

Memoirs of Louis XIV and His Court and of the Regency — Volume 01 eBook

Memoirs of Louis XIV and His Court and of the Regency — Volume 01 by Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Memoirs of Louis XIV and His Court and of the Regency — Volume 01 eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	4
Page 1.....	5
Page 2.....	6
Page 3.....	8
Page 4.....	10
Page 5.....	12
Page 6.....	14
Page 7.....	16
Page 8.....	18
Page 9.....	20
Page 10.....	22
Page 11.....	23
Page 12.....	25
Page 13.....	27
Page 14.....	29
Page 15.....	31
Page 16.....	33
Page 17.....	35
Page 18.....	37
Page 19.....	39
Page 20.....	40
Page 21.....	42
Page 22.....	43

Page 23.....	45
Page 24.....	47
Page 25.....	49
Page 26.....	50
Page 27.....	51
Page 28.....	53
Page 29.....	54
Page 30.....	55
Page 31.....	56
Page 32.....	57
Page 33.....	58
Page 34.....	59
Page 35.....	60
Page 36.....	61
Page 37.....	62
Page 38.....	63
Page 39.....	65
Page 40.....	67
Page 41.....	69

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
SECTION I.		1
SECTION II.—LOUIS XIV.		12
SECTION III.—MADEMOISELLE DE FONTANGE.		24
SECTION IV.—MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.		25
SECTION V.—MADAME DE MONTESPAN		27
SECTION VI.—MADAME DE MAINTENON.		29
SECTION VII.—THE QUEEN—CONSORT OF LOUIS XIV.		39
ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:		41

Page 1

SECTION I.

If my father had loved me as well as I loved him he would never have sent me into a country so dangerous as this, to which I came through pure obedience and against my own inclination. Here duplicity passes for wit, and frankness is looked upon as folly. I am neither cunning nor mysterious. I am often told I lead too monotonous a life, and am asked why I do not take a part in certain affairs. This is frankly the reason: I am old; I stand more in need of repose than of agitation, and I will begin nothing that I cannot, easily finish. I have never learned to govern; I am not conversant with politics, nor with state affairs, and I am now too far advanced in years to learn things so difficult. My son, I thank God, has sense enough, and can direct these things without me; besides, I should excite too much the jealousy of his wife—[Marie-Francoise de Bourbon, the legitimate daughter of Louis XIV. and of Madame de Montespan, Duchesse d'Orleans.]—and his eldest daughter,—[Marie-Louise-Elizabeth d'Orleans, married on the 17th of July, 1710, to Charles of France, Duc de Berri.]—whom he loves better than me; eternal quarrels would ensue, which would not at all suit my views. I have been tormented enough, but I have always forborne, and have endeavoured to set a proper example to my, son's wife and his daughter; for this kingdom has long had the misfortune to be too much governed by women, young and old. It is high time that men should now assume the sway, and this is the reason which has determined me not to intermeddle. In England, perhaps, women may reign without inconvenience; in France, men alone should do so, in order that things may go on well. Why should I torment myself by day and by night? I seek only peace and repose; all that were mine are dead. For whom should I care? My time is past. I must try to live smoothly that I may die tranquilly; and in great public affairs it is difficult, indeed, to preserve one's conscience spotless.

I was born at Heidelberg (1652), in the seventh month. I am unquestionably very ugly; I have no features; my eyes are small, my nose is short and thick, my lips long and flat. These do not constitute much of a physiognomy. I have great hanging cheeks and a large face; my stature is short and stout; my body and my thighs, too, are short, and, upon the whole, I am truly a very ugly little object. If I had not a good heart, no one could endure me. To know whether my eyes give tokens of my possessing wit, they must be examined with a microscope, or it will be difficult to judge. Hands more ugly than mine are not perhaps to be found on the whole globe. The King has often told me so, and has made me laugh at it heartily; for, not being able to flatter even myself that I possessed any one thing which could be called pretty, I resolved to be the first to laugh at my own ugliness; this has succeeded as well as I could have wished, and I must confess

Page 2

that I have seldom been at a loss for something to laugh at. I am naturally somewhat melancholy; when anything happens to afflict me, my left side swells up as if it were filled with water. I am not good at lying in bed; as soon as I awake I must get up. I seldom breakfast, and then only on bread and butter. I take neither chocolate, nor coffee, nor tea, not being able to endure those foreign drugs. I am German in all my habits, and like nothing in eating or drinking which is not conformable to our old customs. I eat no soup but such as I can take with milk, wine, or beer. I cannot bear broth; whenever I eat anything of which it forms a part, I fall sick instantly, my body swells, and I am tormented with colics. When I take broth alone, I am compelled to vomit, even to blood, and nothing can restore the tone to my stomach but ham and sausages.

I never had anything like French manners, and I never could assume them, because I always considered it an honour to be born a German, and always cherished the maxims of my own country, which are seldom in favor here. In my youth I loved swords and guns much better than toys. I wished to be a boy, and this desire nearly cost me my life; for, having heard that Marie Germain had become a boy by dint of jumping, I took such terrible jumps that it is a miracle I did not, on a hundred occasions, break my neck. I was very gay in my youth, for which reason I was called, in German, Rauschenplatten-gnecht. The Dauphins of Bavaria used to say, "My poor dear mamma" (so she used always to address me), "where do you pick up all the funny things you know?"

I remember the birth of the King of England

[George Louis, Duke of Brunswick Hanover, born the 28th of May, 1660; proclaimed King of England the 12th of August, 1714, by the title of George I.]

as well as if it were only yesterday (1720). I was curious and mischievous. They had put a doll in a rosemary bush for the purpose of making me believe it was the child of which my aunt

[Sophia of Bavaria, married, in 1658, to the Elector of Hanover, was the paternal aunt of Madame. She was the granddaughter of James I, and was thus declared the first in succession to the crown of England, by Act of Parliament, 23rd March, 1707.]

had just lain in; at the same moment I heard the cries of the Electress, who was then in the pains of childbirth. This did not agree with the story which I had been told of the baby in the rosemary bush; I pretended, however, to believe it, but crept to my aunt's chamber as if I was playing at hide-and-seek with little Bulau and Haxthausen, and concealed myself behind a screen which was placed before the door and near the



chimney. When the newly born infant was brought to the fire I issued from my hiding-place. I deserved to be flogged, but in honour of the happy event I got quit for a scolding.

Page 3

The monks of the Convent of Ibourg, to revenge themselves for my having unintentionally betrayed them by telling their Abbot that they had been fishing in a pond under my window, a thing expressly forbidden by the Abbot, once poured out white wine for me instead of water. I said, "I do not know what is the matter with this water; the more of it I put into my wine the stronger it becomes." The monks replied that it was very good wine. When I got up from the table to go into the garden, I should have fallen into the pond if I had not been held up; I threw myself upon the ground and fell fast asleep immediately. I was then carried into my chamber and put to bed. I did not awake until nine o'clock in the evening, when I remembered all that had passed. It was on a Holy Thursday; I complained to the Abbot of the trick which had been played me by the monks, and they were put into prison. I have often been laughed at about this Holy Thursday.

My aunt, our dear Electress (of Hanover), being at the Hague, did not visit the Princess Royal;

[Maria-Henrietta Stuart, daughter of Charles I. of England, and of Henriette-Marie of France, married, in 1660, to William of Nassau, Prince of Orange; she lost her husband in 1660, and was left pregnant with William-Henry of Nassau, Prince of Orange, and afterwards, by the Revolution of 1688, King of England. This Princess was then preceptress of her son, the Stadtholder of Holland.]

but the Queen of Bohemia

[Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of James I. of England, widow of Frederic V., Duke of Bavaria, Count Palatine of the Rhine, King of Bohemia until the year 1621, mother of the Duchess of Hanover.]

did, and took me with her. Before I set out, my aunt said to me, "Lizette, now take care not to behave as you do in general, and do not wander away so that you cannot be found; follow the Queen step by step, so that she may not have to wait for you."

I replied, "Oh, aunt, you shall hear how well I will behave myself."

When we arrived at the Princess Royal's, whom I did not know, I saw her son, whom I had often played with; after having gazed for a long time at his mother without knowing who she was, I went back to see if I could find any one to tell me what was this lady's name. Seeing only the Prince of Orange, I accosted him thus,—

"Pray, tell me who is that woman with so tremendous a nose?"

He laughed and answered, "That is the Princess Royal, my mother."

I was quite stupefied. That I might compose myself, Mademoiselle Heyde took me with the Prince into the Princess's bedchamber, where we played at all sorts of games. I



had told them to call me when the Queen should be ready to go, and we were rolling upon a Turkey carpet when I was summoned; I arose in great haste and ran into the hall; the Queen was already in the antechamber. Without losing a moment, I seized the robe of the Princess Royal, and, making her a low curtsy, at the same moment I placed myself directly before her, and followed the Queen step by step to her carriage; everybody was laughing, but I had no notion of what it was at. When we returned home, the Queen went to find my aunt, and, seating herself upon the bed, burst into a loud laugh.

Page 4

“Lizette,” said she, “has made a delightful visit.” And then she told all that I had done, which made the Electress laugh even more than the Queen. She called me to her and said,—

“Lizette, you have done right; you have revenged us well for the haughtiness of the Princess.”

My brother would have had me marry the Margrave of Dourlach, but I had no inclination towards him because he was affected, which I never could bear. He knew very well that I was not compelled to refuse him, for he was married long before they thought of marrying me to Monsieur. Still he thought fit to send to me a Doctor of Dourlach, for the purpose of asking me whether he ought to obey his father and marry the Princess of Holstein. I replied that he could not do better than to obey his father; that he had promised me nothing, nor had I pledged myself to him; but that, nevertheless, I was obliged to him for the conduct he had thought fit to adopt. This is all that passed between us.

Once they wanted to give me to the Duke of Courlande; it was my aunt d’Hervod who wished to make that match. He was in love with Marianne, the daughter of Duke Ulric of Wurtemberg; but his father and mother would not allow him to marry her because they had fixed their eyes on me. When, however, he came back from France on his way home, I made such an impression on him that he would not hear of marriage, and requested permission to join the army.

I once received a very sharp scolding in a short journey from Mannheim to Heidelberg. I was in the carriage with my late father, who had with him an envoy, from the Emperor, the Count of Konigseck. At this time I was as thin and light as I am now fat and heavy. The jolting of the carriage threw me from my seat, and I fell upon the Count; it was not my fault, but I was nevertheless severely rebuked for it, for my father was not a man to be trifled with, and it was always necessary to be very circumspect in his presence.

When I think of conflagrations I am seized with a shivering fit, for I remember how the Palatinate was ravaged for more than three months. Whenever I went to sleep I used to think I saw Heidelberg all in flames; then I used to wake with a start, and I very narrowly escaped an illness in consequence of those outrages.

[The burning of the Palatinate in 1674—a horrible devastation commanded by Louis, and executed by Turenne.]

Upon my arrival in France I was made to hold a conference with three bishops. They all differed in their creeds, and so, taking the quintessence of their opinions, I formed a religion of my own.

It was purely from the affection I bore to her that I refused to take precedence of our late Electress; but making always a wide distinction between her aid and the Duchess of Mecklenbourg, as well as our Electress of Hanover, I did not hesitate to do so with respect to both the latter. I also would not take precedence of my mother. In my childhood I wished to bear her train, but she would never permit me.

Page 5

I have been treated ill ever since my marriage this is in some degree the fault of the Princess Palatine,—[Anne de Gonzague, Princess Palatine, who took so active a part in the troubles of the Fronde.]—who prepared my marriage contract; and it is by the contract that the inheritance is governed. All persons bearing the title of Madame have pensions from the King; but as they have been of the same amount for a great many years past they are no longer sufficient.

I would willingly have married the Prince of Orange, for by that union I might have hoped to remain near my dear Electress (of Hanover).

