, adored, and triumphant in the land of enchantments. But six years have passed, and they assure me that your own afflictions have come, and that you, yourself, have been forced to drink the bitter cup of deprivation.”

At these words, pronounced in a melancholy and celestial voice, I felt as though my heart were broken, and burst into tears.

“I pity you, Athenais,” she resumed. “Is, then, what I have been told lightly, and almost in haste, only too certain for you? How is it you did not expect it? How could you believe him constant and immutable, after what happened to me?

“To-day, I make no secret to you of it, and I say it with the peaceful indifference which God has generously granted me, after such dolorous tribulations. I make no secret of it to you, Athenais; a thousand times you plunged the sword and dagger into my heart, when, profiting by my confidence in you, by my sense of entire security, you permitted your own inclination to substitute itself for mine, and a young man seething with desires to be attracted by your charms. These unlimited sufferings exhausted, I must believe, all the sensibility of my soul. And when this corrosive flame had completely devoured my grief, a new existence grew up in me; I no longer saw in the father of my children other than a young prince, accustomed to see his dominating will fulfilled in everything. Knowing how little in this matter he is master of himself, he who knows so well how to be master of himself in everything to do with his numerous inferiors, I deplored the facility he enjoys from his attractions, from his wealth, from his power to dazzle the hearts which he desires to move and subdue.

“Recognise these truths, my dear Marquise,” she added, “and gain, for it is time, a just idea of your position. After the unhappiness I felt at being loved no longer, I should have quitted the Court that very instant, if I had been permitted to bring up and tend my poor children. They were too young to abandon! I stayed still in the midst of you, as the swallow hovers and flits among the smoke of the fire, in order to watch over and save her little ones. Do not wait till disdain or authority mingles in the matter. Do not come to the sad necessity of resisting a monarch, and of detesting to the point of scandal that which you have so publicly loved; pity him, but depart. This kind of intimacy, once broken, cannot be renewed. However skilfully it may be patched up, the rent always reappears.”

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“My good Louise,” I replied to the amiable Carmelite, “your wise counsels touch me, persuade me, and are nothing but the truth. But in listening to you I feel overwhelmed; and that strength which you knew how to gain, and show to the world, your former companion will never possess.

“I see with astonished eyes the supernatural calm which reigns in your countenance; your health seems to me a prodigy, your beauty was never so ravishing; but this barbarous garb pierces me to the heart.

“The King does not yet hate me; he shows me even a remnant of respect, with which he would colour his indifference. Permit me to ask from him for you an abbey like that of Fontevrault, where the felicities of sanctuary and of the world are all in the power of my sister. He will ask nothing better than to take you out, be assured.”

“Speak to him of me,” answered Louise; “I do not oppose that; but leave me until the end the role of obedience and humility that his fault and mine impose on me. Why should he wish that I should command others,—I who did not know how to command myself at an epoch when my innocence was so dear to me, and when I knew that, in losing that, one is lost?”

As she said these words two nuns came to announce her Serene Highness, that is to say, her daughter, the Princesse de Conti. I prayed Madame de la Valliere to keep between ourselves the communications that had just taken place in the intimacy of confidence. She promised me with her usual candour. I made a profound reverence to the daughter, embraced the mother weeping, and regained my carriage, which the Princess must have remarked on entering.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Reflections.—The Future.—The Refuge of Foresight.—Community of Saint Joseph.—-Wicked Saying of Bossuet.

I wept much during the journey; and to save the spectacle of my grief from the passers-by, I was at the pains to lower the curtains. I passed over in my mind all that the Duchess had said to me. It was very easy for me to understand that the monarch’s heart had escaped me, and that, owing to his character, all resistance, all contradiction would be vain. The figure, as it had been supernumerary and on sufferance, which the Duchess had made in the midst of the Court when she ceased to be loved, returned to my memory completely, and I felt I had not the courage to drink a similar cup of humiliation.

I reminded myself of what the prince had told me several times in those days when his keen affection for me led him to wish for my happiness, even in the future,—even after his death, if I were destined to survive him.

“You ought,” he said to me, at those moments, “you ought to choose and assure yourself beforehand of an honourable retreat; for it is rarely that a king accords his respect or his good-will to the beloved confidante of his predecessor.”

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Not wishing to ask a refuge of any one, but, on the contrary, being greatly set upon ruling in my own house, I resolved to build myself, not a formal convent like Val-de-Grace or Fontevrault, but a pretty little community, whose nuns, few in number, would owe me their entire existence, which would necessarily attach them to all my interests. I held to this idea. I charged my intendant to seek for me a site spacious enough for my enterprise; and when he had found it, had showed it to me, and had satisfied me with it, I had what rambling buildings there were pulled down, and began, with a sort of joy, the excavations and foundations.

The first blow of the hammer was struck, by some inconceivable fortuity, at the moment when the Duchesse de Fontanges expired. Her death did not weaken my resolutions nor slacken my ardour. I got away quite often to cast an eye over the work, and ordered my architect to second my impatience and spur on the numerous workmen.

The rumour was current in Paris that the example of “Soeur Louise” had touched me, and that I was going to take the veil in my convent. I took no notice of this fickle public, and persisted wisely in my plan.

The unexpected and almost sudden decease of Mademoiselle de Fontanges had singularly moved the King. Extraordinary and almost incredible to relate, he was for a whole week absent from the Council. His eyes had shed so many tears that they were swollen and unrecognisable. He shunned the occasions when there was an assembly, buried himself in his private apartments or in his groves, and resembled, in every trait, Orpheus weeping for his fair Eurydice, and refusing to be consoled.

I should be false to others and to myself if I were to say that his extreme grief excited my compassion; but I should equally belie the truth if I gave it to be understood that his “widowhood” gave me pleasure, and that I congratulated myself on his sorrow and bitterness.

He came to see me when he found himself presentable, and, for the first few days, I abstained from all reprisal and any allusion. The innumerable labours of his State soon threw him, in spite of himself, into those manifold distractions which, in their nature, despise or absorb the sensibilities of the soul. He resumed, little by little, his accustomed serenity, and, at the end of the month, appeared to have got over it.

“What,” he asked me, “are those buildings with which you are busy in Paris, opposite the Ladies of Belle-Chasse? I hear of a convent; is it your intention to retire?”

“It is a ‘refuge of foresight,’” I answered him. “Who can count upon the morrow? And after what has befallen Mademoiselle de Fontanges, we must consider ourselves as persons already numbered, who wait only for the call.”

He sighed, and soon spoke of something else.

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I reminded myself that, to speak correctly, I had in Paris no habitation worthy of my children and of my quality. That little hotel in the Rue Saint Andre-des-Arcs I could count for no more than a little box. I sought amongst my papers for a design of a magnificent hotel which I had obtained from the famous Blondel. I found it without difficulty, with full elevations and sections. The artist had adroitly imitated in it the beautiful architecture of the Louvre; this fair palace would suit me in every respect.

My architect, at a cursory glance, judged that the construction and completion of this edifice would easily cost as much as eighteen hundred thousand livres. This expense being no more than I could afford, I commissioned him to choose me a spacious site for the buildings and gardens over by Roule and La Pepiniere.

Not caring to superintend several undertakings at once, I desired, before everything, that my house in the Faubourg Saint Germain should be complete and when the building and the chapel were in a condition to receive the little colony, I dedicated my “refuge of foresight” to Saint Joseph, the respectful spouse of the Holy Virgin and foster-father of the Child Jesus. This agreeable mansion lacked a large garden. I felt a sensible regret for this, especially for the sake of my inmates; but there was a little open space furnished with vines and fruit-walls, and one of the largest courtyards in the whole of the Faubourg Saint Germain.

Having always loved society, I had multiplied in the two principal blocks of the sleeping-rooms and the entrance-hall complete apartments for the lady inmates. And a proof that I was neither detested by the world nor unconsidered is that all these apartments were sought after and occupied as soon as the windows were put in and the painting done. My own apartment was simple, but of a majestic dignity. It communicated with the chapel, where my tribune, closed with a handsome window, was in face of the altar.

I decided, once for all, that the Superior should be my nomination whilst God should leave me in this world, but that this right should not pass on to my heirs. The bell of honour rang for twenty minutes every time I paid a visit to these ladies; and I only had incense at high mass, and at the Magnificat, in my quality of foundress.

I went from time to time to make retreats, or, to be more accurate, vacations, in my House of Saint Joseph. M. Bossuet solicited the favour of being allowed to preach there on the day of the solemn consecration. I begged him to preserve himself for my funeral oration. He answered cruelly that there was nothing he could refuse me.

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.

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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, 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.

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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?

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.

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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 monstrousness, 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.”

“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.’”

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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 'Becs 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.

"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.”

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“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:

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.

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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.

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:

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“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.”

“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 pour 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]

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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!”

“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.

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"'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?'

"'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.

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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.

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.

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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.

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.

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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.

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

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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."

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.

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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.

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.

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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 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.

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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.

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.”

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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.

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.

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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.

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.

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The King was courting her, it is true, and favouring her already with marked respect; but Francoise 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.

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.

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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?

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.

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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.”

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.

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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.

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:

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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.

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.

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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."

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.

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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.

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.

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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.

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."

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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.

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 Tonnay-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.

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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.

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 plaint, 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."

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“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.

“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 mast 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.

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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.

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."

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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.

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

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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.

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.

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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.

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."

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“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.

“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.

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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.

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.

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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.

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.

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“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.

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.

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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.

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.

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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.

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."

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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 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!"

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“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.”

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.

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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."

"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.

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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.

"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."

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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.

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

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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.”

BOOK 7.

CHAPTER XXXVII

The King Takes Luxembourg Because It Is His Will.—Devastation of the Electorate of Treves.—The Marquis de Louvois.—His Portrait.—The Marvels Which He Worked.—The Le Tellier and the Mortemart.—The King Destines De Mortemart to a Colbert.—How One Manages Not to Bow.—The Dragonades.—A Necessary Man.—Money Makes Fat.—Meudon.—The Horoscope.

This journey to Flanders did not keep the King long away from his capital. And, withal, he made two fine and rich conquests, short as the space of time was. The important town of Luxembourg was necessary to him. He wanted it. The Marechal de Crequi invested this place with an army of thirty thousand men, and made himself master of it at the end of a week.

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Immediately after the King marched to the Electorate of Treves, which had belonged, he said, to the former kingdom of Austrasia. He had no trouble in mastering it, almost all the imperial forces being in Hungary, Austria, and in those cantons where the Ottomans had called for them. The town of Treves humbly recognised the King of France as its lord and suzerain. Its fine fortifications were levelled at once, and our victories were, unhappily, responsible for the firing, pillage, and devastation of almost the whole Electorate. For the Duke of Crequi, faithful executor of the orders of Louvois, imagined that a sovereign is only obeyed when he proves himself stern and inflexible.

In the first years of my favour, the Marquis de Louvois enjoyed my entire confidence, and, I must admit, my highest esteem. Independently of his manners, which are, when he wishes, those of the utmost amiability, I remarked in him an industrious and indefatigable minister, an intelligent man, as well instructed in the mass as in details; a mind fertile in resources, means, and expedients; an administrator, a jurist, a theologian, a man of letters and of affairs, an artist, an agriculturist, a soldier.

Loving pleasure, yet knowing how to despise it in favour of the needs of the State and the care of affairs, this minister concentrated in his own person all the other ministries, which moved only by his impulse and guiding hand.

Did the King, followed by his whole Court, arrive in fearful weather by the side of some vast and swollen river, M. de Louvois, alighting from his carriage, would sweep the horizon with a single glance. He would designate on the spot the farms, granaries, mills, and chateaux necessary to the passage of a fastidious king on his travels. A general repast, appropriate and sufficient, issued at his voice as it had been from the bowels of the earth. An abundance of mattresses received provisionally the more or less delicate forms, stretched out in slumber or fatigue. And in the depth of the night, by the light of a thousand flaring torches, a vast bridge, constructed hastily, in spite of wind and rain, permitted the royal carriage and the host of other vehicles to cross the stream, and find on the further bank succulent dishes and voluptuous apartments.

This prodigious energy, which created results by pulverising obstacles, had rendered the minister not only agreeable but precious to a young sovereign, who, unable to tolerate delays and resistance, desired in all things to attain and succeed. The King, without looking too closely at the means, loved the results which were the consequences of such a genius, and he rewarded with a limitless confidence the intrepid and often culpable zeal of a minister who procured him hatred.

When the passions of the conqueror, owing to success, grew calm, he studied more tranquilly both his own desires and his coadjutor’s. The King by nature is neither inhuman nor savage, and he knew that Louvois was like Phalaris in these points. Then he was at as much pains to repress this unpopular humour as he had shown indifference before in allowing it to act.

