

Memoirs of Louis XIV and His Court and of the Regency — Volume 04 eBook

Memoirs of Louis XIV and His Court and of the Regency — Volume 04 by Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon

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CHAPTER XXV

Canaples, brother of the Marechal de Crequi, wished to marry Mademoiselle de Vivonne who was no longer young, but was distinguished by talent, virtue and high birth; she had not a penny. The Cardinal de Coislin, thinking Canaples too old to marry, told him so. Canaples said he wanted to have children. "Children!" exclaimed the Cardinal. "But she is so virtuous!" Everybody burst out laughing; and the more willingly, as the Cardinal, very pure in his manners, was still more so in his language. His saying was verified by the event: the marriage proved sterile.

The Duc de Coislin died about this time. I have related in its proper place an adventure that happened to him and his brother, the Chevalier de Coislin: now I will say something more of the Duke. He was a very little man, of much humour and virtue, but of a politeness that was unendurable, and that passed all bounds, though not incompatible with dignity. He had been lieutenant-general in the army. Upon one occasion, after a battle in which he had taken part, one of the Rhingraves who had been made prisoner, fell to his lot. The Duc de Coislin wished to give up to the other his bed, which consisted indeed of but a mattress. They complimented each other so much, the one pressing, the other refusing, that in the end they both slept upon the ground, leaving the mattress between them. The Rhingrave in due time came to Paris and called on the Duc de Coislin. When he was going, there was such a profusion of compliments, and the Duke insisted so much on seeing him out, that the Rhingrave, as a last resource, ran out of the room, and double locked the door outside. M. de Coislin was not thus to be outdone. His apartments were only a few feet above the ground. He opened the window accordingly, leaped out into the court, and arrived thus at the entrance-door before the Rhingrave, who thought the devil must have carried him there. The Duc de Coislin, however, had managed to put his thumb out of joint by this leap. He called in Felix, chief surgeon of the King, who soon put the thumb to rights. Soon afterwards Felix made a call upon M. de Coislin to see how he was, and found that the cure was perfect. As he was about to leave, M. de Coislin must needs open the door for him. Felix, with a shower of bows, tried hard to prevent this, and while they were thus vying in politeness, each with a hand upon the door, the Duke suddenly drew back; he had put his thumb out of joint again, and Felix was obliged to attend to it on the spot! It may be imagined what laughter this story caused the King, and everybody else, when it became known.

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There was no end to the outrageous civilities of M. de Coislin. On returning from Fontainebleau one day, we, that is Madame de Saint-Simon and myself, encountered M. de Coislin and his son, M. de Metz, on foot upon the pavement of Ponthierry, where their coach had broken down. We sent word, accordingly, that we should be glad to accommodate them in ours. But message followed message on both sides; and at last I was compelled to alight and to walk through the mud, begging them to mount into my coach. M. de Coislin, yielding to my prayers, consented to this. M. de Metz was furious with him for his compliments, and at last prevailed on him. When M. de Coislin had accepted my offer and we had nothing more to do than to gain the coach, he began to capitulate, and to protest that he would not displace the two young ladies he saw seated in the vehicle. I told him that the two young ladies were chambermaids, who could well afford to wait until the other carriage was mended, and then continue their journey in that. But he would not hear of this; and at last all that M. de Metz and I could do was to compromise the matter, by agreeing to take one of the chambermaids with us. When we arrived at the coach, they both descended, in order to allow us to mount. During the compliments that passed—and they were not short—I told the servant who held the coach-door open, to close it as soon as I was inside, and to order the coachman to drive on at once. This was done; but M. de Coislin immediately began to cry aloud that he would jump out if we did not stop for the young ladies; and he set himself to do so in such an odd manner, that I had only time to catch hold of the belt of his breeches and hold him back; but he still, with his head hanging out of the window, exclaimed that he would leap out, and pulled against me. At this absurdity I called to the coachman to stop; the Duke with difficulty recovered himself, and persisted that he would have thrown himself out. The chambermaid was ordered to mount, and mount she did, all covered with mud, which daubed us; and she nearly crushed M. de Metz and me in this carriage fit only for four.