Upon my arrival at Saint-Germain I felt as if I had fallen from the clouds. The Princess Palatine went to Paris and there fixed me. I put as good a face upon the affair as was possible; I saw very well that I did not please my husband much, and indeed that could not be wondered at, considering my ugliness; however, I resolved to conduct myself in such a manner towards Monsieur that he should become accustomed to me by my attentions, and eventually should be enabled to endure me. Immediately upon my arrival, the King came to see me at the Chateau Neuf, where Monsieur and I lived; he brought with him the Dauphin, who was then a child of about ten years old. As soon as I had finished my toilette the King returned to the old Chateau, where he received me in the Guards' hall, and led me to the Queen, whispering at the same time,—“Do not be frightened, Madame; she will be more afraid of you than you of her.” The King felt so much the embarrassment of my situation that he would not quit me; he sat by my side, and whenever it was necessary for me to rise, that is to say, whenever a Duke or a Prince entered the apartment, he gave me a gentle push in the side without being perceived.

According to the custom of Paris, when a marriage is made, all property is in common; but the husband has the entire control over it. That only which has been brought by way of dowry is taken into the account; for this reason I never knew how much my husband received with me. After his death, when I expected to gain my cause at Rome and to receive some money, the disagreeable old Maintenon asked me in the King's name to promise that if I gained the cause I would immediately cede the half of the property to my son; and in case of refusal I was menaced with the King's displeasure. I laughed at this, and replied that I did not know why they threatened me, for that my son was in the course of nature my heir, but that it was at least just that he should stay until my death before he took possession of my property, and that I knew the King was too equitable to require of me anything but what was consistent with justice. I soon afterwards received the news of the loss of my cause, and I was not sorry for it, on account of the circumstance I have just related.

When the Abby de Tesse had convinced the Pope that his people had decided without having read our papers, and that they had accepted 50,000 crowns from the Grand Duke to pronounce against me, he began weeping, and said, “Am I not an unhappy

man to be obliged to trust such persons?" This will show what sort of a character the Pope was.

Page 6

When I arrived in France I had only an allowance of a hundred louis d'or for my pocket-money; and this money was always consumed in advance. After my mother's death, when my husband received money from the Palatinate, he increased this allowance to two hundred louis; and once, when I was in his good graces, he gave me a thousand louis. Besides this, the King had given me annually one thousand louis up to the year before the marriage of my son. That supported me, but as I would not consent to the marriage I was deprived of this sum, and it has never been restored to me. On my first journey to Fontainebleau, the King would have given me 2,000 pistoles, but that Monsieur begged him to keep half of them for Madame, afterwards the Queen of Spain. —[Marie-Louise d'Orleans, born in 1662, married, in 1679, to Charles II, King of Spain.]

I cared very little about it, and, nevertheless, went to Fontainebleau, where I lost all my money at Hoca. Monsieur told me, for the purpose of vexing me, of the good office he had done me with the King; I only laughed at it, and told him that, if Madame had chosen to accept the thousand pistoles from my hands, I would very freely have given them to her. Monsieur was quite confused at this, and, by way of repairing the offence he had committed, he took upon himself the payment of 600 louis d'or, which I had lost over and above the thousand pistoles.

I receive now only 456,000 francs, which is exactly consumed within the year; if, they could have given me any less they would. I would not be thought to make claims to which I am not entitled, but it should be remembered that Monsieur has had the money of my family.

I was very glad when, after the birth of my daughter,

[Elizabeth-Charlotte d'Orleans, born in 1676, married, in 1697, to the Duc de Lorraine. Philippe d'Orleans, afterwards Regent of France, was born in 1674; there were no other children by this marriage.]

my husband proposed separate beds; for, to tell the truth, I was never very fond of having children. When he proposed it to me, I answered, "Yes, Monsieur, I shall be very well contented with the arrangement, provided you do not hate me, and that you will continue to behave with some kindness to me." He promised, and we were very well satisfied with each other. It was, besides, very disagreeable to sleep with Monsieur; he could not bear any one to touch him when he was asleep, so that I was obliged to lie on the very edge of the bed; whence it sometimes happened that I fell out like a sack. I was therefore enchanted when Monsieur proposed to me in friendly terms, and without any anger, to lie in separate rooms.

I obeyed the late Monsieur by not troubling him with my embraces, and always conducted myself towards him with respect and submission.

He was a good sort of man, notwithstanding his weaknesses, which, indeed, oftener excited my pity than my anger. I must confess that I did occasionally express some impatience, but when he begged pardon, it was all forgotten.

Page 7

Madame de Fiennes had a considerable stock of wit, and was a great joker; her tongue spared no one but me. Perceiving that she treated the King and Monsieur with as little ceremony as any other persons, I took her by the hand one day, and, leading her apart, I said to her, "Madame, you are very agreeable; you have a great deal of wit, and the manner in which you display it is pleasant to the King and Monsieur, because they are accustomed to you; but to me, who am but just arrived, I cannot say that I like it. When any persons entertain themselves at my expense, I cannot help being very angry, and it is for this reason that I am going to give you a little advice. If you spare me we shall be mighty good friends; but if you treat me as I see you treat others, I shall say nothing to you; I shall, nevertheless, complain of you to your husband, and if he does not restrain you I shall dismiss him."

He was my Equerry-in-Ordinary.

She promised never to speak of me, and she kept her word.

Monsieur often said to me, "How does it happen that Madame de Fiennes never says anything severe of you?"

I answered, "Because she loves me."

I would not tell him what I had done, for he would immediately have excited her to attack me.

I was called sometimes 'Soeur Pacifique', because I did all in my power to maintain harmony between Monsieur and his cousins, La Grande Mademoiselle,

[Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orleans, Duchesse de Montpensier, and Marguerite-Louise d'Orleans, Duchess of Tuscany, daughters of Gaston, Duc d'Orleans, but by different wives.]

and La Grande Duchesse:

[Charlotte-Eleonore-Maddleine de la Motte Houdancourt, Duchesse de Ventadour; she was gouvernante to Louis XV.]

they quarrelled very frequently, and always like children, for the slightest trifles.

Madame de Ventadour was my Maid of Honour for at least sixteen years. She did not quit me until two years after the death of my husband, and then it was by a contrivance of old Maintenon; she wished to annoy me because she knew I was attached to this lady, who was good and amiable, but not very cunning. Old Maintenon succeeded in depriving me of her by means of promises and threats, which were conveyed by Soubise, whose son had married Madame de Ventadour's daughter, and who was an artful woman. By way of recompense she was made gouvernante. They tried, also, to

deprive me of Madame de Chateau Thiers; the old woman employed all her power there, too, but Madame de Chateau Thiers remained faithful to me, without telling of these attempts, which I learnt from another source.

Madame de Monaco might, perhaps, be fond of forming very close attachments of her own sex, and Madame de Maintenon would have put me on the same footing; but she did not succeed, and was so much vexed at her disappointment that she wept. Afterwards she wanted to make me in love with the Chevalier de Vendome, and this project succeeded no better than the other. She often said she could not think of what disposition I must be, since I cared neither for men nor women, and that the German nation must be colder than any other.

Page 8

I like persons of that cool temperament. The poor Dauphine of Bavaria used to send all the young coxcombs of the Court to me, knowing that I detested such persons, and would be nearly choked with laughter at seeing the discontented air with which I talked to them.

Falsehood and superstition were never to my taste.

The King was in the habit of saying, "Madame cannot endure unequal marriages; she always ridicules them."

Although there are some most delightful walks at Versailles, no one went out either on foot or in carriages but myself; the King observed this, and said, "You are the only one who enjoys the beauties of Versailles."

All my life, even from my earliest years, I thought myself so ugly that I did not like to be looked at. I therefore cared little for dress, because jewels and decoration attract attention. As Monsieur loved to be covered with diamonds, it was fortunate that I did not regard them, for, otherwise, we should have quarrelled about who was to wear them. On grand occasions Monsieur used formerly to make me dress in red; I did so, but much against my inclination, for I always hated whatever was inconvenient to me. He always ordered my dresses, and even used to paint my cheeks himself.

I made the Countess of Soissons laugh very heartily once. She said to me, "How is it, Madame, that you never look in a mirror when you pass it, as everybody else does?"

I answered, "Because I have too great a regard for myself to be fond of seeing myself look as ugly as I really am."

I was always attached to the King; and when he did anything disagreeable to me it was generally to please Monsieur, whose favourites and my enemies did all they could to embroil me with him, and through his means with the King, that I might not be able to denounce them. It was natural enough that the King should be more inclined to please his brother than me; but when Monsieur's conscience reproached him, he repented of having done me ill offices with the King, and he confessed this to the King; His Majesty would then come to us again immediately, notwithstanding the malicious contrivances of old Maintenon.

I have always had my own household, although during Monsieur's life I was not the mistress of it, because all his favourites derived a share of profit from it. Thus no one could buy any employment in my establishment without a bribe to Grancey, to the Chevalier de Lorraine, to Cocard, or to M. Spied. I troubled myself little about these persons; so long as they continued to behave with proper respect towards me, I let them alone; but when they presumed to ridicule me, or to give me any trouble, I set them to rights without hesitation and as they deserved.



Finding that Madame la Marechale de Clerambault was attached to me, they removed her, and they placed my daughter under the care of Madame la Marechale de Grancey, the creature of my, bitterest enemy, the Chevalier de Lorraine, whose mistress was the elder sister of this very, Grancei. It may be imagined how fit an example such a woman was for my daughter; but all my prayers, all my, remonstrances, were in vain.

Page 9

Madame de Montespan said to me one day that it was a shame I had no ambition, and would not take part in anything.

I replied, "If a person should have intrigued assiduously to become Madame, could not her son permit her to enjoy that rank peaceably? Well, then, fancy that I have become so by such means, and leave me to repose."

"You are obstinate," said she.

"No, Madame," I answered; "but I love quiet, and I look upon all your ambition to be pure vanity."

I thought she would have burst with spite, so angry was she. She, however, continued,
—

"But make the attempt and we will assist you."

"No," I replied, "Madame, when I think that you, who have a hundred times more wit than I, have not been able to maintain your consequence in that Court which you love so much, what hope can I, a poor foreigner, have of succeeding, who know nothing of intrigue, and like it as little?"

She was quite mortified. "Go along," she said, "you are good for nothing."

Old Maintenon and her party had instilled into the Dauphine a deep hatred against me; by their direction she often said very impertinent things to me. They hoped that I should resent them to the Dauphine in such manner as to afford her reason to complain to the King of me, and thus draw his displeasure upon me. But as I knew the tricks of the old woman and her coterie, I resolved not to give them that satisfaction; I only laughed at the disobliging manner in which they treated me, and I gave them to understand that I thought the ill behaviour of the Dauphine was but a trick of her childhood, which she would correct as she grew older. When I spoke to her she made me no reply, and laughed at me with the ladies attendant upon her.

"Ladies," she once said to them, "amuse me; I am tired;" and at the same time looked at me disdainfully. I only smiled at her, as if her behaviour had no effect upon me.

I said, however, to old Maintenon, in a careless tone, "Madame la Dauphine receives me ungraciously; I do not intend to quarrel with her, but if she should become too rude I shall ask the King if he approves of her behaviour."

The old woman was alarmed, because she knew very well that the King had enjoined the Dauphine always to behave politely to me; she begged me immediately not to say a word to the King, assuring me that I should soon see the Dauphine's behaviour changed; and indeed, from that time, the Dauphine altered her conduct, and lived upon

much better terms with me. If I had complained to the King of the ill treatment I received from the Dauphine he would have been very angry; but she would not have hated me the less, and she and her old aunt would have formed means to repay me double.

Ratzenhausen has the good fortune to be sprung from a very good family; the King was always glad to see her, because she made him laugh; she also diverted the Dauphine, and Madame de Berri liked her much, and made her visit her frequently. It is not surprising that we should be good friends; we have been so since our infancy, for I was not nine years old when I first became acquainted with her. Of all the old women I know, there is not one who keeps up her gaiety like Linor.

Page 10

I often visited Madame de Maintenon, and did all in my power to gain her affections, but could never succeed. The Queen of Sicily asked me one day if I did not go out with the King in his carriage, as when she was with us. I replied to her by some verses (from Racine's *Phedre*).