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The Marquis de Louvois (who did not like me) had lavished his incense upon me, in order that some fumes of it might float up to the prince. He saw me beloved and, as it were, almost omnipotent; he sought my alliance with ardour. The family of Le Tellier is good enough for a judicial and legal family; but what bonds are there between the Louvois and the Mortemart? No matter: ambition puts a thick bandage over the eyes of those whom it inspires; the Marquis wished to marry his daughter to my nephew, De Mortemart!!!

I communicated this proposition to the King. His Majesty said to me: "I am delighted that he has committed the grave fault of approaching any one else than me about this marriage. Answer him, if you please, that it is my province alone to marry the daughters, and even the sons of my ministers. Louvois has thus far helped me to spend enormous sums. M. Colbert has assisted me to heap up treasure. It is for one of the Colberts that I destine your nephew; for I have made up my mind that the three sisters shall be duchesses."

In effect, his Majesty caused this marriage; and the Marquis de Louvois had the jaundice over it for more than a fortnight.

Since that time his assiduities have been enlightened. He puts respect into his reverences; and when our two coachmen carried our equipages past each other on the same, road, he read some documents in order to avoid saluting me.

In the affair of the Protestants, he caused what was at first only anxiety, religious zeal, and distrust to turn into rebellion. In order to make himself necessary, he proposed his universal and permanent patrols and dragoons. He caused certain excesses to be committed in order to raise a cry of disorder; and a measure which could have been effective without ceasing to be paternal became, in his hands, an instrument of dire persecution.

Madame de Maintenon, having learnt that Louvois, to exonerate himself, was secretly designating her as the real author of these rigorous and lamentable counsels, made complaint of it to the King, and publicly censured his own brother, who, in order to make himself agreeable to the Jesuits, to Bossuet, and to Louvois, had made himself a little hero in his provincial government.

The great talents of M. de Louvois, and the difficulty of replacing him, became his refuge and safeguard. But, from the moment that he no longer received the intimate confidence of the King, and the esteem of the lady in waiting who sits upon the steps of the throne, he can only look upon himself at Versailles as a traveller with board and lodging.

His revenues are incalculable. The people, seeing his enormous corpulence, maintain, or pretend, that he is stuffed with gold. His general administration of posts alone is worth a million. His other offices are in proportion.

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His chateau of Meudon-Fleury, a magical and quite ideal site, is the finest pleasure-house that ever yet the sun shone on. The park and the gardens are in the form of an amphitheatre, and are, in my opinion, sublime, in a far different way from those of Vaux. M. Fouquet, condemned to death, in punishment for his superb chateau, died slowly in prison; the Marquis de Louvois will not, perhaps, die in a stronghold; but his horoscope has already warned that minister to be prepared for some great adversity. He knows it; sometimes he is concerned about it; and everything leads one to believe that he will come to a bad end. He has done more harm than people believe.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Reformed Religion and Painting on Enamel—Petitot and Heliogabalus.—-Theological Discussion with the Marquise.—The King's Intervention.—Louis XIV. Renders His Account to the Christian and Most Christian Painter.—The King's Word Is Not to Be Resisted.—Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

At the moment when the first edicts, were issued against the public exercise of the Reformed Religion, the famous and incomparable Petitot, refusing all the supplications of France and of Europe, executed for me, in my chateau of Clagny, five infinitely precious portraits, upon which it was his caprice only to work alternately, and which still demanded from him a very great number of sittings. One of these five portraits was that of the King, copied from that great and magnificent picture of Mignard, where he was represented at the age of twenty, in the costume of a Greek hero, in all the lustre of his youth. His Majesty had given me this little commission for more than a year, and I desired, with all my heart, to be able soon to fulfil his expectation. He destined this miniature for the Emperor of China or the Sultan.

I went to see M. Petitot at Clagny. When he saw me he came to me with a wrathful air, and, presenting me his unfinished enamel, he said to me: "Here, madame, is your Greek hero; his new edicts finish us, but, as for me, I shall not finish him. With the best intentions in the world, and all the respect that is due to him, my just resentment would pass into my brush; I should give him the traits of Heliogabalus, which would probably not delight him."

"Do you think so, monsieur?" said I to my artist. "Is it thus you speak of the King, our master,—of a King who has affection for you, and has proved it to: you so many times?"

"My memory, recalls to me all that his munificence: has done for my talent in a thousand instances," went on the painter; "but his edicts, his cruel decrees, have upset my heart, and the persecutor of the true Christians no longer merits my consideration or good-will."

I had been ignorant hitherto of the faith which this able man professed; he informed me that he worshipped God in another fashion than ours, and made common cause with the Protestants.

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“Well,” said I to him then, “what have you to complain of in the new edicts and decrees? They only concern, so far, your ministers,—I should say, your priests; you are not one, and are never likely to be; what do these new orders of the Council matter to you?”

“Madame,” resumed Petitot, “our ministers, by preaching the holy gospel, fulfil the first of their duties. The King forbids them to preach; then, he persecutes them and us. In the thousand and one religions which exist, the cause of the priests and the sanctuary becomes the cause of the faithful. Our priests are not imbecile Trappists and Carthusians, to be reduced to inaction and silence. Since their tongues are tied, they are resolved to depart; and their departure becomes an exile which it is our duty to share. If you will entrust me with your portraits which have been commenced, with the exception of that of Heliogabalus, I will finish them in a hospitable land, and shall have the honour of sending them to you, already fired and in all their perfection.”

Petitot, until this political crisis, had only exhibited himself to me beneath an appearance of simplicity and good-nature. Now his whole face was convulsed and almost threatening; when I looked at him he made me afraid. I did not amuse myself by discussing with him matters upon which we were, both of us, more or less ignorant. I did all that could be done to introduce a little calm into his superstitious head, and to gain the necessary time for the completion of my five portraits. I was careful not to confide to the King this qualification of Heliogabalus; but as his intervention was absolutely necessary to me, I persuaded him to come and spend half an hour at this chateau of Clagny, which he had deserted for a long time past.

“Your presence,” I said to him, “will perhaps take the edge off the theological irritation of your fanatical painter. A little royal amenity, a little conversation and blandishment, a la Louis XIV., will seduce his artistic vanity. At the cost of that, your portrait, Sire, will be terminated. It would not be without.”

The surprise of his Majesty was extreme when he had to learn and comprehend that the prodigious talent of Petitot was joined to a Huguenot conscience, and this talent spoke of expatriating itself. “I will go to Clagny to-morrow,” replied the prince to me; and he went there, in fact, accompanied by the Marquise de Montchevreuil and Madame la Dauphine, in an elaborate neglige.

“Good-day, Monsieur Petitot,” said the monarch to our artist, who rose on seeing him enter. “I come to contemplate your new masterpieces. Is my little miniature near completion?”

“Sire,” replied Petitot, “it will not be for another six weeks. All these affairs and decrees have deprived me of many hours; my heart is heavy over it!”

“And why do you busy yourself with these discussions, with which your great talent has no concern?” said the King to him, gently.

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“Sire, it is my religion that is more concerned than ever. I am a Christian, and my law is dear to me.”

“And I am Most Christian,” answered his Majesty, smiling. “I profess the religion, I keep the law that your ancestors and mine kept before the Reformation.”

“Sire, this reform has been adopted by a great number of monarchs,—a proof that the Reformation is not the enemy of kings, as is said.”

“Yes, in the case of wise and honest men like yourself, my good friend Petitot; but just as all your brothers have not your talents, so they have not your rectitude and loyalty, which are known to me.”

“Sire, your Majesty overwhelms me; but I beg you to be persuaded that my brothers have been calumniated.”

“Yes, if one is to accuse them in the mass, my dear Petitot; but there are spoil-alls amongst your theologians; intercepted correspondences depose to it. The allied princes, having been unable to crush me by their invasions and artillery, have recourse to internal and clandestine manoeuvres. Having failed to corrupt my soldiers, they have essayed to corrupt my clergy, as they did at Montauban and La Rochelle, in the days of Cardinal Richelieu.”

“Sire, do not believe in any such manoeuvres; all your subjects love and admire you, whatever be their faith and communion.”

“Petitot, you are an admirable painter and a most worthy man. Do not answer me, I beg you. If I believed you had as much genius and aptitude for great affairs as for the wonders of the brush, I would make you a Counsellor of State on the instant, and a half-hour spent with me and my documents and papers of importance would be sufficient to make you believe and think as I do touching what has been discussed between us. Madame de Montespan, in great alarm, has told me that you wished to leave me. You leave me, my good friend! Where will you find a sky so pure and soft as the sky of France? Where will you find a King more tenderly attached to men of merit, more particularly, to my dear and illustrious Petitot?”

At these words, pronounced with emotion, the artist felt the tears come into his eyes. He bent one knee to the ground, respectfully kissed the hand of the monarch, and promised to complete his portrait immediately.

He kept his word to us. The King’s miniature and my four portraits were finished without hesitation or postponement; and Petitot also consented to copy, for his Majesty, a superb Christine of Sweden, a full-length picture, painted by Le Bourdon. But at the final revocation of the Edict of Nantes, he thought his conscience, or rather his vanity,

compromised, and quitted France, although the King offered to allow him a chaplain of his communion, and a dispensation from all the oaths, to Petitot himself, to Boyer, his brother-in-law, and the chaplain whom they had retained with them.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

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Lovers' Vows.—The Body-guards.—Racine's Phedre.—The Pit.—Allusions.—The Duel.—M. de Monclar.—The Cowled Spy.—He Escapes with a Fright.—M. de Monclar in Jersey.—Gratitude of the Marquise.—Happy Memory.

Lovers, in the effervescence of their passion, exaggerate to themselves the strength and intensity of their sentiments. The momentary, pleasure that this agreeable weakness causes them to feel, brings them, in spite of themselves, to promise a long duration of it, so that they swear eternal fidelity, a constancy, proof against all, two days after that one which shone on their most recent infidelity. I had seen the King neglect and abandon the amiable La Valliere, and I listened to him none the less credulously and confidently when he said to me: "Athenais, we have been created for each other: if Heaven were suddenly to deprive me of the Queen, I would have your marriage dissolved, and, before the altar and the world, join your destiny, to mine."

Full of these fantastic ideas, in which my, hope and desire and credulity were centred, I had accepted those body-guards of state who never left my carriage. The poor Queen had murmured: I had disdained her murmurs. The public had manifested its disapproval: I had hardened myself and fought against the insolent opinion of that public. I could not renounce my chimera of royalty, based on innumerable probabilities, and I used my guards in anticipation, and as a preliminary.

One of them, one day, almost lost his life in following my carriage, which went along like a whirlwind. His horse fell on the high road to Versailles; his thigh was broken, and his body horribly bruised. I descended from my carriage to see after him. I confided him, with the most impressive recommendations, to the physician or surgeon of Viroflai, who lavished on him his attentions, his skill and zeal, and who sent him back quite sound after a whole month of affectionate care.

The young Baron de Monclar (such was the name of this guard) thought himself happy in having merited my favour by this accident, and he remained sincerely and finally attached to me.

At the time of the temporary triumph of Mademoiselle de Fontanges, the spell which was over my eyes was dissipated. The illusions of my youth were lost, and I saw, at last, the real distance which divided me from the steps of the throne. The health of a still youthful Queen seemed to me as firm and unalterable then as it appeared to me weak and uncertain before. The inconstancy of the monarch warned me of what might be still in store for me, and I resolved to withdraw myself, voluntarily and with prudence, within the just limits of my power.

M. le Prince de Luxembourg was one of my friends, and in command; I begged him to send me his guards no longer, but to reserve them for the reigning divinity, who had already more than once obtained them.

In these latter days, that is to say, since the eminent favour of the lady in waiting, having become the friend, and no longer the spouse of the prince, I frequently retired from this sight, so repugnant to me, and went and passed entire weeks at Paris, where the works on my large hotel, that had been suspended for divers reasons, were being resumed.

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A debutante, as beautiful as she was clever, was drawing the entire capital to the Comedie Francaise. She obtained especial applause in the difficult part of Phedre. My friends spoke marvels of it, and wished to take me there with them. Their box was engaged. We arrived as the curtain was going up. As I took my seat I noticed a certain stir in the orchestra and pit. The majority of glances were directed at my box, in which my apparition had attracted curiosity. I carried my fan to my face, under the pretext of the excessive glow of the lights. Immediately several voices were to be heard: "Take away the fan, if you please." The young and foolish applauded this audacity; but all the better part disapproved.