M. de Coislin could not bear that at parting anybody should give him the “last touch;” a piece of sport, rarely cared for except in early youth, and out of which arises a chase by the person touched, in order to catch him by whom he has been touched. One evening, when the Court was at Nancy, and just as everybody was going to bed, M. de Longueville spoke a few words in private to two of his torch-bearers, and then touching the Duc de Coislin, said he had given him the last touch, and scampered away, the Duke hotly pursuing him. Once a little in advance, M. de Longueville hid himself in a doorway, allowed M. de Coislin to pass on, and then went quietly home to bed. Meanwhile the Duke, lighted by the torch-bearers, searched for M. de Longueville all over the town, but meeting with no success, was obliged to give up the chase, and went home all in a sweat. He was obliged of course to laugh a good deal at this joke, but he evidently did not like it over much.

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With all his politeness, which was in no way put on, M. de Coislin could, when he pleased, show a great deal of firmness, and a resolution to maintain his proper dignity worthy of much praise. At Nancy, on this same occasion, the Duc de Crequi, not finding apartments provided for him to his taste on arriving in town, went, in his brutal manner, and seized upon those allotted to the Duc de Coislin. The Duke, arriving a moment after, found his servants turned into the street, and soon learned who had sent them there. M. de Crequi had precedence of him in rank; he said not a word, therefore, but went to the apartments provided for the Marechal de Crequi (brother of the other), served him exactly as he himself had just been served, and took up his quarters there. The Marechal de Crequi arrived in his turn, learned what had occurred, and immediately seized upon the apartments of Cavoye, in order to teach him how to provide quarters in future so as to avoid all disputes.

On another occasion, M. de Coislin went to the Sorbonne to listen to a thesis sustained by the second son of M. de Bouillon. When persons of distinction gave these discourses, it was customary for the Princes of the blood, and for many of the Court, to go and hear them. M. de Coislin was at that time almost last in order of precedence among the Dukes. When he took his seat, therefore, knowing that a number of them would probably arrive, he left several rows of vacant places in front of him, and sat himself down. Immediately afterwards, Novion, Chief President of the Parliament, arrived, and seated himself in front of M. de Coislin. Astonished at this act of madness, M. de Coislin said not a word, but took an arm-chair, and, while Novion turned his head to speak to Cardinal de Bouillon, placed that arm-chair in front of the Chief President in such a manner that he was as it were imprisoned, and unable to stir. M. de Coislin then sat down. This was done so rapidly, that nobody saw it until it was finished. When once it was observed, a great stir arose. Cardinal de Bouillon tried to intervene. M. de Coislin replied, that since the Chief President had forgotten his position he must be taught it, and would not budge. The other presidents were in a fright, and Novion, enraged by the offence put on him, knew not what to do. It was in vain that Cardinal de Bouillon on one side, and his brother on the other, tried to persuade M. de Coislin to give way. He would not listen to them. They sent a message to him to say that somebody wanted to see him at the door on most important business. But this had no effect. "There is no business so important," replied M. de Coislin, "as that of teaching M. le Premier President what he owes me, and nothing will make me go from this place unless M. le President, whom you see behind me, goes away first."

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At last M. le Prince was sent for, and he with much persuasion endeavoured to induce M. de Coislin to release the Chief President from his prison. But for some time M. de Coislin would listen as little to M. le Prince as he had listened to the others, and threatened to keep Novion thus shut up during all the thesis. At length, he consented to set the Chief President free, but only on condition that he left the building immediately; that M. le Prince should guarantee this; and that no “juggling tricks” (that was the term he made use of), should be played off to defeat the agreement. M. le Prince at once gave his word that everything should be as he required, and M. de Coislin then rose, moved away his arm-chair, and said to the Chief President, “Go away, sir! go away, sir! “Novion did on the instant go away, in the utmost confusion, and jumped into his coach. M. de Coislin thereupon took back his chair to its former position and composed himself to listen again.

On every side M. de Coislin was praised for the firmness he had shown. The Princes of the blood called upon him the same evening, and complimented him for the course he had adopted; and so many other visitors came during the evening that his house was quite full until a late hour. On the morrow the King also praised him for his conduct, and severely blamed the Chief President. Nay more, he commanded the latter to go to M. de Coislin, at his house, and beg pardon of him. It is easy to comprehend the shame and despair of Novion at being ordered to take so humiliating a step, especially after what had already happened to him. He prevailed upon M. le Coislin, through the mediation of friends, to spare him this pain, and M. de Coislin had the generosity to do so. He agreed therefore that when Novion called upon him he would pretend to be out, and this was done. The King, when he heard of it, praised very highly the forbearance of the Duke.