Madame de Torci told this again to old Maintenon, as if it applied to her, which indeed it did, and the King was obliged to look coldly on me for some time.

During the last three years of his life I had entirely gained my husband to myself, so that he laughed at his own weaknesses, and was no longer displeased at being joked with. I had suffered dreadfully before; but from this period he confided in me entirely, and, always took my part. By his death I saw the result of the care and pains of thirty years vanish. After Monsieur's decease, the King sent to ask me whither I wished to retire, whether to a convent in Paris, or to Maubuisson, or elsewhere. I replied that as I had the honour to be of the royal house I could not live but where the King was, and that I intended to go directly to Versailles. The King was pleased at this, and came to see me. He somewhat mortified me by saying that he sent to ask me whither I wished to go because he had not imagined that I should choose to stay where he was. I replied that I did not know who could have told His Majesty anything so false and injurious, and that I had a much more sincere respect and attachment for His Majesty than those who had thus falsely accused me. The King then dismissed all the persons present, and we had a long explanation, in the course of which the King told me I hated Madame de Maintenon. I confessed that I did hate her, but only through my attachment for him, and because she did me wrong to His Majesty; nevertheless, I added that, if it were agreeable to him that I should be reconciled to her, I was ready to become so. The good lady was not prepared for this, or she would not have suffered the King to come to me; he was, however, so satisfied that he remained favourable to me up to his last hour. He made old Maintenon come, and said to her, "Madame is willing to make friends with you." He then caused us to embrace, and there the scene ended. He required her also to live upon good terms with me, which she did in appearance, but secretly played me all sorts of tricks. It was at this time a matter of indifference to me whether I went to live at Montargis or not, but I would not have the appearance of doing so in consequence of any disgrace, and as if I had committed some offence for which I was driven from the Court. I had reason to fear, besides, that at the end of two days' journey I might be left to die of hunger, and to avoid this risk I chose rather to be reconciled to the King. As to going into a convent, I never once thought of it, although it was that which old Maintenon most desired. The Castle of Montargis is my jointure; at Orleans there is no house. St. Cloud is not

Page 11

a part of the hereditary property, but was bought by Monsieur with his own money. Therefore my jointure produces nothing; all that I have to live on comes from the King and my son. At the commencement of my widowhood I was left unpaid, and there was an arrear of 300,000 francs due to me, which were not paid until after the death of Louis XIV. What, then, would have become of me if I had chosen to retire to Montargis? My household expenses amounted annually to 298,758 livres.

Although Monsieur received considerable wealth with me, I was obliged, after his death, to give up to my son the jewels, movables, pictures—in short, all that had come from my family; otherwise I should not have had enough to live according to my rank and to keep up my establishment, which is large. In my opinion, to do this is much better than to wear diamonds.

My income is not more than 456,000 livres; and yet, if it please God, I will not leave a farthing of debt. My son has just made me more rich by adding 150,000 livres to my pension (1719). The cause of almost all the evil which prevails here is the passion of women for play. I have often been told to my face, “You are good for nothing; you do not like play.”

If by my influence I can serve any unfortunate persons with the different branches of the Government, I always do so willingly; in case of success I rejoice; in a less fortunate event I console myself by the belief that it was not the will of God.

After the King’s death I repaired to St. Cyr to pay a visit to Madame de Maintenon. On my entering the room she said to me, “Madame, what do you come here for?”

I replied, “I come to mingle my tears with those of her whom the King I so much deplore loved most.—that is yourself, Madame.”

“Yes, indeed,” she said, “he loved me well; but he loved you, also.”

I replied, “He did me the honour to say that, he would always distinguish me by his friendship, although everything was done to make him hate me.”

I wished thus to let her understand that I was, quite aware of her conduct, but that, being a Christian, I could pardon my enemies. If she possessed any sensibility she must have felt some pain at thus. receiving the forgiveness of one whom she had incessantly persecuted.

The affair of Loube is only a small part of what I have suffered here.

I have now no circle, for ladies a tabouret—[Ladies having the privilege of seats upon small stools in the presence.]—seldom come to me, not liking to appear but in full

dress. I begged them to be present as usual at an audience, which I was to give to the ambassador of Malta, but not one of them came. When the late Monsieur and the King were alive, they were more assiduous; they were not then so much accustomed to full dresses, and when they did not come in sufficient numbers Monsieur threatened to tell the King of it.

But this is enough, as M. Biermann said, after having preached four hours together.

Page 12

SECTION II.—LOUIS XIV.

[Illustration: Louis XIV.]

When the King pleased he could be one of the most agreeable and amiable men in the world; but it was first necessary that he should be intimately acquainted with persons. He used to joke in a very comical and amusing manner.

The King, though by no means perfect, possessed some great and many fine qualities; and by no means deserved to be defamed and despised by his subjects after his death.

While he lived he was flattered, even to idolatry.

He was so much tormented on my account that I could not have wondered if he had hated me most cordially. However, he did not; but, on the contrary, he discovered that all which was said against me sprang from malice and jealousy.

If he had not been so unfortunate as to fall into the hands of two of the worst women in the world Montespan, and that old Maintenon, who was even worse than the other, he would have been one of the best kings that ever lived; for all the evil that he ever did proceeded from those two women, and not from himself.

Although I approved of many things he did, I could not agree with him when he maintained that it was vulgar to love one's relations. Montespan had instilled this into him, in order that she might get rid of all his legitimate blood connections, and might suffer none about him but her bastards; she had even carried matters so far as to seek to confine the royal favour to her offspring or her creatures.

Our King loved the chase passionately; particularly hawking and stag hunting.

One day all the world came to Marly to offer their compliments of condolence; Louis XIV., to get rid of the ceremony, ordered that no harangues should be made, but that all the Court should enter without distinction and together at one door, and go out by the other. Among them came the Bishop of Gap, in a sort of dancing step, weeping large, hot tears, and smiling at the same moment, which gave to his face the most grotesque appearance imaginable. Madame, the Dauphine, and I, were the first who could not restrain ourselves; then the Dauphin and the Duc de Berri, and at last the King, and everybody who was in the chamber burst out into loud laughter.

The King, it must be allowed, gave occasion to great scandal on account of his mistresses; but then he very sincerely repented of these offences.

He had good natural wit, but was extremely ignorant; and was so much ashamed of it that it became the fashion for his courtiers to turn learned men into ridicule. Louis XIV.

could not endure to hear politics talked; he was what they call in this country, 'franc du collier'.

At Marly he did not wish the slightest ceremony to prevail. Neither ambassadors nor other envoys were ever permitted to come here; he never gave audience; there was no etiquette, and the people went about 'pele-mele'. Out of doors the King made all the men wear their hats; and in the drawing-room, everybody, even to the captains, lieutenants, and sublieutenants of the foot-guards, were permitted to be seated. This custom so disgusted me with the drawing-room that I never went to it.

Page 13

The King used to take off his hat to women of all descriptions, even, the common peasants.

When he liked people he would tell them everything he had heard; and for this reason it was always dangerous to talk to him of that old Maintenon.

Although he loved flattery, he was very often ready to ridicule it. Montespan and the old woman had spoiled him and hardened his heart against his relations, for he was naturally of a very affectionate disposition.

Louis XIV., as well as all the rest of his family, with the exception of my son, hated reading. Neither the King nor Monsieur had been taught anything; they scarcely knew how to read and write. The King was the most polite man in his kingdom, but his son and his grandchildren were the most rude.

In his youth he had played in the comedy of 'Les Visionnaires', which he knew by heart, and in which he acted better than the comedians. He did not know a note of music; but his ear was so correct that he could play in a masterly style on the guitar, and execute whatever he chose.

It is not astonishing that the King and Monsieur were brought up in ignorance. The Cardinal (Mazarin) wished to reign absolutely; if the princes had been better instructed, he would neither have been trusted nor employed, and this it was his object to prevent, hoping that he should live much longer than he did. The Queen-mother found all that the Cardinal did perfectly right; and, besides, it suited her purpose that he should be indispensable. It is almost a miracle that the King should have become what he afterwards was.

I never saw the King beat but two men, and they both well deserved it. The first was a valet, who would not let him enter the garden during one of his own fetes. The other was a pickpocket, whom the King saw emptying the pocket of M. de Villars. Louis XIV., who was on horseback, rode towards the thief and struck him with his cane; the rascal cried out, "Murder! I shall be killed!" which made us all laugh, and the King laughed, also. He had the thief taken, and made him give up the purse, but he did not have him hanged.

The Duchesse de Schomberg was a good deal laughed at because she asked the King a hundred questions, which is not the fashion here. The King was not well pleased to be talked to; but he never laughed in any one's face.

When Louvois proposed to the King for the first time that he should appoint Madame Dufresnoy, his mistress, a lady of the Queen's bedchamber, His Majesty replied, "Would you, then, have them laugh at both of us?" Louvois, however, persisted so earnestly in his request that the King at length granted it.

The Court of France was extremely agreeable until the King had the misfortune to marry that old Maintenon; she withdrew him from company, filled him with ridiculous scruples respecting plays, and told him that he ought not to see excommunicated persons. In consequence of this she had a small theatre erected in her own apartments, where plays were acted twice a week before the King. Instead of the dismissed comedians,

Page 14

[These dismissed comedians had, as appears by the edition of 1788, renounced their profession, and had been admitted to the communion. After that, Madame de Maintenon no longer saw any sin in them.]

she had the Dauphine, my son, the Duc de Berri, and her own nieces, to play; in her opinion this was much better than the real comedians. The King, instead of occupying his usual place, was seated behind me in a corner, near Madame de Maintenon. This arrangement spoilt all, for the consequence was that few people saw him, and the Court was almost deserted.

Maintenon told me that the King said to her, "Now that I am old my children get tired of me and are delighted to find any opportunity of fixing me here and going elsewhere for their own amusement; Madame alone stays, and I see that she is glad to be with me still." But she did not tell me that she had done all in her power to persuade him of the contrary, and that the King spoke thus by way of reproaching her for the lies she had invented about me. I learned that afterwards from others. If the King had been my father I could not have loved him more than I did; I was always pleased to be with him.

He was fond of the German soldiers, and said that the German horsemen displayed more grace in the saddle than those of any other nation.

When the King had a design to punish certain libertines, Fagon—[Guy Crescent Fagon, appointed the King's chief physician in 1693, died in 1718.]—had an amusing conversation with him. He said,—

"Folks made love long before you came into the world, and they will always continue to do so. You cannot prevent them; and when I hear preachers talking in the pulpit and railing against such as yield to the influence of passion, I think it is very much as if I should say to my phthisical patients, 'You must not cough; it is very wrong to spit.' Young folks are full of humours, which must be dispersed by one way or another."

The King could not refrain from laughing.

He was only superstitious in religious matters; for example, with respect to the miracles of the Virgin, *etc.*

He had been taught to believe that to make friends with his brother was a great political stroke and a fine State device; that it made a part of what is called to reign well.

Since the time of this King it has not been the custom for ladies to talk of the affairs of the State.

If the King heard that any one had spoken ill of him, he displayed a proud resentment towards the offender; otherwise it was impossible to be more polite and affable than he was. His conversation was pleasing in a high degree. He had the skill of giving an

agreeable turn to everything. His manner of talking was natural, without the least affectation, amiable and obliging. Although he had not so much courage as Monsieur, he was still no coward. His brother said that he had always behaved well in occasions of danger; but his chief fault lay in being soon tired of war, and wishing to return home.

Page 15

From the time of his becoming so outrageously devout, all amusements were suspended for three weeks (at Easter); and before, they were only discontinued a fortnight.

The King had a peculiarity of disposition which led him easily to behave harshly to persons who were disagreeable to such as he loved. It was thus that La Valliere was so ill-treated at the instigation of Montespan.

He was much amused with the Comte de Grammont,—[Philibert, Comte de Grammont, St. Evremond's hero, and so well known by means of the Memoirs of Count Antoine Hamilton, his brother-in-law.]—who was very pleasant. He loaded him with proofs of his kindness, and invited him to join in all the excursions to Marly, a decided mark of great favour.