The actress mentioned came on the scene and brought the incident to an end. Although deeply moved by what had occurred, I paid great attention to the magnificent part of Phedre, which often excited my admiration and profound pity. At some passages, which every one knows by heart, two or three insolent persons abandoned themselves to a petty war of allusions, and accenting these aggressive phrases with their applause, succeeded in directing general attention to me. Officers of the service noticed this beginning of disorder, and probably were concerned at my embarrassment. Some Gardes Francais were called within the barrier of the parterre in order to restrain the disturbers. Suddenly a very lively quarrel broke out in the centre. Two young men with great excitement had come to blows, and soon we saw them sally forth with the openly expressed intention of settling their quarrel on the field.

Was it my name, or a contest as to the talent of the actress, which caused this commotion? My nephew, De Mortemart, was concerned for me, and the Comte de Marcilly assured us that all these wrangles were solely with regard to the wife of Theseus.

Between the two pieces our company learnt that a gentleman from the provinces had insulted my name, and a body-guard, out of uniform, had taken this insult for himself; they had gone out to have an explanation.

The following day a religious minim of the House of Chaillot came to inform me of the state of affairs. The Baron de Monclar, of the body-guards of the King, had taken sanctuary in their monastery, after having killed, in lawful duel, beneath the outer walls of the Bois du Boulogne, the imprudent young man who, the night before, at the play, had exposed me to the censure of the public. M. de Monclar was quite prepared for the inflexible severity of the King, as well as for the uselessness of my efforts. He only begged me to procure him a disguise of a common sort, so that he might immediately embark from the neighbourhood of Gainville or Bordeaux, and make for England or Spain; every moment was precious.

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The sad position in which M. de Monclar had put himself in my behalf filled me with sorrow. I gave a long sigh, and dried my first tears. I racked my sick and agitated head for the reply I ought to make to the good monk, and, to my great astonishment, my mind, ordinarily so prompt and active, suggested and offered me no suitable plan. This indecision, perhaps, rendered the worthy ambassador impatient and humiliated me; when, to end it, I made up my mind to request that M. de Monclar be secretly transferred from the House of Chaillot to my dwelling, where I should have time and all possible facilities to take concert with him as to the best means of action.

Suddenly raising my eyes to the monk of Chaillot, I surprised in his a ferocious look of expectation. This horrible discovery unnerved me,—I gave a cry of terror; all my lackeys rushed in. I ordered the traitor to be seized and precipitated from the height of my balcony into the gardens. His arms were already bound ruthlessly, and my people were lifting him to throw him down, when he eluded their grasp, threw himself at my feet, and confessed that his disguise was assumed with the intent to discover the sanctuary of the Baron de Monclar, the assassin of his beloved brother. “It is asserted, madame,” added this man, rising, “that the Baron is confided to the Minim Fathers of Chaillot. I imagined that you were informed of it, and that by this means my family would succeed in reaching him.”

“If he has killed the nobody who yesterday insulted me so unjustly,” I said then to this villain who was ready for death, “he has done a virtuous act, but one which I condemn. I condemn it because of the law of the Prince, which is formal, and because of the dire peril into which he has run; for that my heart could almost praise and thank him. I was ignorant of his offence; I am ignorant of his place of refuge. Whoever you may be,—the agent of a family in mourning, or of a magistrate who forgets what is due to me,—leave my house before my wrath is rekindled. Depart, and never forget what one gains by putting on the livery of deceit in order to surprise and betray innocence.”

My people conducted this unworthy man to the outer gate, and refused to satisfy some prayers which he addressed to them to be released from his disagreeable bonds. The public, with its usual inconsequence, followed the monk with hooting, without troubling as to whether it were abusing a vile spy or a man of worth.

We waited for a whole month without receiving any news of our guard. At last he wrote to me from the island of Jersey, where he had been cast by a storm. I despatched the son of my intendant, who knew him perfectly; I sent him a letter of recommendation to his Majesty the King of England, who had preserved me in his affections, and to those matters of pure obligation, which I could not refrain from without cruelty, I added a present of a hundred thousand livres, which was enough to furnish an honourable condition for my noble and generous cavalier in the land of exile.

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The humour of my heart is of the kind which finishes by forgetting an injury and almost an outrage; but a service loyally rendered is graven upon it in uneffaceable characters, and when (at the solicitation of the King of England) our monarch shall have pardoned M. de Monclar, I will search all through Paris to find him a rich and lovely heiress, and will dower him myself, as his noble conduct and my heart demand.

I admire great souls as much as I loathe ingratitude and villainy.

CHAPTER XL.

Parallel between the Diamond and the Sun.—Taste of the Marquise for Precious Stones.—The King's Collection of Medals.—The Crown of Agrippina.—The Duchess of York.—Disappointment of the Marquise.—To Lend Is Not to Give.—The Crown Well Guarded.—Fright of the Marquise.—The Thief Recognised.—The Marquise Lets Him Hang.—The Difference between Cromwell and a Trunkmaker.—Delicate Restitutions.—The Bourbons of Madame de Montespan.

The diamond is, beyond contradiction, the most beautiful creation of the hands of God, in the order of inanimate objects. This precious stone, as durable as the sun, and far more accessible than that, shines with the same fire, unites all its rays and colours in a single facet, and lavishes its charms, by night and day, in every clime, at all seasons; whilst the sun appears only when it so pleases; sometimes shining, sometimes misty, and shows itself off with innumerable pretensions.

From my tenderest childhood, I was notable amongst all my brothers and sisters for my distinct fondness for precious stones and diamonds. I have made a collection of them worthy of the Princes of Asia; and if my whole fortune were to fail me to-day, my pearls and diamonds, being left to me, would still give me opulence. The King, by a strange accident, shares this taste with me. He has in his third closet two huge pedestals, veneered in rosewood, and divided within, like cabinets of coins, into several layers. It is there that he has conveyed, one by one, all the finest diamonds of the Crown. He consecrates to their examination, their study, and their homage, the brief moments that his affairs leave him. And when, by his ambassadors, he comes to discover some new apparition of this kind in Asia or Europe, he does all that is possible to distance his competitors.

When he loved me with a tender love, I had only to wish and I obtained instantly all that could please me, in rare pearls, in superfine brilliants, sapphires, emeralds, and rubies. One day, his Majesty allowed me to carry home the famous crown of Agrippina, executed with admirable art, and formed of eight sprays of large brilliants handsomely mounted. This precious object occupied me for several days in succession, and the more I examined the workmanship, the more I marvelled at its lightness and excellence,

which was so great that our jewellers, compared with those of Nero and Agrippina, were as artisans and workmen.

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The King, having never spoken to me again of this ornament, I persuaded myself that he had made me a present of it,—a circumstance which confirmed me in the delusions of my hope. I thought then that I ought not to leave in its light case an article of such immense value, and ordered a strong and solid casket in which to enshrine my treasure.

The imperial crown having been encased and its clasps well adjusted by as many little locks of steel, I shut the illustrious valuable in a cupboard in which I had a quantity of jewelry and precious stones. This beautiful crown was the constant object of my thoughts, my affections and my preference; but I only looked at it myself at long intervals, every six months, very briefly, for fear of exciting the cupidity of servants, and exposing the glory of Agrippina to some danger.

When the Princess of Mantua passed through France on her way to marry the Duke of York, whose first wife had left him a widower, the King gave a brilliant reception to this young and lovely creature, daughter of a niece of Cardinal Mazarin.

The conversation was uniformly most agreeable, for she spoke French with fluency, and employed it with wit. There was talk of open-work crowns and shut crowns. The Marquis de Dangeau, something of a savant and antiquary, happened to remark that, under Nero, that magnificent prince, the imperial crown had first been wrought in the form of an arch, such as is seen now.

The King said then: “I was ignorant of that fact; but the crown of the Empress, his mother, was not closed at all. The one which belongs to me is authentic; Madame la Marquise will show it to us:”

A gracious invitation in dumb show completed this species of summons, and I was obliged to execute it. I returned to the King in the space of a few minutes, bringing back in its new case the fugitive present, which a monarch asked back again so politely and with such a good grace.

The crown of Agrippina, being placed publicly on a small round table, excited general attention and admiration. The Italian Princess, Madame de Maintenon, the Duc de Saint Aignan, and Dangeau himself went into raptures over the rare perfection of these marvellously assorted brilliants. The King, drawing near, in his turn examined the masterpiece with pleasure. Suddenly, looking me in the face, he cried:

“But, madame, this is no longer my crown of Agrippina; all the diamonds have been changed!”

Imagine my trouble, and, I must say, my confusion! Approaching the wretched object, and casting my eyes over it with particular attention, I was not slow in verifying the King’s assertion. The setting of this fine work had remained virtually the same; but some bold hand had removed the antique diamonds and substituted—false!

I was pale and trembling, and on the verge of swooning. The ladies were sorry for me. The King did me the honour of declaring aloud that I had assuredly been duped, and I was constrained to explain this removal of the crown into a more solid and better case for its preservation.

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At this naive explanation the King fell to laughing, and said to the young Princess: “Madame, you will relate, if you please, this episode to the Court of London, and you will tell the King, from me, that nothing is so difficult to preserve now as our crowns; guards and locks are no more of use.”

Then, addressing me, his Majesty said, playfully:

“You should have entrusted it to me sooner; I should have saved it. It is said that I understand that well.”

My amour-propre, my actual honour, forbade me to put a veil over this domestic indignity. I assembled all my household, without excepting my intendant himself. I was aggrieved at the affront which I had met with at the King’s, and I read grief and consternation on all faces. After some minutes’ silence, my intendant proposed the immediate intervention of authority, and made me understand with ease that only the casket-maker could be the culprit.

This man’s house was visited; he had left Paris nearly two years before. Further information told us that, before disposing of his property, he had imprudently indulged in a certain ostentation of fortune, and had embarked for the new settlements of Pondicherry.

M. Colbert, who is still living, charged our governor to discover the culprit for him; and he was sent back to us with his hands and feet bound.

Put to the question, he denied at first, then confessed his crime. One of my chamber—-maids, to whom he had made feigned love, introduced him into my house while I was away, and by the aid of this imprudent woman he had penetrated into my closets. The crown of Agrippina, which it had been necessary to show him because of the measures, had become almost as dear to him as to myself; and his ambition of another kind inspired him with his criminal and fatal temerity.

He did no good by petitioning me, and having me solicited after the sentence; I let him hang, as he richly deserved.

The King said on this occasion: “This casketmaker has, at least, left us the setting, but M. Cromwell took all.”

The fortunate success of this affair restored me, not to cheerfulness, but to that honourable calm which had fled far away from me. I made a reflection this time on my extreme imprudence, and understood that all the generosities of love are often no more than loans. I noticed amongst my jewels a goblet of gold, wrought with diamonds and rubies, which came from the first of the Medici princesses. I waited for the King’s fete to return this magnificent ornament to him nobly. I had a lily executed, all of emeralds and

fine pearls; I poured essence of roses into the cup, placed in it the stem of the lily, in the form of a bouquet for the prince, and that was my, present for Saint Louis's day.

I gave back to the King, by degrees, at least three millions' worth of important curiosities, which were like drops of water poured into the ocean. But I was anxious that, if God destined me to perish by a sudden death, objects of this nature should not be seen and discovered amid my treasure.

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As to my other diamonds, either changed in form or acquired and collected by myself, I destine them for my four children by the King. These pomps will have served to delight my eyes, which are pleased with them, and then they will go down to their first origin and source, belonging again to the Bourbons whom I have made.

CHAPTER XLI.

The Duchesse de Lesdiguieres.—Her Jest.—"The Chaise of Convenience."—Anger of the Jesuits.—They Ally Themselves with the Archbishop of Paris.—The Forty Hours' Prayers.—Thanks of the Marquise to the Prelate.—His Visit to Saint Joseph.—Anger of the Marquise.—Her Welcome to the Prelate.

The insult offered me at the Comedie Francaise by a handful of the thoughtless immediately spread through the capital, and became, as it is easy to imagine, the talk of all the salons. I was aware that the Duchesse de Lesdiguieres was keenly interested in this episode, and had embellished and, as it were, embroidered it with her commentaries and reflections. All these women who misconduct themselves are pitiless and severe. The more their scandalous conduct brands them on the forehead, the more they cry out against scandal. Their whole life is bemired with vice, and their mouth articulates no other words than prudence and virtue, like those corrupt and infected doctors who have no indulgence for their patients.

The Duchesse de Lesiguieres, for a long time associated with the Archbishop of Paris, and known to live with that prelate like a miller with his wife, dared to say, in her salon that my presence at Racine's tragedy was, at the least, very useless, and the public having come there to see a debutante, certainly did not expect me.