He was not an old man when he died, but was eaten up with the gout, which he sometimes had in his eyes, in his nose, and in his tongue. When in this state, his room was filled with the best company. He was very generally liked, was truth itself in his dealings and his words, and was one of my friends, as he had been the friend of my father before me.

The President de Novion, above alluded to, was a man given up to iniquity, whom money and obscure mistresses alone influenced. Lawyers complained of his caprices, and pleaders of his injustice. At last, he went so far as to change decisions of the court when they were given him to sign, which was not found out for some time, but which led to his disgrace. He was replaced by Harlay in 1689; and lived in ignominy for four years more.

About this time died Petit, a great physician, who had wit, knowledge, experience, and probity; and yet lived to the last without being ever brought to admit the circulation of the blood.

A rather strange novelty was observed at Fontainebleau: Madame publicly at the play, in the second year of her mourning for Monsieur! She made some objections at first, but the King persuaded her, saying that what took place in his palace ought not to be considered as public.

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On Saturday, the 22nd of October of this year (1702), at about ten in the morning, I had the misfortune to lose my father-in-law, the Marechal de Lorges, who died from the effects of an unskilful operation performed upon him for the stone. He had been brought up as a Protestant, and had practised that religion. But he had consulted on the one hand with Bossuet, and on the other hand with M. Claude, (Protestant) minister of Charenton, without acquainting them that he was thus in communication with both. In the end the arguments of Bossuet so convinced him that he lost from that time all his doubts, became steadfastly attached to the Catholic religion, and strove hard to convert to it all the Protestants with whom he spoke. M. de Turenne, with whom he was intimately allied, was in a similar state of mind, and, singularly enough, his doubts were resolved at the same time, and in exactly the same manner, as those of M. de Lorges. The joy of the two friends, who had both feared they should be estranged from each other when they announced their conversion, was very great. The Comtesse de Roye, sister to M. de Lorges, was sorely affected at this change, and she would not consent to see him except on condition that he never spoke of it.

M. de Lorges commanded with great distinction in Holland and elsewhere, and at the death of M. de Turenne, took for the time, and with great honour, his place. He was made Marshal of France on the 21st of February, 1676, not before he had fairly won that distinction. The remainder of his career showed his capacity in many ways, and acquired for him the esteem of all. His family were affected beyond measure at his loss. That house was in truth terrible to see. Never was man so tenderly or so universally regretted, or so worthy of being so. Besides my own grief, I had to sustain that of Madame de Saint-Simon, whom many times I thought I should lose. Nothing was comparable to the attachment she had for her father, or the tenderness he had for her; nothing more perfectly alike than their hearts and their dispositions. As for me, I loved him as a father, and he loved me as a son, with the most entire and sweetest confidence.

About the same time died the Duchesse de Gesvres, separated from a husband who had been the scourge of his family, and had dissipated millions of her fortune. She was a sort of witch, tall and lean, who walked like an ostrich. She sometimes came to Court, with the odd look and famished expression to which her husband had brought her. Virtue, wit, and dignity distinguished her. I remember that one summer the King took to going very often in the evening to Trianon, and that once for all he gave permission to all the Court, men and women, to follow him. There was a grand collation for the Princesses, his daughters, who took their friends there, and indeed all the women went to it if they pleased. One day the Duchesse de Gesvres took it into her head to go to Trianon and partake of this