The King frequently complained that in his youth he had not been allowed to converse with people generally, but it was the fault of his natural temper; for Monsieur, who had been brought up with him, used to talk to everybody.

Louis XIV. used to say, laughingly, to Monsieur that his eternal chattering had put him out of conceit with talking. "Ah, mon Dieu!" he would say, "must I, to please everybody, say as many silly things as my brother?"

In general, they would not have been taken for brothers. The King was a large man, and my husband a small one: the latter had very effeminate inclinations; he loved dress, was very careful of his complexion, and took great interest in feminine employments and in ceremonies. The King, on the contrary, cared little about dress, loved the chase and shooting, was fond of talking of war, and had all manly tastes and habits. Monsieur behaved well in battle, but never talked of it; he loved women as companions, and was pleased to be with them. The King loved to see them somewhat nearer, and not entirely en honneur, as Monsieur did.

[Madame is not a good authority on this point. The memoirs of the time will show either that she cannot have known or must have wilfully concealed the intrigues of various kinds in which her husband was engaged.]

They nevertheless loved one another much, and it was very interesting to see them together. They joked each other sensibly and pleasantly, and without ever quarrelling.

I was never more amused than in a journey which I took with the King to Flanders. The Queen and the Dauphine were then alive. As soon as we reached a city, each of us retired to our own quarters for a short time, and afterwards we went to the theatre, which was commonly so bad that we were ready to die with laughing. Among others, I remember that at Dunkirk we saw a company playing Mithridates. In speaking to Monimia, Mithridates said something which I forget, but which was very absurd. He

turned round immediately to the Dauphine and said, "I very humbly beg pardon, Madame, I assure you it was a slip of the tongue." The laugh which followed this apology may be imagined, but it became still greater when the Prince of Conti,

Page 16

[Louis-Armaud de Bourbon, Prince de Conti, married in 1780 to Marie-Anne, commonly called Mademoiselle de Blois, one of the legitimated daughters of Louis XIV. by Madame de la Valliere. She was called at Court La Grande Princesse, on account of her beauty and her stature.]

the husband of La Grande Princesse, who was sitting above the orchestra, in a fit of laughing, fell into it. He tried to save himself by the cord, and, in doing so, pulled down the curtain over the lamps, set it on fire, and burnt a great hole in it. The flames were soon extinguished, and the actors, as if they were perfectly indifferent, or unconscious of the accident, continued to play on, although we could only see them through the hole. When there was no play, we took airings and had collations; in short, every day brought something new. After the King's supper we went to see magnificent artificial fireworks given by the cities of Flanders. Everybody was gay; the Court was in perfect unanimity, and no one thought of anything but to laugh and seek amusement.

If the King had known the Duchess of Hanover, he would not have been displeased at her calling him "Monsieur." As she was a Sovereign Princess, he thought it was through pride that she would not call him "Sire," and this mortified him excessively, for he was very sensitive on such subjects.

One day, before Roquelaure was made a Duke, he was out when it rained violently, and he ordered his coachman to drive to the Louvre, where the entrance was permitted to none but Ambassadors, Princes and Dukes. When his carriage arrived at the gate they asked who it was.

"A Duke," replied he.

"What Duke?" repeated the sentinel.

"The Duc d'Epemon," said he.

"Which of them?"

"The one who died last." And upon this they let him enter. Fearing afterwards that he might get into a scrape about it, he went directly to the King. "Sire," said he, "it rains so hard that I came in my coach even to the foot of your staircase."

The King was displeased. "What fool let you enter?" he asked.

"A greater fool than your Majesty can imagine," replied Roquelaure, "for he admitted me in the name of the Duc d'Epemon who died last."

This ended the King's anger and made him laugh very heartily.



So great a fear of hell had been instilled into the King that he not only thought everybody who did not profess the faith of the Jesuits would be damned, but he even thought he was in some danger himself by speaking to such persons. If any one was to be ruined with the King, it was only necessary to say, "He is a Huguenot or a Jansenist," and his business was immediately settled. My son was about to take into his service a gentleman whose mother was a professed Jansenist. The Jesuits, by way of embroiling my son with the King, represented that he was about to engage a Jansenist on his establishment.

Page 17

The King immediately sent for him and said "How is this, nephew? I understand you think of employing a Jansenist in your service."

"Oh, no!" replied my son, laughing, "I can assure your Majesty that he is not a Jansenist, and I even doubt whether he believes in the existence of a God."

"Oh, well, then!" said the King, "if that be the case, and you are sure that he is no Jansenist, you may take him."

It is impossible for a man to be more ignorant of religion than the King was. I cannot understand how his mother, the Queen, could have brought him up with so little knowledge on this subject. He believed all that the priests said to him, as if it came from God Himself. That old Maintenon and Pere la Chaise had persuaded him that all the sins he had committed with Madame de Montespan would be pardoned if he persecuted and extirpated the professors of the reformed religion, and that this was the only path to heaven. The poor King believed it fervently, for he had never seen a Bible in his life; and immediately after this the persecution commenced. He knew no more of religion than what his confessors chose to tell him, and they had made him believe that it was not lawful to investigate in matters of religion, but that the reason should be prostrated in order to gain heaven. He was, however, earnest enough himself, and it was not his fault that hypocrisy reigned at Court. The old Maintenon had forced people to assume it.

It was formerly the custom to swear horridly on all occasions; the King detested this practice, and soon abolished it.

He was very capable of gratitude, but neither his children nor his grandchildren were. He could not bear to be made to wait for anything.

He said that by means of chains of gold he could obtain anything he wished from the ministers at Vienna.

He could not forgive the French ladies for affecting English fashions. He used often to joke about it, and particularly in the conversation which he addressed to me, expecting that I would take it up and tease the Princesses. To amuse him, I sometimes said whatever came into my head, without the least ceremony, and often made him laugh heartily.

Reversi was the only game at which the King played, and which he liked.

When he did not like openly to reprove any person, he would address himself to me; for he knew that I never restrained myself in conversation, and that amused him infinitely. At table, he was almost obliged to talk to me, for the others scarcely said a word. In the cabinet, after supper, there were none but the Duchess—[Anne of Bavaria, wife of



Henri-Jules, Duc de Bourbon, son of the great Conde; she bore the title of Madame la Princesse after his death.]—and I who spoke to him. I do not know whether the Dauphine used to converse with the King in the cabinets, for while she was alive I was never permitted to enter them, thanks to Madame

Page 18

de Maintenon's interference; the Dauphine objected to it; the King would willingly have had it so; but he dare not assert his will for fear of displeasing the Dauphine and the old woman. I was not therefore suffered to enter until after the death of the Dauphine, and then only because the King wished to have some one who would talk to him in the evening, to dissipate his melancholy thoughts, in which I did my best. He was dissatisfied with his daughters on both sides, who, instead of trying to console him in his grief, thought only of amusing themselves, and the good King might often have remained alone the whole evening if I had not visited his cabinet. He was very sensible of this, and said to Maintenon, "Madame is the only one who does not abandon me."

Louis XIV. spoiled the Jesuits; he thought whatever came from them must be admirable, whether it was right or wrong.

The King did not like living in town; he was convinced that the people did not love him, and that there was no security for him among them. Maintenon had him, besides, more under her sway at Versailles than at Paris, where there was certainly no security for her. She was universally detested there; and whenever she went out in a carriage the populace shouted loud threats against her, so that at last she dared not appear in public.

At first the King was in the habit of dining with Madame de Montespan and his children, and then no person went to visit him but the Dauphin and Monsieur. When Montespan was dismissed, the King had all his illegitimate children in his cabinet: this continued until the arrival of the last Dauphine; she intruded herself among the bastards to their great affliction. When the Duchess—

[Louise-Francoise, commonly called Mademoiselle de Nantes, the legitimated daughter of Madame de Montespan and the King, was married to the Duc de Bourbon in 1685.]

became the favourite of the Dauphin, she begged that no other persons of the royal house might have access to the cabinet; and therefore my request for admission, although not refused, was never granted until after the death of the Dauphin and Dauphine. The latter accompanied the King to places where I did not, and could not go, for she even, went with him upon occasions when decency ought to have forbidden her presence. Maintenon did the same thing, for the purpose of having an opportunity of talking to the King in secret.

Louis XIV. loved the young Dauphine so well that he dared refuse her nothing; and Maintenon had so violent a hatred against me that she was ready to do me all the mischief in her power. What could the King do against the inclinations of his son and his granddaughter? They would have looked cross, and that would have grieved him. I

had no inclination to cause him any vexation, and therefore preferred exercising my own patience. When I had anything to say to the King, I requested a private audience, which threw them all into despair, and furnished me with a good laugh in my sleeve.

Page 19

The King was so much devoted to the old usages of the Royal Palace that he would not for the world have departed from them. Madame de Fiennes was in the habit of saying that the Royal Family adhered so strictly to their habits and customs that the Queen of England died with a toguet on her head; that is, a little cap which is put upon children when they go to bed.

When the King denied anything it was not permitted to argue with him; what he commanded must be done quickly and without reply. He was too much accustomed to "such is our good pleasure," to endure any contradiction.

He was always kind and generous when he acted from his own impulses. He never thought that his last will would be observed; and he said to several people, "They have made me sign a will and some other papers; I have done it for the sake of being quiet, but I know very well that it will not stand good."

The good King was old; he stood in need of repose, and he could not enjoy it by any other means than by doing whatever that old Maintenon wished; thus it was that this artful hussy always accomplished her ends.

The King used always to call the Duc de Verneuil his uncle.

It has been said and believed that Louis XIV. retired from the war against Holland through pure generosity; but I know, as well as I know my own name that he came back solely for the purpose of seeing Madame de Montespan, and to stay with her. I know also many examples of great events, which in history have been attributed to policy or ambition, but which have originated from the most insignificant trifles. It has been said it was our King's ambition that made him resolve to become the master of the world, and that it was for this he commenced the Dutch war; but I know from an indisputable source that it was entered upon only because M. de Lionne, then Minister of State, was jealous of Prince William of Furstenberg, who had an intrigue with his wife, of which he had been apprised. It was this that caused him to engage in those quarrels which afterwards produced the war.

It was not surprising that the King was insensible to the scarcity which prevailed, for in the first place he had seen nothing of it, and, in the second, he had been told that all the reports which had reached him were falsehoods, and that they were in no respect true. Old Maintenon invented this plan for getting money, for she had bought up all the corn, for the purpose of retailing it at a high price. [This does not sound like M. Maintenon. D.W.] Everybody had been requested to say nothing about it to the King, lest it should kill him with vexation.

Page 20

The King loved my son as well as his own, but he cared little for the girls. He was very fond of Monsieur, and he had reason to be so; never did a child pay a more implicit obedience to its parents than did Monsieur to the King; it was a real veneration; and the Dauphin, too, had for him a veneration, affection and submission such as never son had for a father. The King was inconsolable for his death. He never had much regard for the Duke of Burgundy; the old sorceress (Maintenon) had slandered him to the King, and made the latter believe that he was of an ambitious temper, and was impatient at the King's living so long. She did this in order that if the Prince should one day open his eyes, and perceive the manner in which his wife had been educated, his complaints might have no effect with the King, which really took place. Louis XIV. at last thought everything that the Dauphine of Burgundy did was quite charming; old Maintenon made him believe that her only aim was to divert him. This old woman was to him both the law and the prophets; all that she approved was good, and what she condemned was bad, no matter how estimable it really was. The most innocent actions of the first Dauphine were represented as crimes, and all the impertinences of the second were admired.

A person who had been for many years in immediate attendance upon the King, who had been engaged with him every evening at Maintenon's, and who must consequently have heard everything that was said, is one of my very good friends, and he has told me that although while the old lady was living he dare not say a word, yet, she being dead, he was at liberty to tell me that the King had always professed a real friendship for me. This person has often heard with his own ears Maintenon teasing the King, and speaking ill of me for the purpose of rendering me hateful in his eyes, but the King always took my part. It was in reference to this, I have no doubt, that the King said to me on his death-bed:

"They have done all they could to make me hate you, Madame, but they have not succeeded." He added that he had always known me too well to believe their calumnies. While he spoke thus, the old woman stood by with so guilty an air that I could not doubt they had proceeded from her.