The phrase was repeated to me, word for word by my sister De Thianges, who did not conceal her anger, and wished to avenge me, if I did not avenge myself. The Marquise then informed me of another thing, which she had left me in ignorance of all along, from kind motives chiefly, and to prevent scandal.

"You remember, my sister," said the Marquise to me, "a sort of jest which escaped you when Pere de la Chaise made the King communicate, in spite of all the noise of his new love affair and the follies of Mademoiselle de Fontanges? You nicknamed that benevolent Jesuit 'the Chaise of Convenience.' Your epigram made all Paris laugh except the hypocrites and the Jesuits. Those worthy men resolved to have full satisfaction for your insult by stirring up the whole of Paris against you. The Archbishop entered readily into their plot, for he thought you supplanted; and he granted them the forty Hours' Prayers, to obtain from God your expulsion from Court. Harlay, who is imprudent only in his debauches, preserved every external precaution, because of the King, whose temper he knows; he told the Jesuits that they must not expect either his pastoral letter or his mandate,

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but he allowed them secret commentaries, the familiar explanations of the confessional; he charged them to let the other monks and priests into the secret, and the field of battle being decided, the skirmishes began. With the aid and assistance of King David, that trivial breastplate of every devotional insult, the preachers announced to their congregations that they must fast and mortify themselves for the cure of King David, who had fallen sick. The orators favoured with some wit embellished their invectives; the ignorant and coarse amongst the priests spoiled everything. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed for a whole week in the churches, and it ended by an announcement to Israel, that their cry had reached the firmament, that David had grown cold to Bathsheba (they did not add, nevertheless, that David preferred another to Bathsheba with his whole heart). But the Duchesse de Fontanges gave offence neither to the Archbishop of Paris nor to the Jesuits. Her mind showed no hostility. The beauty was quite incapable of saying in the face of the world that a Jesuit resembled a 'Chaise of Convenience.'

"The Duchesse de Lesdiguieres, covered with rouge and crimes, has put herself at the head of all these intrigues," added my sister; "and without having yet been able to subdue herself to the external parade of devotion, she has allowed herself to use against you all the base tricks of the most devout hypocrites."

"Let me act," I said to my sister; "this lady's good offices call for a mark of my gratitude. The Forty Hours' Prayer is an attention that is not paid to every one; I owe M. de Paris my thanks."

I went and sat down at my writing-table, and wrote this fine prelate the following honeyed missive:

I have only just been informed, monseigneur, of the pains you have been at with God for the amelioration of the King and of myself. The gratitude which I feel for it cannot be expressed. I pray you to believe it to be as pure and sincere as your intention. A good bishop, as perfect and exemplary as yourself, is worthy of taking a passionate interest in the regularity of monarchs, and ours must owe you the highest rewards for this new mark of respect which it has pleased you to give him. I will find expressions capable of making him feel all that he owes to your Forty Hours' Prayer, and to that Christian and charitable emotion cast in the midst of a capital and a public. To all that only your mandate of accusation and allegorical sermons are lacking. Cardinals' hats, they say, are made to the measure of strong heads; we will go seek, in the robing-rooms of Rome, if there be one to meet the proportions of your ability. If ladies had as much honourable influence over the Vicar of Jesus Christ as simple bishops allow them, I should solicit, this very day, your wished-for recompense and exaltation. But it is the monarch's affair; he will undertake it. I can only offer you, in my own person, M. Archbishop of Paris, my prayers for yours. My little church of Saint Joseph has not the

same splendour as your cathedral; but the incense that we burn there is of better quality than yours, for I get it from the Sultan of Persia. I will instruct my little community to-morrow to hold our Forty Hours' Prayer, that God may promptly cure you of your Duchesse de Lesdiguieres, who has been damning you for fourteen years.

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Deign to accept these most sincere reprisals, and believe me, without reserve, Monsieur the Archbishop,

The marquise de Montespan.

This letter cast the camp into alarm. There were goings and comings between the Episcopal Palace and the Jesuits of the Rue Saint Antoine, and from this professed house to their College of Louis le Grand. The matadores of the society were of opinion that I should be conciliated by every possible means, and it was arranged that the Archbishop should pay me a visit at Saint Joseph's, on the earliest possible occasion, to exculpate his virtuous colleagues and make me accept his disclaimers. He came, in effect, the following week. I made him wait for half an hour in the chapel, for half an hour in my parlour, and I ascended into my carriage, almost in his presence, without deigning either to see or salute him.

The mother of four legitimised princes was not made to support such outrages, nor to have interviews with their insolent authors.

Alarms, anxieties of consciences, weak but virtuous, have always found me gentle, and almost resigned; the false scruples of hypocrites and libertines will never receive from me aught but disdain and contempt.

CHAPTER XLII.

The Verse of Berenice.—Praises of Boileau.—The King's Aversion to Satirical Writers.—The Painter Le Brun.—His Bacchus.—The Waterbottle.—The Pyramid of Jean Chatel Injurious to the Jesuits.—They Solicit Its Demolition.—Madame de Maintenon's Opposition.—Political Views of Henri IV. on This Matter.—The Jesuits of Paris Proclaim the Dedication of Their College to Louis the Great.—The Gold Pieces.

Whatever be the issue of a liaison which cannot probably be eternal, I have too much judgment and equity to deny the King the great talents which are his by nature, or to dispute the surname of Great which has been given him in his lifetime, and which the ages to come must surely preserve. But here I am writing secret Memoirs, where I set down, as in a mirror, the most minute traits of the personages whom I bring on the stage, and I wish to relate in what manner and with what aim this apotheosis affected the mind of those who flattered the prince in their own interest.

The painters and sculptors, most artful of courtiers in their calling, had already represented the King, now with the attributes of Apollo, now in the costume of the god Mars, of Jupiter Tonans, Neptune, lord of the waves; now with the formidable and vigorous appearance of the great Hercules, who strangled serpents even in his cradle.

His Majesty saw all these ingenious allegories, examined them without vanity, with no enthusiasm, and seemed to regard them as accessories inherent to the composition, as conventional ornaments, the good and current small change of art. The adulations of Racine, in his “Berenice,” having all a foundation of truth, please him, but chiefly for the grace of the poetry; and he sometimes recited them, when he wished to recall and quote some fine verse.

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The praises of Boileau, although well versified, had not, however, the fortune to please him. He found those verses too methodical for poetry; and the poet, moreover, seemed to him somewhat a huckster, and in bad taste. The satirists might do what they liked, they never had his friendship. Perhaps he feared them.

When Le Brun started preparing the magnificent cradle of the great gallery, he composed for the ceiling rich designs or cartoons, which in their entirety should represent the victories and great military or legislative achievements of the prince. His work being finished, he came to present it to his Majesty, who on that day was dining with me. In one of the compartments the painter had depicted his hero in the guise of Bacchus; the King immediately took up a bottle of clear water and drank a big glass. I gave a great peal of laughter, and said to M. le Brun, “You see, monsieur, his Majesty’s decision in that libation of pure water.”

M. le Brun changed his design, seeing the King had no love for Bacchus, but he left the Thundering Jove, and all the other mythological flatteries, in regard to which no opinion had been given.

The Jesuits for a long time past had groaned at seeing, exactly opposite the Palace,—-[In the midst of the semicircle in front of the Palais de Justice.]—in the centre of Paris, that humiliating pyramid which accused them of complicity with, or inciting, the famous regicide of the student, Jean Chatel, assassin of Henri IV. Pere de la Chaise, many times and always in vain, had prayed his Majesty to render justice to the virtues of his order, and to command the destruction of this slanderous monument. The King had constantly refused, alleging to-day one motive, to-morrow another. One day, when the professed House of Paris came to hand him a respectful petition on the subject, his Majesty begged Madame de Maintenon to read it to him, and engaged us to listen to it with intelligence, in order to be able to give an opinion.

The Jesuits said in this document that the Parliament, with an excessive zeal, had formerly pushed things much too far in this matter. “For that Jean Chatel, student with the Jesuit Fathers, having been heard to say to his professor that the King of Navarre, a true Huguenot, ought not to reign over France, which was truly Catholic, the magistrates were not, therefore, justified in concluding that that Jesuit, and all the Jesuits, had directed the dagger of Jean Chatel, a madman.”

The petition further pointed out that “the good King Henri IV., who was better informed, had decided to recall the Society of Jesus, had reestablished it in all his colleges, and had even chosen a confessor from their ranks.

“This fearful pyramid,

[This monument represented a sort of small square temple, built of Arcueil stone and marble. Corinthian fluted pillars formed its general decoration, and enshrined the four

fulminatory inscriptions. Independently of the obelisk, the cupola of this temple bore eight allegorical statues, of which the one was France in mourning; the second, Justice raising her sword, and the others the principal virtues of the King. On the principal side these words occurred: "Passer-by, whosoever thou be, abhor Jean Chatel, and the Jesuits who beguiled his youth and destroyed his reason."—*Editor's note*.]

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surcharged with wrathful inscriptions," added the petition, "designates our Society as a perpetual hotbed of regicidal conspiracy, and presents us to credulous people as an association of ambitious, thankless and corrupt assassins!"

"In the name of God, Sire, do away with this criminal and dangerous memento of old passions, unjust hatreds, and the spirit of impiety which, after having led astray magistrates devoid of light, serves to-day only to beguile new generations, whom excess of light blinds," *etc*., *etc*.

When this letter was finished, the King said:

"I have never seen, the famous pyramid; one of these days I will escape, so that I can see it without being observed." And then his Majesty asked me what I thought of the petition. I answered that I did not understand the inconsistency of M. de Sully, who, after consenting to the return of the Jesuits, had left in its place the monument which accused and branded them. I put it on Sully, the minister, because I dared not attack Henri IV. himself.

The King answered me: "There are faults of negligence such as that in every government and under the best administrations. King Henri my grandfather was vivacity itself. He was easily irritated; he grew calm in the same way. For my part, I think that he pardoned the Jesuits, as he had the Leaguers, in the hope that his clemency would bring them all into peaceful disposition; in which he was certainly succeeding when a miscreant killed him."

Madame de Maintenon, begged to give her opinion, expressed herself in these terms: "Sire, this petition cannot be other than extremely well done, since a society of clever minds have taken the work in hand. We have not the trial of Jean Chatel before our eyes, with his interrogatories; it is impossible for us, then, to pronounce on the facts. In any case, there is one thing very certain: the Jesuits who are living at present are innocent, and most innocent of the faults of their predecessors.

"The sentences and anathemas which surcharge the pyramid, as they say, can in no way draw down upon them the anger of passers-by and the populace, for these inscriptions, which I have read, are in bad Latin. This monument, which is very rich and even elegant in itself, is placed upon the site of the destroyed house of the assassin Chatel. The most ignorant of your Parisians knows this circumstance, which he has learnt from family traditions. It is good that the people see every day before their eyes this solitary pyramid, which teaches how King's assassins are punished and what is done with the houses in which they were born.

"King Henri IV., for all his gaiety, had wits enough for four; he left the pyramid standing, like those indulgent people who compromise a great lawsuit, but do not on that account destroy the evidence and documents.

“This monument, besides, is the work of the Parliament of Paris; that illustrious assembly has raised it, and perhaps your Majesty might seem to accuse justice by destroying what it has once done for a good cause.”

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The King smiled at the conclusions of the lady in waiting, and said to both of us: "This is between us three, I pray you, ladies; I will keep Pere de la Chaise amused with promises some day."

Madame de Maintenon, for a brief time in her first youth a Calvinist, cherished always in the bottom of her heart a good share of those suspicions that Calvin's doctrine is careful to inspire against the Jesuits.

On the other hand, she retained amongst the Parliament a large number of friends whom she had known formerly at M. Scarron's, the son of a counsellor of the chamber. I understood that in those circumstances she was well pleased to prove to the gentlemen of Parliament that the interests of their house were kept in good hands, and that she would not abandon her friends of the Place Royale and the Marais for all the Jesuits and all the pyramids in the world.

The Parliament, which was informed of her conduct and fidelity, bore her infinite good-will for it. The first president, decorated with his blue riband, came; to express his formal thanks, and begged her to accept in perpetuity a key of honour to the High Chamber.

[In famous and unusual causes, princes, ambassadors, and keys of honour came and occupied the lanterns, that is to say, elegant and well furnished tribunes, from which all that passed in the grand hall of the Parliament could be seen.]