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meal; her age, her rarity at Court, her accoutrements, and her face, provoked the Princesses to make fun of her in whispers with their fair visitors. She perceived this, and without being embarrassed, took them up so sharply, that they were silenced, and looked down. But this was not all: after the collation she began to talk so freely and yet so humorously about them that they were frightened, and went and made their excuses, and very frankly asked for quarter. Madame de Gesvres was good enough to grant them this, but said it was only on condition that they learned how to behave. Never afterwards did they venture to look at her impertinently. Nothing was ever so magnificent as these soirees of Trianon. All the flowers of the parterres were renewed every day; and I have seen the King and all the Court obliged to go away because of the tuberoses, the odour of which perfumed the air, but so powerfully, on account of their quantity, that nobody could remain in the garden, although very vast, and stretching like a terrace all along the canal.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Prince d'Harcourt at last obtained permission to wait on the King, after having never appeared at Court for seventeen years. He had followed the King in all his conquests in the Low Countries and Franche-Comte; but he had remained little at the Court since his voyage to Spain, whither he had accompanied the daughter of Monsieur to the King, Charles II., her husband. The Prince d'Harcourt took service with Venice, and fought in the Morea until the Republic made peace with the Turks. He was tall, well made; and, although he looked like a nobleman and had wit, reminded one at the same time of a country actor. He was a great liar, and a libertine in body and mind; a great spendthrift, a great and impudent swindler, with a tendency to low debauchery, that cursed him all his life. Having fluttered about a long time after his return, and found it impossible either to live with his wife—which is not surprising—or accommodate himself to the Court or to Paris, he set up his rest at Lyons with wine, street-walkers, a society to match, a pack of hounds, and a gaming-table to support his extravagance and enable him to live at the expense of the dupes, the imbeciles, and the sons of fat tradesmen, whom he could lure into his nets. Thus he spent many years, and seemed to forget that there existed in the world another country besides Lyons. At last he got tired, and returned to Paris. The King, who despised him, let him alone, but would not see him; and it was only after two months of begging for him by the Lorraines, that he received permission to present himself. His wife, the Princesse d'Harcourt, was a favourite of Madame de Maintenon. The origin of their friendship is traced to the fact that Brancas, the father of the Princess, had been one of the lovers of Madame de Maintenon. No claim less powerful could have induced the latter to take

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into her favour a person who was so little worthy. Like all women who know nothing but what chance has taught them, and who have long languished in obscurity before arriving at splendour, Madame de Maintenon was dazzled by the very name of Princess, even if assumed: as to a real Princess, nothing equalled her in her opinion. The Princess then tried hard to get the Prince invited to Marly, but without success. Upon this she pretended to sulk, in hopes that Madame de Maintenon would exert all her influence; but in this she was mistaken. The Prince accordingly by degrees got disgusted with the Court, and retired into the provinces for a time.

The Princesse d'Harcourt was a sort of personage whom it is good to make known, in order better to lay bare a Court which did not scruple to receive such as she. She had once been beautiful and gay; but though not old, all her grace and beauty had vanished. The rose had become an ugly thorn. At the time I speak of she was a tall, fat creature, mightily brisk in her movements, with a complexion like milk-porridge; great, ugly, thick lips, and hair like tow, always sticking out and hanging down in disorder, like all the rest of her fittings out. Dirty, slatternly, always intriguing, pretending, enterprising, quarrelling—always low as the grass or high as the rainbow, according to the person with whom she had to deal: she was a blonde Fury, nay more, a harpy: she had all the effrontery of one, and the deceit and violence; all the avarice and the audacity; moreover, all the gluttony, and all the promptitude to relieve herself from the effects thereof; so that she drove out of their wits those at whose house she dined; was often a victim of her confidence; and was many a time sent to the devil by the servants of M. du Maine and M. le Grand. She, however, was never in the least embarrassed, tucked up her petticoats and went her way; then returned, saying she had been unwell. People were accustomed to it.

Whenever money was to be made by scheming and bribery, she was there to make it. At play she always cheated, and if found out stormed and raged; but pocketed what she had won. People looked upon her as they would have looked upon a fish-fag, and did not like to commit themselves by quarrelling with her. At the end of every game she used to say that she gave whatever might have been unfairly gained to those who had gained it, and hoped that others would do likewise. For she was very devout by profession, and thought by so doing to put her conscience in safety; because, she used to add, in play there is always some mistake. She went to church always, and constantly took the sacrament, very often after having played until four o'clock in the morning.