Monsieur often took a pleasure in diminishing or depriving me of the King's favour, and the King was not sorry for some little occasions to blame Monsieur. He told me once that he had embroiled me with Monsieur by policy.

I was alarmed, and said immediately, "Perhaps your Majesty may do the same thing again."

The King laughed, and said, "No, if I had intended to do so I should not have told you of it; and, to say the truth, I had some scruples about it, and have resolved never to do so again."



Upon the death of one of his children, the King asked of his old medical attendant, M. Gueneau: "Pray, how does it happen that my illegitimate children are healthy and live, while all the Queen's children are so delicate and always die?" "Sire," replied Gueneau, "it is because the Queen has only the rinsings of the glass."

Page 21

He always slept in the Queen's bed, but did not always accommodate himself to the Spanish temperament of that Princess; so that the Queen knew he had been elsewhere. The King, nevertheless, had always great consideration for her, and made his mistresses treat her with all becoming respect. He loved her for her virtue, and for the sincere affection she bore to him, notwithstanding his infidelity. He was much affected at her death; but four days afterwards, by the chattering of old Maintenon, he was consoled. A few days afterwards we went to Fontainebleau, and expected to find the King in an ill-humour, and that we should be scolded; but, on the contrary, he was very gay.

When the King returned from a journey we were all obliged to be at the carriage as he got out, for the purpose of accompanying him to his apartments.

While Louis XIV. was young all the women were running after him; but he renounced this sort of life when he flattered himself that he had grown devout. His motive was, Madame de Maintenon watched him so narrowly that he could not, dare not, look at any one. She disgusted him with everybody else that she might have him to herself; and this, too, under the pretext of taking care of his soul.

Madame de Colonne had a great share of wit, and our King was so much in love with her, that, if her uncle, the Cardinal, had consented, he would certainly have married her. Cardinal Mazarin, although in every other respect a worthless person, deserved to be praised for having opposed this marriage. He sent his niece into Italy. When she was setting out, the King wept violently. Madame de Colonne said to him, "You are a King; you weep, and yet I go." This was saying a great deal in a few words. As to the Comtesse de Soissons, the King had always more of friendship than of love for her. He made her very considerable presents, the least of which was to the amount of 2,000 louis.

Madame de Ludres, the King's mistress, was an agreeable person; she had been Maid of Honour to Monsieur's first wife,—[Henrietta of England.]—and after her death she entered the Queen's service, but when these places were afterwards abolished, Monsieur took back Ludres and Dampierre, the two Ladies of Honour he had given to the Queen. The former was called Madame, because she was canoness of a chapter at Lorraine.

It is said that the King never observed her beauty while she was with the Queen, and that it was not until she was with me that he fell in love with her. Her reign lasted only two years. Montespan told the King that Ludres had certain ringworms upon her body, caused by a poison that had been given her in her youth by Madame de Cantecroix. At twelve or thirteen years of age, she had inspired the old Duc de Lorraine with so violent a passion that he resolved to marry her at all events. The poison caused eruptions, covered her with ringworms from head to foot, and prevented the marriage. She was

Page 22

cured so well as to preserve the beauty of her figure, but she was always subject to occasional eruptions. Although now (1718) more than seventy years old, she is still beautiful; she has as fine features as can be seen, but a very disagreeable manner of speaking; she lisps horribly. She is, however, a good sort of person. Since she has been converted she thinks of nothing but the education of her nieces, and limits her own expenses that she may give the more to her brother's children. She is in a convent at Nancy, which she is at liberty to quit when she pleases. She, as well as her nieces, enjoy pensions from the King.

I have seen Beauvais, that femme de chambre of the Queen-mother, a one-eyed creature, who is said to have first taught the King the art of intriguing. She was perfectly acquainted with all its mysteries, and had led a very profligate life; she lived several years after my arrival in France.

Louis XIV. carried his gallantries to debauchery. Provided they were women, all were alike to him peasants, gardeners' girls, femmes de chambre, or ladies of quality. All that they had to do was to seem to be in love with him.

For a long time before his death, however, he had ceased to run after women; he even exiled the Duchesse de la Ferte, because she pretended to be dying for him. When she could not see him, she had his portrait in her carriage to contemplate it. The King said that it made him ridiculous, and desired her to retire to her own estate. The Duchesse de Roquelaure, of the house of Laval, was also suspected of wishing to captivate the King; but his Majesty was not so severe with her as with La Ferte. There was great talk in the scandalous circles about this intrigue; but I did not thrust my nose into the affair.

I am convinced that the Duchesse de la Valliere always loved the King very much. Montespan loved him for ambition, La Soubise for interest, and Maintenon for both. La Fontange loved him also, but only like the heroine of a romance; she was a furiously romantic person. Ludres was also very much attached to him, but the King soon got tired of her. As for Madame de Monaco, I would not take an oath that she never intrigued with the King. While the King was fond of her, Lauzun, who had a regular though a secret arrangement with his cousin, fell into disgrace for the first time. He had forbidden his fair one to see the King; but finding her one day sitting on the ground, and talking with His Majesty, Lauzun, who, in his place as Captain of the guard, was in the chamber, was so transported with jealousy that he could not restrain himself, and, pretending to pass, he trod so violently on the hand which Madame de Monaco had placed upon the ground, that he nearly crushed it. The King, who thus guessed at their intrigue, reprimanded him. Lauzun replied insolently, and was sent for the first time to the Bastille.



Madame de Soubise was cunning, full of dissimulation, and very wicked. She deceived the good Queen cruelly; but the latter rewarded her for this in exposing her falsehood and in unmasking her to the world. As soon as the King had undeceived Her Majesty with respect to this woman, her history became notorious, and the Queen amused herself in relating her triumph, as she called it, to everybody.

Page 23

The King and Monsieur had been accustomed from their childhood to great filthiness in the interior of their houses; so much so, that they did not know it ought to be otherwise, and yet, in their persons, they, were particularly neat.

Madame de la Motte, who had been at Chaillot, preferred the old Marquis de Richelieu to the King. She declared to His Majesty that her heart was no longer disposable, but that it was at length fixed.

I can never think, without anger, of the evil which has been spoken of the late King, and how little His Majesty has been regretted by those to whom he had done so much good.

I hardly dare repeat what the King said to me on his death-bed. All those who were usually in his cabinet were present, with the exception of the Princess, his daughter, the Princesse de Conti, and Madame de Vendome, who, alone, did not see the King. The whole of the Royal Family was assembled. He recommended his legitimated daughters to live together in concord, and I was the innocent cause of his saying something disagreeable to them. When the King said, "I recommend you all to be united," I thought he alluded to me and my son's daughter; and I said, "Yes, Monsieur, you shall be obeyed." He turned towards me, and said in a stern voice, "Madame, you thought I spoke of you. No, no; you are a sensible person, and I know you; it is to the Princesses, who are not so, that I speak:"

Louis XIV. proved at his death that he was really a great man, for it would be impossible to die with more courage than he displayed. For eight days he had incessantly the approach of death before his eyes without betraying fear or apprehension; he arranged everything as if he had only been going to make a journey.

Eight or ten days before his death a disease had appeared in his leg; a gangrene ensued, and it was this which caused his death. But for three months preceding he had been afflicted with a slow fever, which had reduced him so much that he looked like a lath. That old rogue, Fagon, had brought him to this condition, by administering purgatives and sudorifics of the most violent kind. At the instigation of Pere Letellier, he had been tormented to death by the cursed constitution,—[The affair of the Bull Unigenitus]—and had not been allowed to rest day or night. Fagon was a wicked old scoundrel, much more attached to Maintenon than to the King. When I perceived how much it was sought to exalt the Duc du Maine, and that the old woman cared so little for the King's death, I could not help entertaining unfavourable notions of this old rascal.

It cannot be denied that Louis XIV. was the finest man in his kingdom. No person had a better appearance than he. His figure was agreeable, his legs well made, his feet small, his voice pleasant; he was lusty in proportion; and, in short, no fault could be found with his person. Some folks thought he was too corpulent for his height, and that Monsieur was too stout; so that it was said, by way of a joke at Court, that there had been a

mistake, and that one brother had received what had been intended for the other. The King was in the habit of keeping his mouth open in an awkward way.

Page 24

An English gentleman, Mr. Hammer, found him an expert fencer.

He preserved his good looks up to his death, although some of my ladies, who saw him afterwards, told me that he could scarcely be recognized. Before his death, his stature had been diminished by a head, and he perceived this himself.

His pronunciation was very distinct, but all his children, from the Dauphin to the Comte de Toulouse, lisped. They used to say, Pahi, instead of Paris.

In general, the King would have no persons at his table but members of the Royal Family. As for the Princesses of the blood, there were so many of them that the ordinary table would not have held them; and, indeed, when we were all there, it was quite full.

The King used to sit in the middle, and had the Dauphin and the Duke of Burgundy at his right, and the Dauphine and the Duchesse de Berri on his left; on one of the sides Monsieur and I sat; and on the other, my son and his wife; the other parts of the table were reserved for the noblemen in waiting, who did not take their places behind the King, but opposite to him. When the Princesses of the blood or any other ladies were received at the King's table, we were waited on, not by noblemen, but by other officers of the King's household, who stood behind like pages. The King upon such occasions was waited on by his chief Maitre d'Hotel. The pages never waited at the King's table, but on journeys; and then upon no person but the King. The Royal Family had persons to attend them who were not noble. Formerly all the King's officers, such as the butler, the cupbearer, *etc.*, *etc.*, were persons of rank; but afterwards, the nobility becoming poor could not afford to buy the high offices; and they fell, of necessity, into the hands of more wealthy citizens who could pay for them.

The King, the late Monsieur, the Dauphin, and the Duc de Berri were great eaters. I have often seen the King eat four platefuls of different soups, a whole pheasant, a partridge, a plateful of salad, mutton hashed with garlic, two good-sized slices of ham, a dish of pastry, and afterwards fruit and sweetmeats. The King and Monsieur were very fond of hard eggs.

Louis XIV. understood perfectly the art of satisfying people even while he reproved their requests. His manners were most affable, and he spoke with so much politeness as to win all hearts.

SECTION III.—MADEMOISELLE DE FONTANGE.

I had a Maid of Honour whose name was Beauvais; she was a very well-disposed person: the King fell in love with her, but she remained firm against all his attempts. He then turned his attention to her companion, Fontange, who was also very pretty, but not

very sensible. When he first saw her he said, "There is a wolf that will not eat me;" and yet he became very fond of her soon afterwards. Before she came to me she had dreamt all that was

Page 25

to befall her, and a pious Capuchin explained her dream to her. She told me of it herself long before she became the King's mistress. She dreamt that she had ascended a high mountain, and, having reached the summit, she was dazzled by an exceedingly bright cloud; then on a sudden she found herself in such profound darkness that her terror at this accident awoke her. When she told her confessor he said to her: "Take care of yourself; that mountain is the Court, where some distinction awaits you; it will, however, be but of short duration; if you abandon your God He will forsake you and you will fall into eternal darkness."

There is no doubt that Fontange died by poison; she accused Montespan of being the cause of her death. A servant who had been bribed by that favourite destroyed her and some of her people by means of poison mixed with milk. Two of them died with her, and said publicly that they had been poisoned.

Fontange was a stupid little creature, but she had a very good heart. She was very red-haired, but, beautiful as an angel from head to foot.

SECTION IV.-MADAME DE LA VALLIERE.

When one of Madame de Montespan's children died, the King was deeply affected; but he was not so at the death of the poor Comte de Vermandois (the son of La Valliere). He could not bear him, because Montespan and that old Maintenon had made him believe the youth was not his but the Duc de Lauzun's child. It had been well if all the King's reputed children had been as surely his as this was. Madame de La Valliere was no light mistress, as her unwavering penitence sufficiently proved. She was an amiable, gentle, kind and tender woman. Ambition formed no part of her love for the King; she had a real passion for him, and never loved any other person. It was at Montespan's instigation that the King behaved so ill to her. The poor creature's heart was broken, but she imagined that she could not make a sacrifice more agreeable to God than that which had been the cause of her errors; and thought that her repentance ought to proceed from the same source as her crime. She therefore remained, by way of self-mortification, with Montespan, who, having a great portion of wit, did not scruple to ridicule her publicly, behaved extremely ill to her, and obliged the King to do the same.