The Jesuits, for perseverance and tenacity, can be compared with spiders who repair, or start again every instant at a damaged or broken thread. When these good fathers knew that their petition had not triumphed offhand, they struck out for some new road to reach the generous heart of the monarch. Having learnt that an alderman, full of enthusiasm, had just proposed in full assembly at the Hotel de Ville to raise a triumphal monument to the Peacemaker of Europe, and to proclaim him Louis the Great at a most brilliant fete, the Jesuit Fathers cleverly took the initiative, and whilst the Hotel de Ville was deliberating to obtain his Majesty's consent, the College of Clermont, in the Rue Saint Jacques, brought out its annual thesis, and dedicated it to the King,—Louis the Great (Ludovico Magno).

On the following day the masons raised scaffolding before the great door of the college, erased the original inscription—which consisted of the words: "College of Clermont"—to substitute for it, in letters of gold: "Royal College of Louis the Great." These items of news reached Versailles one after the other. The King received them with visible satisfaction, and if only Pere de la Chaise had known how to profit at the time by the emotion and sentiment of the prince, he would have carried off the tall pyramid as an eagle does a sparrow. The confessor, a man of great circumspection, dared not force his penitent's hand; he was tactful with him in all things, and the society had the trouble

of its famous cajolery without gaining anything more at the game than compliments and gold pieces in sufficient plenty.

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Some days afterwards the monarch, of his own accord and without any incentive, remembered the offensive and mortifying pyramid; but Madame de Maintenon reminded him that it was desirable to wait, for scoffers would not be wanting to say that this demolition was one of the essential conditions of the bargain.

The King relished this advice. At the Court one must make haste to obtain anything; but to be forgotten, a few minutes' delay is sufficient.

[This pyramid was taken down two or three years before the Revolution by the wish of Louis XVI., after having stood for two hundred years.—*Editor's note*.]

CHAPTER XLIII.

Little Opportune.—M. and Madame Bontems.—The Young Moor Weaned.—The Good Cure.—The Blessed Virgin.—Opportune at the Augustinians of Meaux.—Bossuet Director.—Mademoiselle Albanier and Leontine.—Flight of Opportune.—Her Threats of Suicide.—Visit of the Marquise.—Prudence of the Court.

The poor Queen had had several daughters, all divinely well made and pretty as little Cupids. They kept in good health up to their third or fourth year; they went no further. It was as though a fate was over these charming creatures; so that the King and Queen trembled whenever the accoucheurs announced a daughter instead of a son.

My readers remember the little negress who was born to the Queen in the early days, —she whom no one wanted, who was dismissed, relegated, disinherited, unacknowledged, deprived of her rank and name the very day of her birth; and who, by a freak of destiny, enjoyed the finest health in the world, and surmounted, without any precautions or care, all the difficulties, perils, and ailments of infancy.

M. Bontems, first valet de chambre of the cabinets, served as her guardian, or curator; even he acted only through the efforts and movements of an intermediary. It was wished that this young Princess should be ignorant of her birth, and in this I agree that, in the midst of crying injustice, the King kept his natural humanity. This poor child not being meant, and not being able, to appear at Court, it was better, indeed, to keep her from all knowledge of her rights, in order to deprive her, at one stroke, of the distress of her conformation, the hardship of her repudiation, and the despair of captivity. The King destined her for a convent when he saw her born, and M. Bontems promised that it should be so.

At the age of three, she was withdrawn from the hands of her nurse, and Madame Bontems put her to be weaned in her own part of the world. Opportune,—[She was born on Sainte Opportune's Day.]—clothed and nourished like the other children of the farmer, who was her new patron, played with them in the barns or amongst the snow;

she followed them into the orchards and fields; she filled, like them, her little basket with acorns that had been left after the crop was

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over, or ears of corn that the gleaners had neglected, or withered branches and twigs left by the wood-cutters for the poor. Her nude, or semi-nude, arms grew rough in the burning sun, and more so still in the frosts. Her pretty feet, so long as the fine season lasted, did not worry about being shod, and when November arrived with its terrors, Opportune took her little heeled sabots like the other country children. M. and Madame Bontems wrote every six months to inquire if she were dead, and each time the answer came that the little Moor was in wonderful health.

The pastor of the neighbouring hamlet felt pity for this poor child, who was sometimes tormented by her companions on account of her colour. The good cure even went so far as to declare, one day when there was a sermon, that the Virgin Mary, if one was to believe respectable books, was black from head to foot, which did not prevent her from being most beautiful in the sight of God and of men.

This good cure taught the gentle little orphan to read and pray. He often came to her farm to visit her, and probably he knew her birth; he was in advanced age, and he died. Then Opportune was placed with the Augustinian ladies of Meaux, where Bossuet charged himself with the task of instructing her well in religion and of making her take the veil.

The lot of this young victim of pride and vain prejudices touched me in spite of myself, and often I made a firm resolution to take her away from her oppressors and adopt her in spite of everybody. The poor Queen, forgetting our rivalry, had taken all my children into her affections. Why should not I have shown a just recognition by protecting an innocent little creature animated with her breath, life, and blood,—a child whom she would have loved, I do not doubt, if she had been permitted to see and recognise her? This idea grew so fixed in my, mind, that I resolved to see Opportune and do her some good, if I were able.

The interest of my position had led me once to assure myself of the neighbourhood of the King by certain little measures, not of curiosity but of surveillance. I had put with M. Bontems a young man of intelligence and devotion, who, without passing due limits, kept me informed of many things which it is as well to know.

When I knew, without any doubt, the new abiding-place of Opportune, I secretly sent to the Augustinians of Meaux the young and intelligent sister of my woman of the bedchamber, who presented herself as an aspirant for the novitiate. They were ignorant in the house of the relations of Mademoiselle Albanier with her sister Leontine Osselin, so that they wrote to each other, but by means of a cipher, and under seal, addressing their missives to a relative.

Albanier lost no time in informing us that the little Opportune had begun to give her her confidence, and that the nuns took it in very good part, believing them both equally called to take the veil in their convent. Opportune knew, though in a somewhat vague way, to what great personage she owed her life, and it appeared that the good cure had informed her, out of compassion, before he left this world. Albanier wrote to Leontine:

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“Tell Madame la Marquise that Opportune is full of wit; she resembles M. le Duc du Maine as though she were his twin; her carriage is exactly that of the King; her body is built to perfection, and were it not for her colour, the black of which diminishes day by day, she would be one of the loveliest persons in France; she is sad and melancholy by temperament, but as I have succeeded in attracting her confidence, and diverting her as much as one can do in a purgatory like this, we dance sometimes in secret, and then you would think you saw Mademoiselle de Nantes dance and pirouette.

“When any one pronounces the name of the King, she trembles. She asked me to-day whether I had seen the King, if he were handsome, if he were courteous and affable. It seemed to me as though she was already revolving some great project in her brain, and if I am not mistaken, she has quite decided to scale the fruit-trees against our garden wall and escape across country.

“M. Bossuet, in his quality of Bishop of Meaux, has the right of entry into this house; he has come here three times since my arrival; he has given me each time a little tap on my check in token of goodwill, and such as one gets at confirmation; he told me that he longs to see me take the veil of the Ursulines, as well as my little scholar; it is by that name he likes to call her.

“Opportune answers him with a stately air which would astound you; she only calls him monsieur, and when told that she has made an error, and that she should say monseigneur, she replies with great seriousness, ’I had forgotten it.’”

Mademoiselle Albanier, out of kindness to me, passed nearly two years in this house, which she always called her purgatory, but the endeavours of the superior and of M. Bossuet becoming daily more pressing, and her health, which had suffered, being unable to support the seclusion longer, she made up her mind to retire.

Her departure was a terrible blow to the daughter of the Queen. This young person, who was by nature affectionate, almost died of grief at the separation. We learnt that, after having been ill and then ailing for several weeks, she found the means of escaping from the convent, and of taking refuge with some lordly chatelaine. M. de Meaux had her pursued, but as she threatened to kill herself if she were taken back to the Abbey of Notre Dame, the prelate wrote to M. Bontems, that is to say, to the real father, and poor Opportune was taken to Moret, a convent of Benedictines, in the forest of Fontainebleau. There they took the course of lavishing care, and kindness, and attentions on her. But as her destiny, written in her cradle, was an irrevocable sentence, she was finally made to take the veil, which suited her admirably, and which she wears with an infinite despair.

I disguised myself one day as a lady suitor who sought a lodging in the house. I established myself there for a week, under the name of the Comtesse de Clagny, and I saw, with my own eyes, a King’s daughter reduced to singing matins. Her air of nobility

and dignity struck me with admiration and moved me to tears. I thought of her four sisters, dead at such an early age, and deplored the cruelty of Fate, which had spared her in her childhood to kill her slowly and by degrees.

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I would have accosted her in the gardens, and insinuated myself into her confidence, but the danger of these interviews, both for her and me, restrained what had been an ill-judged kindness. We should both have gone too far, and the monarch would have been able to think that I was opposing him out of revenge, and to give him pain.

This consideration came and crushed all my projects of compassion and kindness. There are situations in life where we are condemned to see evil done in all liberty, without being able to call for succour or complain.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The Aristocratic Republic of Genoa Offends the King.—Its Punishment.—Reception of the Doge at Paris and Versailles.

M. de Louvois—by nature, as I have said, hard and despotic—was quite satisfied to gain the same reputation for the King, in order to cover his own violence and rigour beneath the authority of the monarch.

The King, I admit, did not like to be contradicted or opposed. He became irritated if one was unfortunate enough to do so; but I know from long experience that he readily accepted a good excuse, and by inclination liked neither to punish nor blame. The Marquis de Louvois was unceasingly occupied in exciting him against one Power and then another, and his policy was to keep the prince in constant alarm of distrust in order to perpetuate wars and dissensions. This order of things pleased that minister, who dreaded intervals of calm and peace, when the King came to examine expenses and to take account of the good or bad employment of millions.

The Republic of Genoa, accustomed to build vessels for all nations, built some of them, unfortunately, for the King's enemies. These constructions were paid for in advance. M. de Louvois, well-informed of what passed in Genoa, waited till the last moment to oppose the departure of the four or five new ships. The Genoese, promising to respect the King's will in the future, sent these vessels to their destination.

On the report and conclusions of M. de Louvois, his Majesty commanded the senators of Genoa to hand over to his Minister of War the sums arising from the sale of these, and to send their Doge and four of the most distinguished senators to beg the King's pardon in his palace at Versailles.

The senate having replied that, by a fundamental law, a Doge could not leave the, city without instantly losing his power and dignity, the King answered this message to the effect that the Doge would obey as an extraordinary circumstance, that in this solitary case he would derogate from the laws of the Genoese Republic, and that, the King's will being explicit and unalterable, the Doge would none the less maintain his authority.

Whilst waiting, his Majesty sent a fleet into Italian waters, and the city of Genoa immediately sustained the most terrible bombardment.

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The flag of distress and submission having been flown from all the towers, our admirals ceased, and the Doge set out for Versailles, accompanied by the four oldest senators.

At the news of their approach, all Paris echoed the songs of triumph that M. de Louvois had had composed. A spacious hotel was prepared to receive these representatives of a noble, aristocratic republic; and, to withdraw them from the insults of the populace, they were given guards and archers.

Although the chateau of Versailles was in all the lustre of its novelty, since it had been inhabited for only two years, I perceived that they had even been adding to its magnificence, and that everywhere were new curtains, new candelabra, new carpets. The throne on which the monarch was to sit surpassed all that we had ever seen.

On the eve of the solemn presentation the astonished ambassadors appeared incognito before the minister, who dictated to them their costumes, their reverences, and all the substance of their address. The influx of strangers and Parisians to Versailles, to be witnesses of such a spectacle, was so extraordinary and prodigious that the hostels and other public inns were insufficient, and they were obliged to light fires of yew in all the gardens.

In the great apartments there were persons of the highest rank who sought permission to pass the night on benches, so that they might be all there and prepared on the following day. On the two sides of the great gallery they had raised tribunes in steps, draped in ‘Cramoisi’ velvet. It was on these steps, which were entirely new, that all the ladies were placed. The lords stood upright below them, and formed a double hedge on each side.

When his Majesty appeared on his throne, the fire of the diamonds with which he was covered for a moment dazzled all eyes. The King seemed to me less animated than was his wont; but his fine appearance, which never quits him, rendered him sufficiently fit for such a representation and his part in it.

The Doge of the humiliated Republic exhibited neither obsequiousness nor pride. We found his demeanour that of a philosopher prepared for all human events. His colleagues walked after him, but at a little distance. When the Doge Lescaro had asked for pardon, as he had submitted to do, two of his senators fell to weeping. The King, who noticed the general emotion, descended from his throne and spoke for some minutes with the five personages, and, smiling on them with his most seductive grace, he once more drew all hearts to him.