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One day, when there was a grand fete at Fontainebleau, Madame la Marechale de Villeroy persuaded her, out of malice, to sit down and play, instead of going to evening prayers. She resisted some time, saying that Madame de Maintenon was going; but the Marechale laughed at her for believing that her patron could see who was and who was not at the chapel: so down they sat to play. When the prayers were over, Madame de Maintenon, by the merest accident—for she scarcely ever visited any one —went to the apartments of the Marechale de Villeroy. The door was flung back, and she was announced. This was a thunderbolt for the Princesse d'Harcourt. "I am ruined," cried she, unable to restrain herself; "she will see me playing, and I ought to have been at chapel!" Down fell the cards from her hands, and down fell she all abroad in her chair. The Marechale laughed most heartily at so complete an adventure. Madame de Maintenon entered slowly, and found the Princess in this state, with five or six persons. The Marechale de Villeroy, who was full of wit, began to say that, whilst doing her a great honour, Madame was the cause of great disorder; and showed her the Princesse d'Harcourt in her state of discomfiture. Madame de Maintenon smiled with majestic kindness, and addressing the Princesse d'Harcourt, "Is this the way," said she; "that you go to prayers?" Thereupon the Princess flew out of her half-faint into a sort of fury; said that this was the kind of trick that was played off upon her; that no doubt the Marechale knew that Madame de Maintenon was coming, and for that reason had persecuted her to play. "Persecuted!" exclaimed the Marechale, "I thought I could not receive you better than by proposing a game; it is true you were for a moment troubled at missing the chapel, but your tastes carried the day. —This, Madame, is my whole crime," continued she, addressing Madame de Maintenon. Upon this, everybody laughed louder than before: Madame de Maintenon, in order to stop the quarrel; commanded them both to continue their game; and they continued accordingly, the Princesse d'Harcourt, still grumbling, quite beside herself, blinded with fury, so as to commit fresh mistakes every minute. So ridiculous an adventure diverted the Court for several days; for this beautiful Princess was equally feared, hated, and despised.

Monseigneur le Duc and Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne continually played off pranks upon her. They put, one day, crackers all along the avenue of the chateau at Marly, that led to the Perspective where she lodged. She was horribly afraid of everything. The Duke and Duchess bribed two porters to be ready to take her into the mischief. When she was right in the middle of the avenue the crackers began to go off; and she to cry aloud for mercy; the chairman set her down and ran for it. There she was, then, struggling in her chair, furiously enough to upset it, and yelling like a demon. At this

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the company, which had gathered at the door of the chateau to see the fun, ran to her assistance, in order to have the pleasure of enjoying the scene more fully. Thereupon she set to abusing everybody right and left, commencing with Monseigneur and Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne. At another time M. de Bourgogne put a cracker under her chair in the salon, where she was playing at piquet. As he was about to set fire to this cracker, some charitable soul warned him that it would maim her, and he desisted.

Sometimes they used to send about twenty Swiss guards, with drums, into her chamber, who roused her from her first sleep by their horrid din. Another time—and these scenes were always at Marly—they waited until very late for her to go to bed and sleep. She lodged not far from the post of the captain of the guards, who was at that time the Marechal de Lorges. It had snowed very hard, and had frozen. Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne and her suite gathered snow from the terrace which is on a level with their lodgings; and, in order to be better supplied, waked up, to assist them, the Marechal's people, who did not let them want for ammunition. Then, with a false key, and lights, they gently slipped into the chamber of the Princesse d'Harcourt; and, suddenly drawing the curtains of her bed, pelted her amain with snowballs. The filthy creature, waking up with a start, bruised and stifled in snow, with which even her ears were filled, with dishevelled hair, yelling at the top of her voice, and wriggling like an eel, without knowing where to hide, formed a spectacle that diverted people more than half an hour: so that at last the nymph swam in her bed, from which the water flowed everywhere, slushing all the chamber. It was enough to make one die of laughter. On the morrow she sulked, and was more than ever laughed at for her pains.

Her fits of sulkiness came over her either when the tricks played were too violent, or when M. le Grand abused her. He thought, very properly, that a person who bore the name of Lorraine should not put herself so much on the footing of a buffoon; and, as he was a rough speaker, he sometimes said the most abominable things to her at table; upon which the Princess would burst out crying, and then, being enraged, would sulk. The Duchesse de Bourgogne used then to pretend to sulk, too; but the other did not hold out long, and came crawling back to her, crying, begging pardon for having sulked, and praying that she might not cease to be a source of amusement! After some time the Duchess would allow herself to be melted, and the Princess was more villainously treated than ever, for the Duchesse de Bourgogne had her own way in everything. Neither the King nor Madame de Maintenon found fault with what she did, so that the Princesse d'Harcourt had no resource; she did not even dare to complain of those who aided in tormenting her; yet it would not have been prudent in any one to make her an enemy.