He used to pass through La Valliere's chamber to go to Montespan's; and one day, at the instigation of the latter, he threw a little spaniel, which he had called Malice, at the Duchesse de La Valliere, saying: "There, Madam, is your companion; that's all."

Page 26

This was the more cruel, as he was then going direct to Montespan's chamber. And yet La Valliere bore everything patiently; she was as virtuous as Montespan was vicious. Her connection with the King might be pardoned, when it was remembered that everybody had not only advised her to it, but had even assisted to bring it about. The King was young, handsome and gallant; she was, besides, very young; she was naturally modest, and had a very good heart. She was very much grieved when she was made a Duchess, and her children legitimated; before that she thought no one knew she had had children. There was an inexpressible charm in her countenance, her figure was elegant, her eyes were always in my opinion much finer than Montespan's, and her whole deportment was unassuming. She was slightly lame, but not so much as to impair her appearance.

When I first arrived in France she had not retired to the convent, but was still in the Court. We became and continued very intimate until she took the veil. I was deeply affected when this charming person took that resolution; and, at the moment when the funeral pall was thrown over her, I shed so many tears that I could see no more. She visited me after the ceremony, and told me that I should rather congratulate than weep for her, for that from that moment her happiness was to begin: she added that she should never forget the kindness and friendship I had displayed towards her, and which was so much more than she deserved. A short time afterwards I went to see her. I was curious to know why she had remained so long in the character of an attendant to Montespan. She told me that God had touched her heart, and made her sensible of her crimes; that she felt she ought to perform a penitence, and suffer that which would be most painful to her, which was to love the King, and to be despised by him; that for the three years after the King had ceased to love her she had suffered the torments of the damned, and that she offered her sorrows to Heaven as the expiation of her sins; and as her sins had been public, so should be her repentance. She said she knew very well that she had been taken for a fool, who was not sensible of anything; but that at the very period she alluded to she suffered most, and continued to do so until God inspired her with the resolution to abandon everything, and to serve Him alone, which she had since put into execution; but that now she considered herself unworthy, on account of her past life, to live in the society of persons as pure and pious as the Carmelite Sisters. All this evidently came from the heart.

From the time she became professed, she was entirely devoted to Heaven. I often told her that she had only transposed her love, and had given to God that which had formerly been the King's. She has said frequently that if the King should come into the convent she would refuse to see him, and would hide herself so that he could not find her. She was, however, spared this pain, for the King not only never went, but seemed to have forgotten her, as if he had never known her.

Page 27

To accuse La Valliere of loving any one besides the King was wicked to the last degree, but falsehoods cost Montespan but little. The Comte de Vermandois was a good sort of young man, and loved me as if I had been his mother. When his irregularities were first discovered,—[A more particular account of these will be found hereafter.]—I was very angry with him; and I had caused him to be told very seriously that if he had behaved ill I should cease to have any regard for him. This grieved him to the heart; he sent to me daily, and begged permission to say only a few words to me. I was firm during four weeks; at length I permitted him to come, when he threw himself at my feet, begged my pardon, promising to amend his conduct, and beseeching me to restore him my friendship (without which he said he could not exist), and to assist him again with my advice. He told me the whole history of his follies, and convinced me that he had been most grossly deluded.

When the Dauphine lay in of the Duke of Burgundy, I said to the King, “I hope your Majesty will not upon this occasion refuse a humble request I have to make to you.”

He smiled and said, “What have you to ask, then?”

I replied, “The pardon, Monsieur, of the poor Comte de Vermandois.”

He smiled once more, and said, “You are a very good friend; but as for M. Vermandois, he has not been sufficiently punished for his crimes.”

“The poor lad,” I rejoined, “is so very penitent for his offence.”

The King replied, “I do not yet feel myself inclined to see him; I am too angry with him still.”

Several months elapsed before the King would see him; but the young man was very grateful to me for having spoken in his behalf; and my own children could not be more attached to me than he was. He was well made, but his appearance, though not disagreeable, was not remarkably good; he squinted a little.

SECTION V.—MADAME DE MONTESPAN

The King at first could not bear Madame de Montespan,—[Daughter of Gabriel de Roche Chouart, first Duc de Mortemart.]—and blamed Monsieur and even the Queen for associating with her; yet, eventually, he fell deeply in love with her himself.

She was more of an ambitious than a libertine woman, but as wicked as the devil himself. Nothing could stand between her and the gratification of her ambition, to which she would have made any sacrifice. Her figure was ugly and clumsy, but her eyes bespoke great intelligence, though they were somewhat too bright. Her mouth was very pretty and her smile uncommonly agreeable. Her complexion was fairer than La

Valliere's, her look was more bold, and her general appearance denoted her intriguing temper. She had very beautiful light hair, fine arms, and pretty hands, which La Valliere had not. But the latter was always very neat, and Montespan was filthy to the last degree. She was very amusing in conversation, and it was impossible to be tired in talking with her.

Page 28

The King did not regret Montespan more than he did La Fontange. The Duc d'Antin, her only legitimate child, was also the only one who wept at her death. When the King had the others legitimated, the mother's name was not mentioned, so that it might appear Madame de Montespan was not their mother.

[Madame de Montespan had eight children by Louis XIV. The Duc du Maine; Comte Vegin; Mademoiselle de Nantes, married to the Duc de Bourbon; Mademoiselle de Tours, married to the Regent Duc d'Orleans; the Comte de Toulouse, and two other sons who died young.]

She was once present at a review, and as she passed before the German soldiers they called out:

"Konigs Hure! Hure!" When the King asked her in the evening how she liked the review, she said: "Very well, but only those German soldiers are so simple as not to call things by their proper names, for I had their shouts explained to me."

Madame de Montespan and her eldest daughter could drink a large quantity of wine without being affected by it. I have seen them drink six bumpers of the strong Turin Rosa Solis, besides the wine which they had taken before. I expected to see them fall under the table, but, on the contrary, it affected them no more than a draught of water.

It was Madame de Montespan who invented the 'robes battantes' for the purpose of concealing her pregnancy, because it was impossible to discover the shape in those robes. But when she wore them, it was precisely as if she had publicly announced that which she affected to conceal, for everybody at the Court used to say, "Madame de Montespan has put on her robe battante, therefore she must be pregnant." I believe she did it on purpose, hoping that it commanded more attention for her at Court, as it really did.

It is quite true that she always had a Royal bodyguard, and it was fit that she should, because the King was always in her apartments by day and night. He transacted business there with his Ministers, but, as there were several chambers, the lady was, nevertheless, quite at liberty to do as she pleased, and the Marshal de Noailles, though a devout person, was still a man. When she went out in a carriage, she had guards, lest her husband should, as he had threatened, offer her some insult.

She caused the Queen great vexation, and it is quite true that she used to ridicule her; but then she did the same to everybody besides. She, however, never ventured upon any direct or remarkable impertinence to Her Majesty, for the King would not have suffered it.

Page 29

She had married one of her cousins, M. de Montpipeau, to Mademoiselle Aubry, the daughter of a private citizen who was exceedingly rich. To convince her that she had made a good match, Madame de Montespan had her brought into her own small private room. The young lady was not accustomed to very refined society, and the first time she went she seated herself upon the table, and, crossing her legs, sat swinging there as if she had been in her own chamber. The laugh which this excited cannot be conceived, nor the comical manner in which Madame de Montespan turned it to the King's amusement. The young lady thought that her new relation was inclined to be favourable to her, and loaded her with compliments. In general, Montespan had the skill of representing things so humourously that it was impossible not to laugh at her.

According to the law of the land, all her children were supposed to be Monsieur de Montespan's. When her husband was dangerously ill, Madame de Montespan, who in some degree affected devotion, sent to ask him if he would allow her to nurse him in his sickness. He replied that he would very willingly, provided she would bring all his children home with her, but if she left one behind he would not receive her. After this answer, she took care not to go, for her husband was a great brute, and would have said whatever he pleased as soon as she presented herself to him.

With the exception of the Comte de Toulouse, all the children she had by the King are marked. The Duc du Maine is paralytic, Madame d'Orleans is crooked, and Madame la Duchesse is lame.

M. de Montespan was not a very estimable person; he did nothing but play. He was a very sordid man, and I believe if the King had chosen to give him a good round sum he would have been very quiet. It was amusing enough to see him and his son, d'Antin, playing with Madame d'Orleans and Madame la Duchesse, and presenting the cards very politely, and kissing his hand to the Princesses, who were called his own daughters. He thought it a joke himself, and always turned aside a little to laugh in his sleeve.

SECTION VI.—MADAME DE MAINTENON.

The marriage of Louis XIV. with old Maintenon proves how impossible it is to escape one's fate. The King said one day to the Duc de Crequi and to M. de La Rochefoucauld, long before he knew Mistress Scarron, "I am convinced that astrology is false. I had my nativity cast in Italy, and I was told that, after living to an advanced age, I should be in love with an old ----- to the last moment of my existence. I do not think there is any great likelihood of that." He laughed most heartily as he said this; and yet the thing has taken place.

Page 30

The history of Theodora, in Procopius, bears a singular resemblance to that of Maintenon. In the history of Sweden, too, there is a similar character in the person of Sigbritta, a Dutch woman, who lived during the reign of Christian II, King of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, who bears so great a likeness to Maintenon that I was struck with it as soon as I read it. I cannot imagine how they came to permit its publication. It is fortunate for the Abbe Vertot, who is the author, that the King does not love reading, otherwise he would certainly have been sent to the Bastille. Several persons thought that the Abbe had invented it by way of a joke, but he swears by all that is good that he found it in the annals of Sweden. The old woman cannot have read it either, for she is too much occupied in reading the letters written to her from Paris, relating all that is going on there and at the Court. Sometimes the packets have consisted of twenty or thirty sheets; she kept them or showed them to the King, according as she liked or disliked the persons.

She was not deficient in wit, and could talk very well whenever she chose. She did not like to be called La Marquise, but preferred the simpler and shorter title of Madame de Maintenon.

She did not scruple to display openly the hatred she had for me. For example, when the Queen of England came to Marly, and went out on foot or in the carriage with the King, on their return the Queen, the Dauphine, the Princess of England, and all the Princesses, went into the King's room; I alone was excluded.

It was with great regret that I gave up my Maids of Honour. I had four, sometimes five of them, with their governess and sub-governess; they amused me very much, for they were all very gay. The old woman feared there might be some among them to whom the King might take a fancy, as he had done to Ludre and Fontange. I only kept my Maids of Honour a year after the death of Monsieur.—[1702]—The King was always fond of the sex, and if the old woman had not watched him very narrowly he would have slipped through her fingers in spite of all his devotion.

She hated the Dauphine because the latter would not let her treat her like a child, but wished to keep a Court and live as became her rank. This the old woman could not and would not endure. She loved to set all things in confusion, as she did afterwards with the second Dauphine, in the hope of compelling the King to recognize and proclaim her as Queen; but this the King never would do, notwithstanding all her artifices.—

[Other writers including Madame de Montespan put it just the opposite way that the King wished to proclaim Maintenon Queen and she refused. D.W.]

Nobody at Court used perfumery except that old woman; her gloves were always scented with jessamine. The King could not bear scent on any other person, and only endured it in her because she made him believe that it was somebody else who was perfumed.

Page 31

If Madame des Ursins had not been protected by Madame de Maintenon, she would have been ruined at Court long before the Queen of Spain dismissed her, for in his heart the King disliked her excessively; but all those who were supported by Madame de Maintenon were sure to triumph.

The old woman took great pains to conceal from the King all that could give him pain; but she did not scruple to torment him incessantly about the Constitution and those illegitimate children, whom she wished to raise higher than the King desired. She teased him also with her hatred of my son and myself, for he had no dislike to us.