I was placed at two paces from Madame de Maintenon. The Doge,—who was never left by a master of ceremonies, who named the ladies to him,—in passing before me, made a profound reverence. He then drew near Madame de Maintenon, who heard all

his compliments, said to him, in Italian, all that could be said, and did him the honour to lean on his hand when descending from her tribune to return to the King's.

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On the next day the Doge and senators came to present their homage to my children, and did not forget me in their visits of ceremony.

CHAPTER XLV.

The Comte de Vermandois.—His Entrance into the World.—Quarrels with the Dauphin.—Duel.—Siege of Courtrai.—The Cathedral of Arras.

When Madame de la Valliere (led by suggestions coming from the Most High) left the Court and the world to shut herself up in a cloister, she committed a great imprudence; I should not know how to repeat it: The Carmelites in the Rue Saint Jacques could easily do without her; her two poor little children could not. The King confided them, I am well aware, to governors and governesses who were prudent, attentive, and capable; but all the governors and preceptors in the world will never replace a mother,—above all, in a place of dissipation, tumult, and carelessness like the Court.

M. le Comte de Vermandois was only seven years old when exaggerated scruples and bad advice deprived him of his mother. This amiable child, who loved her, at first suffered much from her absence and departure. He had to be taken to the Carmelites, where the sad metamorphosis of his mother, whom he had seen so brilliant and alluring, made him start back in fright.

He loved her always as much as he was loved by her, and in virtue of the permission formally given by the Pope, he went every week to pass an hour or two with her in the parlour. He regularly took there his singing and flute lessons; these were two amiable talents in which he excelled.

About his twelfth year he was taken with the measles, and passed through them fairly well. The smallpox came afterwards, but respected his charming brown face. A severe shower of rain, which caught him in some forest, made him take rheumatism; the waters of Vichy cured him; he returned beaming with health and grace.

The King loved him tenderly, and everybody at Court shared this predilection of the monarch. M. de Vermandois, of a stature less than his father, was none the less one of the handsomest cavaliers at the Court. To all the graces of his amiable mother he joined an ease of manner, a mixture of nobility and modesty, which made him noticeable in the midst of the most handsome and well made. I loved him with a mother's fondness, and, from all his ingenuous and gallant caresses, it was easy to see that he made me a sincere return.

This poor Comte de Vermandois, about a year before the death of the Queen, had a great and famous dispute with Monsieur le Dauphin, a jealous prince, which brought

him his first troubles, and deprived him suddenly of the protecting favour of the Infanta-queen.

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At a ball, at the Duchesse de Villeroi's, all the Princes of the Blood appeared. Monseigneur, who from childhood had had a fancy for Mademoiselle de Blois, his legitimised sister, loved her far more definitely since her marriage with M. le Prince de Conti. Monseigneur is lacking in tact. At this ball he thought he could parade his sentiments, which were visibly unpleasant, both to the young husband and to the Princess herself. He danced, nevertheless, for some minutes with her; but, suddenly, she feigned to be seized with a sharp pain in the spleen, and was conducted to a sofa. The young Comte de Vermandois came and sat there near her. They were both exhibiting signs of gaiety; their chatter amused them, and they were seen to laugh with great freedom. Although Monsieur le Dauphin was assuredly not in their thoughts, he thought they were making merry at his expense. He came and sat at the right of the Princess and said to her:

"Your brother is very ill-bred!"

"Do you think so?" the Princess answered immediately. "My brother is the most amiable boy in the world. He is laughing at my talking to myself. He assures me that my pain is in my knee instead of being in the spleen, and that is what we were amusing ourselves at, quite innocently."

"Your brother thinks himself my equal," added the Prince; "in which he certainly makes a mistake. All his diamonds prove nothing; I shall have, when I like, those of the crown."

"So much the worse, monsieur," replied the Comte de Vermandois, quickly. "Those diamonds should never change hands,—at least, for a very long time."

These words degenerating into an actual provocation, Monseigneur dared to say to his young brother that, were it not for his affection for the Princess, he would make him feel that he was——

"My elder brother," resumed the Comte de Vermandois, "and nothing more, I assure you."

Before the ball was over, they met in an alcove and gave each other a rendezvous not far from Marly. Both of them were punctual; but Monsieur le Dauphin had given his orders, so that they were followed in order to be separated.

The King was informed of this adventure; he immediately gave expression to his extreme dissatisfaction, and said:

"What! is there hatred and discord already amongst my children?"

I spoke next to elucidate the facts, for I had learnt everything, and I represented M. de Vermandois as unjustly provoked by his brother. His Majesty replied that Monsieur le

Dauphin was the second personage in the Empire, and that all his brothers owed him respect up to a certain point.

“It was out of deference and respect that the Count accepted the challenge,” said I to the King; “and here the offending party made the double attack.”

“What a misfortune!” resumed the King. “I thought them as united amongst themselves as they are in my heart. Vermandois is quick, and as explosive as saltpetre; but he has the best nature in the world. I will reconcile them; they will obey me.”

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The scene took place in my apartment, owing to my Duc du Maine. “My son,” said his Majesty to the child of the Carmelite, “I have learned with pain what has passed at Madame de Villeroi’s and then in the Bois de Marly. You will be pardoned for this imprudence because of your age; but never forget that Monsieur le Dauphin is your superior in every respect, and must succeed me some day.”

“Sire,” replied the Count, “I have never offended nor wished to offend Monseigneur. Unhappily for me, he detests me, as though you had not the right to love me.”

At these words Monsieur le Dauphin blushed, and the King hastened to declare that he loved all his children with a kindness perfectly alike; that rank and distinctions of honour had been regulated, many centuries ago, by the supreme law of the State; that he desired union and concord in the heart of the royal family; and he commanded the two brothers to sacrifice for him all their petty grievances, and to embrace in his presence.

Hearing these words, the Comte de Vermandois, with a bow to his father, ran in front of Monseigneur, and, spreading out his arms, would have embraced him. Monsieur le Dauphin remained cold and dumb; he received this mark of good-will without returning it, and very obviously displeased his father thereby.

These little family events were hushed up, and Monseigneur was almost explicitly forbidden to entertain any other sentiments for Madame de Conti than those of due friendship and esteem.

Some time after that, Messieurs de Conti, great lovers of festivity, pleasure, and costly delights, which are suited only for people of their kind, dragged the Comte de Vermandois, as a young debutant, into one of those licentious parties where a young man is compelled to see things which excite horror.

His first scruples overcome, M. de Vermandois, naturally disposed to what is out of the common, wished to give guarantees of his loyalty and courage; from a simple spectator he became, it is said, an accomplice.

There is always some false friend in these forbidden assemblies. The King heard the details of an orgy so unpardonable, and the precocious misconduct of his cherished son gave him so much pain, that I saw his tears fall. The assistant governor of the young criminal was dismissed; his valet de chambre was sent to prison; only three of his servants were retained, and he himself was subjected to a state of penitence which included general confessions and the most severe discipline. He resigned himself sincerely to all these heavy punishments. He promised to associate only with his mother, his new governor, his English horses, and his books; and this manner of life, carried out with a grandeur of soul, made of him in a few months a perfect gentleman, in the honourable and assured position to which his great heart destined him.

The King, satisfied with this trial, allowed him to go and prove his valour at the sieges of Digmude and Courtrai. All the staff officers recognised soon in his conversation, his zeal, his methods, a worthy rival of the Vendomes. They wrote charming things of him to the Court. A few days afterwards we learned at Versailles that M. de Vermandois was dead, in consequence of an indisposition caught whilst bivouacking, which at first had not seemed dangerous.

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The King deplored this loss, as a statesman and a good father. I was a witness of his affliction; it seemed to me extreme. One knew not whom to approach to break the news to the poor Carmelite. The Bishop of Meaux, sturdy personage, voluntarily undertook the mission, and went to it with a tranquil brow, for he loved such tasks.

To his hoarse and funereal voice Soeur Louise only replied with groans and tears. She fell upon the floor without consciousness, and M. Bossuet went on obstinately preaching Christian resignation and stoicism to a senseless mother who heard him not.

About a fortnight after the obsequies of the Prince (which I, too, had celebrated in my church of Saint Joseph), the underprioress of that little community begged me to come to Paris for a brief time and consecrate half an hour to her. I responded to her invitation. This is the important secret which the good nun had to confide to me: Before expiring; the young Prince had found time to interview his faithful valet de chambre behind his curtains. “After my death,” said he, “you will repair, not to the King, my father, but to Madame la Marquise de Montespan, who has given me a thousand proofs of kindness in my behalf. You will remit to her my casket, in which all my private papers are kept. She will be kind enough to destroy all which ought not to survive me, and to hand over the remainder, not to my good mother, who will have only too much sorrow, but to Madame la Princesse de Conti, whose indulgence and kindness are known to me.”

Sydney, this valet de chambre, informed me that the Count was dead, not through excessive brandy, as the Dauphin’s people spread abroad, but from a cerebral fever, which a copious bleeding would have dissipated at once. All the soldiers wept for this young Prince, whose generous affability had charmed them. Sydney had just accompanied his body to Arras, where, by royal command, it had been laid in a vault of the cathedral. I opened his pretty casket of citron wood, with locks of steel and silver. The first object which met my eyes was a fine and charming portrait of Madame de la Valliere. The face was smiling in the midst of this great tragedy, and that upset me entirely, and made my tears flow again. Five or six tales of M. la Fontaine had been imitated most elegantly by the young Prince himself, and to these rather frivolous verses he had joined some songs and madrigals. All these little relics of a youth so eager to live betokened a mind that was agreeable, and not libertine. In any case the sacrifice was accomplished; reflections were in vain. I burned these papers, and all those which seemed to me without direct importance or striking interest. That was not the case with a correspondence, full of wit, tenderness, and fire, of whose origin the good Sydney pretended ignorance, but which two or three anecdotes that were related sufficiently revealed to me. The handsome Comte de Vermandois, barely seventeen years old, had won the heart of a fair lady, of about his own age, who expressed her passion for him with an energy, a delicacy, and a talent far beyond all that we admire in books.

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I knew her; the King loved her. Her husband, a most distinguished field-officer, cherished her and believed her to be faithful. I burned this dangerous correspondence, for M. de Vermandois, barely adolescent, was already a father, and his mistress gloried in it.

On receiving this casket, in which she saw once more the portraits of her mother, her brother, and her husband, Madame la Princesse de Conti felt the most sorrowful emotion. I told her that I had acquitted myself, out of kindness and respect, of a commission almost beyond my strength, and I begged her never to mention it to the King, who, perhaps, would have liked to see and judge himself all that I had destroyed.

M. le Comte de Vermandois left by his death the post of High Admiral vacant. The King begged me to bring him my little Comte de Toulouse; and passing round his neck a fine chain of coral mixed with pearls, to which a diamond anchor was attached, he invested him with the dignity of High Admiral of France. “Be ever prudent and good, my amiable child,” he said to him, raising his voice, which had grown weak; “be happier than your predecessor, and never give me the grief of mourning your loss.”

I thanked the King for my son, who looked at his decoration of brilliants and did not feel its importance. I hope that he will feel that later, and prove himself worthy of it.

CHAPTER XLVI.

The House of Saint Cyr.—Petition of the Monks of Saint Denis to the King, against the Plan of Madame de Maintenon.—Madame de Maintenon Summons Them and Sends Them Away with Small Consolation.

At the time when I founded my little community of Saint Joseph, Madame de Maintenon had already collected near her chateau at Rueil a certain number of well-born but poor young persons, to whom she was giving a good education, proportioned to their present condition and their birth. She had charged herself with the maintenance of two former nuns, noble and well educated, who, at the fall of their community, had been recommended, or had procured a recommendation, to her. Mesdames de Brinon and du Basque were these two vagrant nuns. Madame de Maintenon, instinctively attracted to this sort of persons, welcomed and protected them.

The little pension or community of Rueil, having soon become known, several families who had fallen into distress or difficulty solicited the kindness of the directress towards their daughters, and Madame de Maintenon admitted more inmates than the space allowed. A more roomy habitation was bought nearer Versailles, which was still only temporary and the King, having been taken into confidence with regard to these little girls, who mostly belonged to his own impoverished officers, judged that the moment

had come to found a fine and large educational establishment for the young ladies of his nobility.

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He bought, at the entrance to the village of Saint Cyr, in close proximity to Versailles, a large old chateau, belonging to M. Seguier; and on the site of this chateau, which he pulled down, the royal house of Saint Cyr was speedily erected. I will not go into the nature and aim of a foundation which is known nowadays through the whole of Europe. I will content myself with observing that if Madame de Maintenon conceived the first idea of it, it is the great benefactions of the monarch and the profound recognition of the nobility which have given stability and renown to this house.

Madame de Maintenon received much praise and incense as the foundress of this community. It has been quite easy for her to found so vast an establishment with the treasures of France, since she herself had remained poor, by her own confession, and had neither to sell nor encumber Maintenon, her sole property.

In founding my community of Saint Joseph, I was neither seconded nor aided by anybody. Saint Joseph springs entirely from myself, from good intentions, without noise or display. Saint Joseph is one of my good actions, and although it makes no great noise in the world, I would rather have founded it than Saint Cyr, where the most exalted houses procure admission for their children with false certificates of poverty.

The buildings of Saint Cyr, in spite of all the sums they have absorbed, have no external nobility or grandeur. The foundress put upon it the seal of her parsimony, or, rather, of her general timidity. She is like Moliere's Harpagon, who would like to do great things for little money.

[Here Madame de Montespan forgets what she has just said, that Saint-Cyr cost "immense sums,"—an ordinary effect of passion.—*Ed*. *Note*]

The only beauty about the house is in the laundry and gardens. All the rest reminds you of a convent of Capuchins. The chapel has not even necessary and indispensable dignity; it is a long, narrow barn, without arches, pillars, or decorations. The King, having wished to know beforehand what revenue would be needed for a community of four hundred persons, consulted M. de Louvois. That minister, accustomed to calculate open-handedly, put in an estimate of five hundred thousand livres a year. The foundress presented hers, which came to no more than twenty-five thousand crowns. His Majesty adopted a middle course, and assigned a revenue of three hundred thousand livres to his Royal House of Saint Cyr.

The foundress, foreseeing the financial embarrassments which have supervened later, conceived the idea of making the clergy (who are childless) support the education of these three hundred and fifty young ladies. In consequence, she cast her eyes upon the rich abbey of Saint Denis, then vacant, and suggested it to the King, as being almost sufficient to provide for the new establishment.

This idea astonished the prince. He found it, at first, audacious, not to say perilous; but, on further reflection, considering that the monks of Saint Denis live under the rule of a prior, and never see their abbot, who is almost always a great noble and a man of the world, his Majesty consented to suppress the said abbey in order to provide for the children.

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The monks of Saint Denis, alarmed at such an innovation (which did not, however, affect their own goods and revenues), composed a petition in the form of the factum that our advocates draw up in a suit. They exclaimed in this document "on the disrepute which this innovation would bring upon their ancient, respectable, and illustrious community. In suppressing the title of Abbot of Saint Denis," they said further, "your Majesty, in reality, suppresses our abbey; and if our abbey is reduced to nothing, our basilica, where the Kings, your ancestors, lie, will be no more than a royal church, and will cease to be abbatial."

Further on, this petition said: "Sire, may it please your Majesty, whose eyes can see so far, to appreciate this innovation in all its terrible consequences. By striking to-day dissolution and death into the first abbey of your kingdom, do you not fear to leave behind you a great and sinister precedent? . . . What Louis the Great has looked upon as possible will seem righteous and necessary to your successors; and it will happen, maybe, before long, that the thirst for conquests and the needs of the State (those constant and familiar pretexts of ministers) will authorise some political Attila to extend your work, and wreak destruction upon the tabernacle by depriving it of the splendour which is its due, and which sustains it."

Madame de Maintenon, to whom this affair was entrusted, summoned the administrative monks of Saint Denis to Versailles. She received them with her agreeable and seductive courtesy, and, putting on her dulcet and fluted voice, said to them that their alarm was without foundation; that his Majesty did not suppress their abbey; that he simply took it from the male sex to give it to the female, seeing that the Salic law never included the dignities of the Church nor her revenues.

"The King leaves you," she added, "those immense and prodigious treasures of Saint Denis, more ancient, perhaps, than the Oriflamme. That is your finest property, your true and illustrious glory. In general, your abbots have been, to this very day, unknown to you. Do you find, gentlemen, that religion was more honoured and respected when men of battle, covered with murders and other crimes, were called Abbots of Saint Denis? Beneath the government of the King such nominations would never have affected the Church; and after the present M. le Chevalier de Lorraine, we shall hear no more of nominating an abbot-commandant on the steps of the Opera.

"Our little girls are cherubim and seraphim, occupied unceasingly with the praise of the Lord. I recommend them to your holy prayers, and you can count on theirs."

With this compliment she dismissed the monks, and what she had resolved on was carried out.

The King, who all his life had loved children greatly, did not take long to contract an affection for this budding colony. He liked to assist sometimes at their recreations and exercises, and, as though Versailles had been at the other end of the world, he had a

magnificent apartment built at Saint Cyr. This fine armorial pavilion decorates the first long court in the centre. The mere buildings announce a king; the royal crown surmounts them.

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At first the education of Saint Cyr had been entrusted to canonesses; but a canoness only takes annual vows; that term expired, she is at liberty to retire and marry. Several of these ladies having proved thus irresolute as to their estate, and the house being afraid that a greater number would follow, the Abbe de Fenelon, who cannot endure limited or temporary devotion, thought fit to introduce fixed and perpetual vows into Saint Cyr, and that willynilly.

This elegant abbe says all that he means, and resolutely means all that he can say. By means of his lectures, a mixed and facile form of eloquence, which is his glory, he easily proved to these poor canonesses that streams and rivers flow ever since the world began, and never think of suspending their current or abandoning their direction. He reminded them that the sun, which is always in its place and always active, never dreams of abandoning its functions, either from inconstancy or caprice. He told them that wise kings are never seized with the idea or temptation of abdicating their crown, and that God, who serves them as a model and example, is ceaselessly occupied, with relation to the world, in preserving, reanimating, and maintaining it. Starting from there, the ingenious man made them confess that they ought to remain at their post and bind themselves to it by a perpetual vow.

The first effect of this fine oration having been a little dissipated, objections broke out. One young and lovely canoness dared to maintain the rights of her freedom, even in the face of her most amiable enemy. Madame de Maintenon rushed to the succour of the Abbe of Saint Sulpice, and half by wheedling, half by tyranny, obtained the cloister and perpetual vows.

I must render this justice to the King; he never would pronounce or intervene in this pathetic struggle. His royal hand profited, no doubt, by a submission which the Abbe de Fenelon imposed upon timidity, credulity, and obedience. The House of Saint Cyr profited thereby; but the King only regretted a new religious convent, for, as a rule, he liked them not. How many times has he unburdened himself before me on the subject.

CHAPTER XLVII.

Final Rupture.—Terrible Scene.—Madame de Maintenon in the Brocaded Chair.

To-day, when time and reflection, and, perhaps, that fund of contempt which is so useful, have finally revealed to me the insurmountable necessities of life, I can look with a certain amount of composure at the; injury which the King did me. I had at first resolved to conclude, with the chapter which you have just read, my narrative of the more or less important things which have passed or been unfolded before my eyes. For long I did not feel myself strong enough to approach a narrative which might open up all my old wounds and make my blood boil again; but I finished by considering that our monarch’s reign will

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be necessarily the subject of a multitude of commentaries, journals, and memoirs. All these confidential writings will speak of me to the generations to be; some will paint me as one paints an object whom one loves; others, as the object one detests. The latter, to render me more odious, will probably revile my character, and, perhaps, represent me as a cowardly and despairing mistress, who has descended even to supplications!! It is my, part, therefore, to retrace with a firm and vigorous hand this important epoch of my life, where my destiny, at once kind and cruel, reduced me to treat the greatest of all Kings both as my equal and as an inconstant friend, as a treacherous enemy, and as my inferior or subject. He had, at first, the intention of putting me to death,—of that I am persuaded,—but soon his natural gentleness got the better of his pride. He grasped the wounds in my heart from the deplorable commotion of my face. If his former friend was guilty in her speech, he was far more guilty by his actions. Like an equitable judge he pardoned neither of us; he did not forgive himself and he dared not condemn me.

Since this sad time of desertion and sorrow, into which the new state of things had brought me, *mm*. de Mortemart, de Nevers, and de Vivonne had been glad to avoid me. They found my humour altered, and I admit that a woman who sulks, scolds, or complains is not very attractive company.

One day the poor Marechal de Vivonne came to see me; he opened my shutters to call my attention to the beauty of the sky, and, my health seeming to him a trifle poor, he suggested to me to embark at once in his carriage and to go and dine at Clagny. I had no will left that day, so I accompanied my brother.

Being come to Clagny, the Marshal, having shut himself up with me in his closet, said to me the words which follow:

“You know, my, sister, how all along you have been dear to me; the grief which is wearing you out does me almost as much harm as you. To-day I wish to hurt you for your own good; and get you away from this locality in spite of yourself. Kings are not to be opposed as we oppose our equals; our King, whom you know by heart, has never suffered contradiction. He has had you asked, two or three times already, to leave his palace and to go and live on your estates. Why do you delay to satisfy him, and to withdraw from so many eyes which watch you with pity?”

“The King, I am very sure, would like to see me away,” I replied to the Marshal, “but he has never formally expressed himself, and it is untrue that any such wish has been intimated or insinuated to me.”

“What! you did not receive two letters last year, which invited you to make up your mind and retire!”

“I received two anonymous letters; nothing is more true. Could those two letters have been sent to me by the King himself?”

“The Marquis de Chamarante wrote them to you, but beneath the eyes, and at the dictation, of his Majesty.”

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“All, God! What is it you tell me? What! the Marquis de Chamarante, whom I thought one of my friends, has lent himself to such an embassy!”

“The Marquis is a good man, a man of honour; and his essential duty is to please his sovereign, his master. Moreover, at the time when the letters were sent you, time remained to you for deliberation. To-day, all time for delay has expired; you must go away of your own free will, or receive the affront of a command, and a ‘lettre de cachet’ in form.”

“A ‘lettre de cachet’ for me! for the mother of the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse! We shall see that, my brother! We shall see!”

“There is nothing to see or do but to summon here all your people, and leave to-morrow, either for my chateau of Roissy, or for your palace at Petit-Bourg; things are pressing, and the day after to-morrow I will explain all without any secrecy.”

“Explain it to me at once, my brother, and I promise to satisfy you.”

“Do you give me your word?”

“I give it you, my good and dear friend, with pleasure. Inform me of what is in progress.”

“Madame de Maintenon, whom, having loved once greatly, you no longer love, had the kindness to have me summoned to her this morning.”

“The kindness!”

“Do not interrupt me—yes, the kindness. From the moment that she is in favour, all that comes from her requires consideration. She had me taken into her small salon, and there she charged me to tell you that she has always loved you, that she always will; that your rupture with her has displeased the King; that for a long time, and on a thousand occasions, she has excused you to his Majesty, but that things are now hopeless; that your retreat is required at all costs, and that it will be joined with an annual pension of six hundred thousand livres.”

“And you advise me—?” I said to my brother.

“I advise you, I implore you, I conjure you, to accept these propositions which save everything.”

My course was clear to me on the instant. Wishing to be relieved of the importunities of the Marshal (a courtier, if ever there was one), I embraced him with tears in my eyes. I assured him that, for the honour of the family and out of complacence, I accepted his propositions. I begged him to take me back to Versailles, where I had to gather together my money, jewels, and papers.

The Duc de Vivonne, well as he knew me, did not suspect my trickery; he applied a score of kisses to my “pretty little white hands,” and his postilions, giving free play to their reins, speedily brought us back to the chateau.

All beaming with joy and satisfaction, he went to convey his reply to Madame de Maintenon, who was probably expecting him. Twenty minutes hardly elapsed. The King himself entered my apartment.

He came towards me with a friendly air, and, hardly remarking my agitation, which I was suppressing, he dared to address the following words to me:

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“The shortest follies are the best, dear Marquise; you see things at last as they should be seen. Your determination, which the Marechal de Vivonne has just informed me of, gives me inexpressible pleasure; you are going to take the step of a clever woman, and everybody will applaud you for it. It will be eighteen years to-morrow since we took a fancy for each other. We were then in that period of life when one sees only that which flatters, and the satisfaction of the heart surpasses everything. Our attachment, if it had been right and legitimate, might have begun with the same ardour, but it could not have endured so long; that is the property of all contested affections.

“From our union amiable children have been born, for whom I have done, and will do, all that a father with good intentions can do. The Act which acknowledged them in full Parliament has not named you as their mother, because your bonds prevented it, but these respectful children know that they owe you their existence, and not one of them shall forget it while I live.