Neither the Queen nor the first Dauphine nor myself ever received a farthing; but this old Maintenon took money on all sides, and taught the second Dauphine to do the same. Her example was followed by all the others.

In the time of the Queen and the first Dauphine, everything at Court was conducted with modesty and dignity. Those persons who indulged in secret debaucheries at least kept up a respect for appearances; but from the time that Maintenon's reign began, and the King's illegitimate children were made a part of the Royal Family, all was turned topsy-turvy.

When she once conceived a hatred against any person it was for life, and she never ceased secretly to persecute them, as I have personally experienced. She has laid many snares for me, which by the help of Providence I have always avoided. She was terribly annoyed by her first husband, who kept her always shut up in his chamber. Many people say, too, that she hastened the passage of poor Mansart into the other world. It is quite certain that he was poisoned by means of green peas, and that he died within three hours of eating them. She had learnt that on the same day M. de Torcy was going to show the King certain papers containing an account of the money which she had received from the post unknown to His Majesty. The King never knew anything of this adventure nor of that of Louvois, because, as people had no fancy for being poisoned, they held their tongues.

Before she got into power, the Church of France was very reasonable; but she spoiled everything by encouraging such follies and superstitions as the rosaries and other things. When any reasonable men appeared, the old woman and the Confessor had them banished or imprisoned. These two persons were the causes of all the persecutions which the Lutherans and those of the reformed religion underwent in France. Pere La Chaise, with his long ears, began this worthy enterprise, and Pere Letellier completed it; France was thus ruined in every way.

Page 32

The Duchesse de Bourbon was taught by her mother and her aunt, Mesdames de Montespan and De Thiange, to ridicule everybody, under the pretext of diverting the King. The children, who were always present, learnt nothing else; and this practice was the universal dread of all persons in the Court; but not more so than that of the gouvernante of the children (Madame de Maintenon). Her habit was to treat things very seriously, and without the least appearance of jesting. She used to speak ill of persons to the King through charity and piety, for the sole purpose of correcting the faults of her neighbours; and under this pretext she filled the King with a bad opinion of the whole Court, solely that he might have no desire for any other company than that of herself and her creatures, who were alone perfect and without the slightest defect. What rendered her disclosures the more dangerous was that they were frequently followed by banishment, by 'lettres-de-cachet', and by imprisonment. When Montespan was in power, at least there was nothing of this sort. Provided she could amuse herself at the expense of all around her, she was content.

I have often heard Madame de Maintenon say, jestingly, "I have always been either too far from, or too near to, greatness, to know exactly what it is."

She could not forgive the King for not having proclaimed her Queen. She put on such an appearance of humility and piety to the Queen of England that she passed for a saint with her. The old woman knew very well that I was a right German, and that I never could endure unequal alliances. She fancied, therefore, that it was on my account the King was reluctant to acknowledge his marriage with her, and this it was that made her hate me so profoundly. From the time of the King's death and our departure from Versailles my son has never once seen her.

She would never allow me to meddle with anything, because she feared it would give me an opportunity of talking to the King. It was not that she was jealous lest he should be fond of me, but she feared that, in speaking according to my usual custom, freely and without restraint, I should open the King's eyes and point out to him the folly of the life he was leading. I had, however, no such intention.

All the mistresses the King had did not tarnish his reputation so much as the old woman he married; from her proceeded all the calamities which have since befallen France. It was she who excited the persecution against the Protestants, invented the heavy taxes which raised the price of grain so high, and caused the scarcity. She helped the Ministers to rob the King; by means of the Constitution she hastened his death; she brought about my son's marriage; she wanted to place bastards upon the throne; in short, she ruined and confused everything.

Formerly the Court never went into mourning for children younger than six years of age; but the Duc du Maine having lost a daughter only one year old, the old woman persuaded the King to order a mourning, and since that time it has been always worn for children of a year old.

Page 33

The King always hated or loved as she chose to direct; it was not, therefore, surprising that he could not bear Montespan, for all her failings were displayed to him by the old woman, who was materially assisted in this office by Montespan's eldest son, the Duc du Maine. In her latter years she enjoyed a splendour which she could never have dreamed of before; the Court looked upon her as a sort of divinity.

The old lady never failed to manifest her hatred of my son on all occasions. She liked my husband no better than myself; and my son and my daughter and her husband were equally objects of her detestation. She told a lady once that her greatest fault was that of being attached to me. Neither my son nor I had ever done her any injury. If Monsieur thought fit to tell his niece, the Duchess of Burgundy, a part of Maintenon's history, in the vexation he felt at her having estranged the Princess from him, and not choosing that she should behave affectionately to her great-uncle, that was not our fault. She was as jealous of the Dauphine as a lover is of his mistress.

She was in the habit of saying, "I perceive there is a sort of vertigo at present affecting the whole world." When she perceived that the harvest had failed, she bought up all the corn she could get in the markets, and gained by this means an enormous sum of money, while the poor people were dying of famine. Not having a sufficient number of granaries, a large quantity of this corn became rotten in the boats loaded with it, and it was necessary to throw it into the river. The people said this was a just judgment from Heaven.

My son made me laugh the other day. I asked him how Madame de Maintenon was.

"Wonderfully well," he replied.

"That is surprising at her age," I said.

"Yes," he rejoined, "but do you not know that God has, by way, of punishing the devil, doomed him to exist a certain number of years in that ugly body?"

Montespan was the cause of the King's love for old Maintenon. In the first place, when she wished to have her near her children, she shut her ears to the stories which were told of the irregular life which the hussy had been leading; she made everybody who spoke to the King about her, praise her; her virtue and piety were cried up until the King was made to think that all he had heard of her light conduct were lies, and in the end he most firmly believed it. In the second place, Montespan was a creature full of caprice, who had no control over herself, was passionately fond of amusement, was tired whenever she was alone with the King, whom she loved only, for the purposes of her own interest or ambition, caring very little for him personally. To occupy him, and to prevent him from observing her fondness for play and dissipation, she brought Maintenon. The King was fond of a retired life, and would willingly have passed his time alone with Montespan; he often reproached her

Page 34

with not loving him sufficiently, and they quarrelled a great deal occasionally. Goody Scarron then appeared, restored peace between them, and consoled the King. She, however, made him remark more and more the bitter temper of Montespan; and, affecting great devotion, she told the King that his affliction was sent him by Heaven, as a punishment for the sins he had committed with Montespan. She was eloquent, and had very fine eyes; by degrees the King became accustomed to her, and thought she would effect his salvation. He then made a proposal to her; but she remained firm, and gave him to understand that, although he was very agreeable to her, she would not for the whole world offend Heaven. This excited in the King so great an admiration for her, and such a disgust to Madame de Montespan, that he began to think of being converted. The old woman then employed her creature, the Duc du Maine, to insinuate to his mother that, since the King had taken other mistresses, for example, Ludres and Fontange, she had lost her authority, and would become an object of contempt at Court. This irritated her, and she was in a very bad humour when the King came. In the meantime, Maintenon was incessantly censuring the King; she told him that he would be damned if he did not live on better terms with the Queen. Louis XIV. repeated this to his wife, who considered herself much obliged to Madame de Maintenon: she treated her with marks of distinction, and consented to her being appointed second dame d'atour to the Dauphine of Bavaria; so that she had now nothing to do with Montespan. The latter became furious, and related to the King all the particulars of the life of Dame Scarron. But the King, knowing her to be an arrant fiend, who would spare no one in her passion, would not believe anything she said to him. The Duc du Maine persuaded his mother to retire from Court for a short time in order that the King might recall her. Being fond of her son, and believing him to be honest in the advice he gave her, she went to Paris, and wrote to the King that she would never come back. The Duc du Maine immediately sent off all her packages after her without her knowledge; he even had her furniture thrown out of the window, so that she could not come back to Versailles. She had treated the King so ill and so unkindly that he was delighted at being rid of her, and he did not care by what means. If she had remained longer, the King, teased as he was, would hardly have been secure against the transports of her passion. The Queen was extremely grateful to Maintenon for having been the means of driving away Montespan and bringing back the King to the marriage-bed; an arrangement to which, like an honest Spanish lady, she had no sort of objection. With that goodness of heart which was so remarkable in her, she thought she was bound to do something for Madame de Maintenon, and therefore consented to her being appointed dame d'atour. It was not until shortly before her death that she learnt she had been deceived by her. After the Queen's death, Louis XIV. thought he had gained a triumph over the very personification of virtue in overcoming the old lady's scruples; he used to visit her every afternoon, and she gained such an influence over him as to induce him to marry.

Page 35

Madame la Marechale de Schomberg had a niece, Mademoiselle d'Aumale, whom her parents had placed at St. Cyr during the King's life. She was ugly, but possessed great wit, and succeeded in amusing the King so well that the old Maintenon became disturbed at it. She picked a quarrel with her, and wanted to send her again to the convent. But the King opposed this, and made the old lady bring her back. When the King died, Mademoiselle d'Aumale would not stay any longer with Madame de Maintenon.

When the Dauphine first arrived, she did not know a soul. Her household was formed before she came. She did not know who Maintenon was; and when Monsieur explained it to her a year or two afterwards, it was too late to resist. The Dauphin used at first to laugh at the old woman, but as he was amorous of one of the Dauphine's Maids of Honour, and consequently was acquainted with the gouvernante of the Maids of Honour, Montchevreuil, a creature of Maintenon's, that old fool set her out in very fair colours. Madame de Maintenon did not scruple to estrange the Dauphin from the Dauphine, and very piously to sell him first Rambure and afterwards La Force.

18th April, 1719—To-day I will begin my letter with the story of Madame de Ponikau, in Saxony. One day during her lying-in, as she was quite alone, a little woman dressed in the ancient French fashion came into the room and begged her to permit a party to celebrate a wedding, promising that they would take care it should be when she was alone. Madame de Ponikau having consented, one day a company of dwarfs of both sexes entered her chamber. They brought with them a little table, upon which a good dinner, consisting of a great number of dishes, was placed, and round which all the wedding guests took their seats. In the midst of the banquet, one of the little waiting-maids ran in, crying,

“Thank Heaven, we have escaped great perplexity. The old ----- is dead.”

It is the same here, the old is dead. She quitted this world at St. Cyr, on Saturday last, the 15th day of April, between four and five o'clock in the evening. The news of the Duc du Maine and his wife being arrested made her faint, and was probably the cause of her death, for from that time she had not a moment's repose or content. Her rage, and the annihilation of her hopes of reigning with him, turned her blood. She fell sick of the measles, and was for twenty days in great fever. The disorder then took an unfavourable turn, and she died. She had concealed two years of her age, for she pretended to be only eighty-four, while she was really eighty-six years old. I believe that what grieved her most in dying was to quit the world, and leave me and my son behind her in good health. When her approaching death was announced to her, she said, “To die is the least event of my life.” The sums which her nephew and niece De Noailles inherited from her were immense; but the amount cannot be ascertained, because she had concealed a large part of her wealth.

Page 36

A cousin of hers, the Archbishop of Rouen, who created so much trouble with respect to the Constitution, followed his dear cousin into the other world exactly a week afterwards, on the same day, and at the same hour.

Nobody, knows what the King said to Maintenon on his death bed. She had retired to St. Cyr before he died. They fetched her back, but she did not stay, to the end. I think the King repented of his folly in having married her, and, indeed, notwithstanding all her contrivances, she could not persuade him to declare their marriage. She wept for the King's death, but was not so deeply afflicted as she ought to have been. She always flattered herself with the hope of reigning together with the Duc du Maine.