“You have charmed by your wit and the liveliness of your character the busiest years of my life and reign. That pleasant memory will never leave me, and separated though we be, as good sense and propriety of every kind demands, we shall still belong to each other in thought. Athenais will always be to me the mother of my, dear children. I have been mindful up to this day, to increase at different moments the amount of your fortune: I believe it to be considerable, and wish, nevertheless, to add to it even more. If the pension that Vivonne had just suggested to you appear insufficient, two lines from your pen will notify me that I must increase it.

“Your children being proclaimed Princes of France, the Court will be their customary residence, but you will see them frequently, and can count on my commands. Here they are coming,—not to say good-bye to you, but, as of old, to embrace you on the eve of a journey.

“If you are prudent, you will write first to the Marquis de Montespan, not to annul and revoke the judicial and legal separation which exists, but to inform him of your return to reasonable ideas, and of your resolve to be reconciled with the public.”

With these words the King ceased speaking. I looked at him with a fixed gaze; a long sigh escaped from my heaving breast, and I had with him, as nearly as I can remember, the following conversation:

“I admire the sang-froid with which a prince who believes himself, and is believed by the whole universe, to be magnanimous, gives the word of dismissal to the tender friend of his youth,—to that friend who, by a misfortune which is too well known, knew how to leave all and love him alone.

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“From the day when the friendship which had united us cooled and was dissipated, you have resumed with regard to me that distance which your rank authorises you, and on my side, I have submitted to see in you only my King. This revolution has taken effect without any shock, or noise, or scandal. It has continued for two years already; why should it not continue in the same manner until the moment when my last two children no longer require my eyes, and presence, and care? What sudden cause, what urgent motive, can determine you to exclude me? Does not, then, the humiliation which I have suffered for two years any longer satisfy your aversion?”

“What!” cried the prince, in consternation, “is your resolution no longer the same? Do you go back upon what you promised to your brother?”

“I do not change my resolution,” I resumed at once; “the places which you inhabit have neither charm nor attraction for my heart, which has always detested treachery and falseness. I consent to withdraw myself from your person, but on condition that the odious intriguer who has supplanted me shall follow the unhappy benefactress who once opened to her the doors of this palace. I took her from a state of misery, and she plunges daggers into my breast.”

“The Kings of Europe,” said the prince, white with agitation and anger, “have not yet laid down the law to me in my palace; you shall not make me submit to yours, madame. The person whom, for far too long, you have been offending and humiliating before my eyes, has ancestors who yield in nothing to your forefathers, and if you have introduced her to this palace, you have introduced here goodness, sweetness, talent, and virtue itself. This enemy, whom you defame in every quarter, and who every day excuses and justifies you, will abide near this throne, which her fathers have defended and which her good counsel now defends. In sending you today from a Court where your presence is without motive and pretext, I wished to keep from your knowledge, and in kindness withdraw from your eyes an event likely to irritate you, since everything irritates you. Stay, madame, stay, since great catastrophes appeal to and amuse you; after to-morrow you will be more than ever a supernumerary in this chateau.”

At these words I realised that it was a question of the public triumph of my rival. All my firmness vanished; my heart was, as it were, distorted with the most rapid palpitations. I felt an icy coldness run through my veins, and I fell unconscious upon my carpet.

My woman cameo to bring me help, and when my senses returned, I heard the King saying to my intendant: “All this wearies me beyond endurance; she must go this very day.”

“Yes, I will go,” I cried, seizing a dessert-knife which was on my bureau. I rushed forward with a mechanical movement upon my little Comte de Toulouse, whom I snatched from the hands of his father, and I was on the verge of sacrificing this child.

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I shudder every time I think of that terrible and desperate scene. But reason had left me; sorrow filled my soul; I was no longer myself. My reader must be penetrated by my misfortune and have compassion on me.

Madame de Maintenon, informed probably of this storm, arrived and suddenly showed herself. To rush forward, snatch away the dagger and my child was but one movement for her. Her tears coursed in abundance; and the King, leaning on the marble of my chimney-piece, shed tears and seemed to feel a sort of suffocation.

My women had removed my children. My intendant alone had remained in the deep embrasure of a shutter; the poor man had affliction and terror painted on his face. Madame de Maintenon had slightly wounded herself in seizing my knife. I saw her tearing her handkerchief, putting on lavender water in order to moisten the bandage. As she left me she took my hand with an air of kindness, and her tears began again.

The King, seeing her go out, retired without addressing me a word. I might call as much as I would; he did not return.

Until nightfall I seemed to be in a state of paralysis. My arms were like lead; my will could no longer stir them. I was distressed at first, and then I thanked God, who was delivering me from the torments of existence. All night my body and soul moved in the torrent and waves of a fever handed over to phantoms; I saw in turn the smiling plains of Paradise and the dire domain of Hell. My children, covered with wounds, asked me for pardon, kneeling before me; and Madame de Maintenon, one mass of blood, reproached me for having killed her.

On the following day a copious blood-letting, prescribed by my doctor, relieved my head and heart.

The following week Madame de Maintenon, entirely cured of her scratch, consented to the King's will, which she had opposed in order to excite it, and in the presence of the Marquis and Marquise de Montchevreuil, the Duc de Noailles, the Marquis de Chamarante, M. Bontems, and Mademoiselle Ninon, her permanent chambermaid, was married to the King of France and Navarre in the chapel of the chateau.

The Abbe de Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, assisted by the Bishop of Chartres and Pere de la Chaise, had the honour of blessing this marriage and presenting the rings of gold. After the ceremony, which took place at an early hour, and even by torchlight, there was a slight repast in the small apartments. The same persons, taking carriages, then repaired to Maintenon, where the great ceremony, the mass, and all that is customary in such cases were celebrated.

At her return, Madame de Maintenon took possession of an extremely sumptuous apartment that had been carefully arranged and furnished for her. Her people continued

to wear her livery, but she scarcely ever rode any more except in the great carriage of the King, where we saw her in the place which had been occupied by the Queen. In her interior the title of Majesty was given her; and the King, when he had to speak of her, only used the word Madame, without adding Maintenon, that having become too familiar and trivial.

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He was desirous of proclaiming her; she consistently opposed it, and this prudent and wise conduct regained for her, little by little, the opinions which had been shocked.

A few days after the marriage, my health being somewhat reestablished, I went to Petit-Bourg; but the Marechal de Vivonne, his son Louis de Vivonne, all the Mortemarts, all the Rochehouarts, Thianges, Damas, Seignelays, Blainvilles, and Colberts,—in a word, counts, marquises, barons, prelates, and duchesses, came to find me and attack me in my desert, in order to represent to me that, since Madame de Maintenon was the wife of the monarch, I owed her my homage and respectful compliments. The whole family has done so, said these cruel relations; you only have not yet fulfilled this duty. You must do it, in God's name. She has neither airs nor hauteur; you will be marvellously well received. Your resistance would compromise us all.

Not desiring to harm or displease my family, and wishing, above all, to reinstate myself somewhat in the King's mind, I resolutely prepared for this distressing journey, and God gave me the necessary strength to execute it.

I appeared in a long robe of gold and silver before the new spouse of the monarch. The King, who was sitting at a table, rose for a moment and encouraged me by his greeting. I made the three pauses and three reverences as I gradually approached Madame de Maintenon, who occupied a large and rich armchair of brocade. She did not rise; etiquette forbade it, and principally the presence of the all-powerful King of kings. Her complexion, ordinarily pale, and with a very slight tone of pink, was animated suddenly, and took all the colours of the rose. She made me a sign to seat myself on a stool, and it seemed to me that her amiable gaze apologised to me. She spoke to me of Petit-Bourg, of the waters of Bourbon, of her country-place, of my children, and said to me, smiling kindly: "I am going to confide in you. Monsieur le Prince has already asked Mademoiselle de Names for his grandson, M. le Duc de Bourbon, and his Highness promises us his granddaughter for our Duc du Maine. Two or three years more, and we shall see all that."

After half an hour spent thus, I rose from this uncomfortable stool and made my farewell reverences. Madame de Maintenon, profiting by the King having leaned over to write, rose five or six inches in her chair, and said to me these words: "Do not let us cease to love one another, I implore you."

I went to rest myself in the poor apartment which was still mine, since the keys had not yet been returned, and I sent for M. le Duc du Maine, who said to me coldly: "I have much pleasure in seeing you again; we were going to write to you."

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I had come out from Madame de Maintenon by the door of mirrors, which leads to the great gallery. There was much company there at the moment; M. le Prince de Salm came to me and said: “Go and put on your peignoir; you are flushed, and I can perfectly well understand why.” He pressed my hand affectionately. In all the salons they were eager to see me pass. Some courageous persons came even within touch of my fan; and all were more or less pleased with my mishap and downfall. I had seen all these figures at my feet, and almost all were under obligations to me. I left Versailles again very early. When I was seated in my carriage I noticed the King, who, from the height of his balcony in the court of marble, watched me set off and disappear.

I settled at Paris, where my personal interest and my great fortune gave me an existence which many might have envied. I never returned to Versailles, except for the weddings of my eldest daughter, and of my son, the Serious;—[Louis Augusts de Bourbon, Duc du Maine, a good man, somewhat devout and melancholy. (See the Memoirs of Dubois and Richelieu.)—*Editor’s note*.]—I always loved him better than he did me.

Pere de Latour, my director, obtained from me then, what I had refused hitherto to everybody, a letter of reconciliation to M. le Marquis de Montespan: I had foreseen the reply, which was that of an obstinate, ill-bred, and evil man.

Pere de Latour, going further, wished to impose hard, not to say murderous, penances on me; I begged him to keep within bounds, and not to make me impatient. This Oratorian and his admirers have stated that I wore a hair shirt and shroud. Pious slanders, every word of them! I give many pensions and alms, that is to say, I do good to several families; the good that I bestow about me will be more agreeable to God than any harm I could do myself, and that I maintain.

The Marquis d’Antin, my son, since my disgrace.....

Here end the memoirs of madame de Montespan.

THE ETEXT EDITOR’S BOOKMARKS:

All the death-in-life of a convent
Always sold at a loss which must be sold at a given moment
Ambition puts a thick bandage over the eyes
And then he would go off, laughing in his sleeve
Armed with beauty and sarcasm
Cannot reconcile themselves to what exists
Conduct of the sort which cements and revives attachments

Console me on the morrow for what had troubled me to-day
Cuddlings and caresses of decrepitude
Depicting other figures she really portrays her own
Domestics included two nurses, a waiting-maid, a physician
Extravagant, without the means to be so
Grow like a dilapidated house; I am only here to repair myself
Happy with him as a woman who takes her husband's place can be
Hate me, but fear me
He contradicted me about trifles

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He was not fool enough for his place
I myself being the first to make merry at it (my plainness)
In the great world, a vague promise is the same as a refusal
In Rome justice and religion always rank second to politics
In ill-assorted unions, good sense or good nature must intervene
In England a man is the absolute proprietor of his wife
Intimacy, once broken, cannot be renewed
It is easier to offend me than to deceive me
Jealous without motive, and almost without love
Kings only desire to be obeyed when they command
Knew how to point the Bastille cannon at the troops of the King
Laws will only be as so many black lines on white paper
Love-affair between Mademoiselle de la Valliere and the King
Madame de Sevigne
Madame de Montespan had died of an attack of coquetry
Not show it off was as if one only possessed a kennel
Permissible neither to applaud nor to hiss
Poetry without rhapsody
Present princes and let those be scandalised who will!
Respectful without servility
Satire without bitterness
Says all that he means, and resolutely means all that he can say
She awaits your replies without interruption
Situations in life where we are condemned to see evil done
Talent without artifice
That Which Often It is Best to Ignore
The King replied that “too much was too much”
The monarch suddenly enough rejuvenated his attire
The pulpit is in want of comedians; they work wonders there
Then comes discouragement; after that, habit
There is an exaggeration in your sorrow
These liars in surplice, in black cassock, or in purple
Time, the irresistible healer
Trust not in kings
Violent passion had changed to mere friendship
Weeping just as if princes had not got to die like anybody else
Went so far as to shed tears, his most difficult feat of all
What they need is abstinence, prohibitions, thwartings
When women rule their reign is always stormy and troublous
When one has seen him, everything is excusable

When one has been pretty, one imagines that one is still so
Wife: property or of furniture, useful to his house
Wish you had the generosity to show, now and again, less wit
Women who misconduct themselves are pitiless and severe
Won for himself a great name and great wealth by words
Would you like to be a cardinal? I can manage that
You know, madame, that he generally gets everything he wants