From the beginning to the end of their connection, the King's society was always irksome to her, and she did not scruple to say so to her own relations. She had before been much accustomed to the company of men, but afterwards dared see none but the King, whom she never loved, and his Ministers. This made her ill-tempered, and she did not fail to make those persons who were within her power feel its effects. My son and I have had our share of it. She thought only of two things, her ambition and her amusement. The old sorceress never loved any one but her favourite, the Duc du Maine. Perceiving that the Dauphine was desirous of acting for herself and profiting by the king's favour, that she ridiculed her to her attendants, and seemed not disposed to yield to her domination, she withdrew her attention from her; and if the Dauphine had not possessed great influence with the King, Maintenon would have turned round upon her former favourite; she was therefore very soon consoled for this Princess's death. She thought to have the King entirely at her disposal through the Duc du Maine, and it was for this reason that she relied so much upon him, and was so deeply afflicted at his imprisonment.

She was not always so malicious, but her wickedness increased with her years. For us it had been well that she had died twenty years before, but for the honour of the late King that event ought to have taken place thirty-three years back, for, if I do not mistake, she was married to the King two years after the Queen's death, which happened five-and-thirty years ago.

If she had not been so outrageously inveterate against me, she could have done me much more injury with the King, but she set about it too violently; this caused the King to perceive that it was mere malice, and therefore it had no effect. There were three reasons why she hated me horribly. The first was, that the King treated me favourably. I was twenty-five years of age when she came into power; she saw that, instead of suffering myself to be governed by her, I would have my own way, and, as the King was kind to me, that I should undeceive him and counsel him not to suffer himself to be blindly led by so worthless a person. The second reason was that,

Page 37

knowing how much I must disapprove of her marriage with the King, she imagined I should always be an obstacle to her being proclaimed Queen; and the third was, that I had always taken the Dauphine's part whenever Maintenon had mortified her. The poor Dauphine did not know what to do with Maintenon, who possessed the King's heart, and was acquainted with all his intentions. Notwithstanding all the favour she enjoyed, the old lady was somewhat timid. If the Dauphine could have summoned courage to threaten Maintenon, as I advised her, to hint that her previous life was well known, and that unless she behaved better to the Dauphine the latter would expose her to the King, but that if, on the contrary, she would live quietly and on good terms, silence should be kept, then Maintenon would have pursued a very different conduct. That wicked Bessola always prevented this, because then she would have had no more tales to tell.

One day I found the Dauphine in the greatest distress and drowned in tears, because the old woman had threatened to make her miserable, to have Madame du Maine preferred to her, to make her odious to the whole Court and to the King besides. I laughed when she told me all this.

"Is it possible," I said, "with so much sense and courage as you possess that you will suffer this old hag to frighten you thus? You can have nothing to fear: you are the Dauphine, the first person in the kingdom; no one can do you any mischief without the most serious cause. When, therefore, they threaten you, answer boldly: 'I do not fear your menaces; Madame de Maintenon is too much beneath me, and the King is too just to condemn without hearing me. If you compel me I will speak to him myself, and we shall see whether he will protect me or not.'"

The Dauphine was not backward in repeating this word for word. The old woman immediately said, "This is not your own speech; this proceeds from Madame's bad advice; you have not courage enough to think thus for yourself; however, we shall see whether Madame's friendship will be profitable to you or not." But from that time forth she never threatened the Princess. She had introduced the name of the Duchesse du Maine adroitly enough in her threats to the Dauphine, because, having educated the Duke, she thought her power at Court unlimited, and wished to chew that she could prefer the last Princess of the blood before the first person in France, and that therefore it was expedient to submit to her and obey her. But Bessola, who was jealous of me, and could not bear that the Dauphine should confide in me, had been bought over by the old woman, to whom she betrayed us, and told her all that I had said to console the Princess; she was commissioned, besides, to torment and intimidate her mistress as much as possible, and acquitted herself to a miracle, terrifying her to death, and at the same time seeming to act only from attachment, and to be entirely devoted to

Page 38

her. The poor Dauphine never distrusted this woman, who had been educated with her, and had accompanied her to France; she did not imagine that falsehood and perfidy existed to such an extent as this infernal creature carried them. I was perfectly amazed at it. I opposed Bessola, and did all I could to console the Dauphine and to alleviate her vexation. She told me when she was dying that I had prolonged her life by two years by inspiring her with courage. My exertions, however, procured for me Maintenon's cordial hatred, which lasted to the end of her life. Although the Dauphine might have something to reproach herself with, she was not to be taken to task for it by that old woman, for who had ever led a less circumspect life than she? In public, or when we were together, she never said anything unpleasant to me, for she knew that I would not have failed to answer her properly, as I knew her whole life. Villarceaux had told me more of her than I desired to know.

When the King was talking to me on his death-bed she turned as red as fire.

"Go away, Madame," said she; "the King is too much affected while he talks to you; it may do him harm. Pray go away."

As I went out she followed me and said, "Do not think, Madame, that I have ever done you an ill turn with the King."

I answered her with tears, for I thought I should choke with grief: "Madame, do not let us talk upon that subject," and so quitted her.

That humpbacked old Fagon, her favourite, used to say that he disliked Christianity because it would not allow him to build a temple to Maintenon and an altar to worship her.

The only trait in her character that I can find to praise is her conduct to Montchevreuil; although she was a wicked old devil, Maintenon had reason to love her and be kind to her, for she had fed and clothed her when Maintenon was in great want.

I believe the old woman would not procure for Madame de Dangeau the privilege of the tabouret, only because she was a German and of good family. She once had two young girls from Strasbourg brought to Court, and made them pass for Countesses Palatine, placing them in the office of attendants upon her nieces. I did not know a word of it until the Dauphine came to tell it me with tears in her eyes.

I said to her, "Do not disturb yourself, leave me alone to act; when I have a good reason for what I do, I despise the old witch."

When I saw from my window the niece walking with these German girls, I went into the garden and met them. I called one of them, and asked her who she was. She told me, boldly, that she was a Countess Palatine of Lutzelstein.

“By the left hand?” I asked.

“No,” she replied, “I am not illegitimate; the young Count Palatine married my mother, who is of the house of Gehlen.”

Page 39

"In that case," I said, "you cannot be Countess Palatine; for we never allow such unequal marriages to hold good. I will tell you, moreover, that you lie when you say that the Count Palatine married your mother; she is a ----, and the Count has married her no more than a hundred others have done; I know her lawful husband is a hautboy-player. If you presume, in future, to pass yourself off as a Countess Palatine I will have you stripped; let me never again hear anything of this; but if you will follow my advice, and take your proper name, I shall not reproach you. And now you see what you have to choose between."

The girl took this so much to heart that she died some days afterwards. As for the second, she was sent to a boarding-house in Paris, where she became as bad as her mother; but as she changed her name I did not trouble myself any further about her.

I told the Dauphine what I had done, who was very much obliged to me, and confessed she should not have had courage enough to do it herself. She feared that the King would be displeased with me; but he only said to me, jestingly, "One must not play tricks with you about your family, for it seems to be a matter of life or death with you."

I replied, "I hate lies."

There was a troop of Italian players who had got up a comedy called "The Pretended Prude." When I learnt they were going to represent it, I sent for them and told them not to do so. It was in vain; they played it, and got a great deal of money by it; but they were afterwards sent away in consequence. They then came to me and wanted me to intercede for them; but I said, "Why did you not take my advice?" It was said they hit off the character of Maintenon with the most amusing fidelity. I should have liked to see it, but I would not go lest the old woman should have told the King that I had planned it out of ill-will to her.

SECTION VII.—THE QUEEN—CONSORT OF LOUIS XIV.

Our Queen was excessively ignorant, but the kindest and most virtuous woman in the world; she had a certain greatness in her manner, and knew how to hold a Court extremely well. She believed everything the King told her, good or bad. Her teeth were very ugly, being black and broken. It was said that this proceeded from her being in the constant habit of taking chocolate; she also frequently ate garlic. She was short and fat, and her skin was very white. When she was not walking or dancing she seemed much taller. She ate frequently and for a long time; but her food was always cut in pieces as small as if they were for a singing bird. She could not forget her country, and her manners were always remarkably Spanish. She was very fond of play; she played basset, reversis, ombre, and sometimes a little primero; but she never won because she did not know how to play.



She had such an affection for the King that she used to watch his eyes to do whatever might be agreeable to him; if he only looked at her kindly she was in good spirits for the rest of the day. She was very glad when the King quitted his mistresses for her, and displayed so much satisfaction that it was commonly remarked. She had no objection to being joked upon this subject, and upon such occasions used to laugh and wink and rub her little hands.

Page 40

One day the Queen, after having conversed for half-an-hour with the Prince Egon de Furstemberg,—[Cardinal Furstemberg, Bishop of Strasbourg.]—took me aside and said to me, “Did you know what M. de Strasbourg has been saying? I have not understood him at all.”

A few minutes afterwards the Bishop said to me, “Did your Royal Highness hear what the Queen said to me? I have not comprehended a single word.”

“Then,” said I, “why did you answer her.”

“I thought,” he replied, “that it would have been indecorous to have appeared not to understand Her Majesty.”

This made me laugh so much that I was obliged precipitately to quit the Chamber.

The Queen died of an abscess under her arm. Instead of making it burst, Fagon, who was unfortunately then her physician, had her blooded; this drove in the abscess, the disorder attacked her internally, and an emetic, which was administered after her bleeding, had the effect of killing the Queen.

The surgeon who blooded her said, “Have you considered this well, Sir? It will be the death of my Mistress!”

Fagon replied, “Do as I bid you.”

Gervais, the surgeon, wept, and said to Fagon, “You have resolved, then, that my Mistress shall die by my hand!”

Fagon had her blooded at eleven o'clock; at noon he gave her an emetic, and three hours afterwards she was dead. It may be truly said that with her died all the happiness of France. The King was deeply grieved by this event, which that old villain Fagon brought about expressly for the purpose of confirming that mischievous old woman's fortune.

After the Queen's death I also happened to have an abscess. Fagon did all he could to make the King recommend me to be blooded; but I said to him, in His Majesty's presence, “No, I shall do no such thing. I shall treat myself according to my own method; and if you had done the same to the Queen she would have been alive now. I shall suffer the abscess to gather, and then I shall have it opened.” I did so, and soon got well.

The King said very kindly to me, “Madame, I am afraid you will kill yourself.”

I replied, laughing, “Your Majesty is too good to me, but I am quite satisfied with not having followed my physician's advice, and you will soon see that I shall do very well.”



After my convalescence I said at table, in presence of my two doctors, Daguin, who was then first physician, and Fagon, who succeeded him upon his being disgraced, "Your Majesty sees that I was right to have my own way; for I am quite well, notwithstanding all the wise sayings and arguments of these gentlemen."

They were a little confused, but put it off with a laugh; and Fagon said to me,—

"When folks are as robust as you, Madame, they may venture to risk somewhat."

I replied, "If I am robust, it is because I never take medicine but on urgent occasions."

Page 41

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A pious Capuchin explained her dream to her
Art of satisfying people even while he reproved their requests
Asked the King a hundred questions, which is not the fashion
Because the Queen has only the rinsings of the glass
Duplicity passes for wit, and frankness is looked upon as folly
Even doubt whether he believes in the existence of a God
Follies and superstitions as the rosaries and other things
Formerly the custom to swear horribly on all occasions
Great filthiness in the interior of their houses
Great things originated from the most insignificant trifles
He always slept in the Queen's bed
He had good natural wit, but was extremely ignorant
He was a good sort of man, notwithstanding his weaknesses
Her teeth were very ugly, being black and broken (Queen)
I am unquestionably very ugly
I formed a religion of my own
I have seldom been at a loss for something to laugh at
I never take medicine but on urgent occasions
It was not permitted to argue with him
Jewels and decoration attract attention (to the ugly)
Louis XIV. scarcely knew how to read and write
Made his mistresses treat her with all becoming respect
My husband proposed separate beds
No man more ignorant of religion than the King was
Nobility becoming poor could not afford to buy the high offices
Not lawful to investigate in matters of religion
Robes battantes for the purpose of concealing her pregnancy
Seeing myself look as ugly as I really am (in a mirror)
So great a fear of hell had been instilled into the King
Soon tired of war, and wishing to return home (Louis XIV)
The old woman (Madame Maintenon)
To die is the least event of my life (Maintenon)
To tell the truth, I was never very fond of having children
You are a King; you weep, and yet I go
You never look in a mirror when you pass it