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The Princesse d'Harcourt paid her servants so badly that they concocted a plan, and one fine day drew up on the Pont Neuf. The coachman and footmen got down, and came and spoke to her at the door, in language she was not used to hear. Her ladies and chambermaid got down, and went away, leaving her to shift as she might. Upon this she set herself to harangue the blackguards who collected, and was only too happy to find a man, who mounted upon the seat and drove her home. Another time, Madame de Saint-Simon, returning from Versailles, overtook her, walking in full dress in the street, and with her train under her arms. Madame de Saint-Simon stopped, offered her assistance, and found that she had been left by her servants, as on the Pont Neuf. It was volume the second of that story; and even when she came back she found her house deserted, every one having gone away at once by agreement. She was very violent with her servants, beat them, and changed diem every day.

Upon one occasion, she took into her service a strong and robust chambermaid, to whom, from the first day of her arrival, she gave many slaps and boxes on the ear. The chambermaid said nothing, but after submitting to this treatment for five or six days, conferred with the other servants; and one morning, while in her mistress's room, locked the door without being perceived, said something to bring down punishment upon her, and at the first box on the ear she received, flew upon the Princesse d'Harcourt, gave her no end of thumps and slaps, knocked her down, kicked her, mauled her from her head to her feet, and when she was tired of this exercise, left her on the ground, all torn and dishevelled, howling like a devil. The chambermaid then quitted the room, double-locked the door on the outside, gained the staircase, and fled the house.

Every day the Princess was fighting, or mixed up in some adventures. Her neighbours at Marly said they could not sleep for the riot she made at night; and I remember that, after one of these scenes, everybody went to see the room of the Duchesse de Villeroy and that of Madame d'Espinoy, who had put their bed in the middle of their room, and who related their night vigils to every one.

Such was this favourite of Madame de Maintenon; so insolent and so insupportable to every one, but who had favours and preferences for those who brought her over, and who had raised so many young men, amassed their wealth, and made herself feared even by the Prince and minister.

CHAPTER XXVII

In a previous page I have alluded to the Princesse des Ursins, when she was appointed 'Camerera Mayor' to the Queen of Spain on her marriage. As I have now to occupy myself more particularly with her, it may be as well to give a description of this extraordinary woman, which I omitted when I first spoke of her.

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Anne Marie de la Tremoille, was daughter of M. de Noirmoutiers, who figured sufficiently in the troubles of the minority to be made a 'Duc a brevet'. She first married M. Talleyrand, who called himself Prince de Chalais, and who was obliged to quit the kingdom for engaging in the famous duel against Messieurs de la Frette. She followed her husband to Spain, where he died. Having gone to Rome, she got into favour with the Cardinals de Bouillon and d'Estrees, first on account of her name and nation, and afterwards for more tender reasons. In order to detain her at Rome, these dignitaries thought of obtaining her an establishment. She had no children, and almost no fortune, they wrote to Court that so important a man as the Duc de Bracciano, Prince des Ursins, was worth gaining; and that the way to arrive at this result was to have him married to Madame de Chalais. The Duke was persuaded by the two Cardinals that he was in love with Madame de Chalais: and so the affair was arranged. Madame des Ursins displayed all her wit and charms at Rome; and soon her palace became a sort of court, where all the best company assembled. It grew to be the fashion to go there.

The husband amidst all this counts for not much. There was sometimes a little disagreement between the two, without open rupture; yet they were now and then glad to separate. This is why the Duchesse de Bracciano made two journeys to France: the second time she spent four or five years there. It was then I knew her, or rather formed a particular friendship with her. My mother had made her acquaintance during her previous visit. She lodged near us. Her wit, her grace, her manners enchanted me: she received me with tenderness and I was always at her house. It was she who proposed to me a marriage with *Mlle. de Royan*, which I rejected for the reason already given.

When Madame des Ursins was appointed 'Camerera Mayor', she was a widow, without children. No one could have been better suited for the post. A lady of our court would not have done: a Spanish lady was not to be depended on, and might have easily disgusted the Queen. The Princesse des Ursins appeared to be a middle term. She was French, had been in Spain, and she passed a great part of her life at Rome, and in Italy. She was of the house of La Tremoille: her husband was chief of the house of Ursins, a grandee of Spain, and Prince of the Soglio. She was also on very good terms with the Duchess of Savoy, and with the Queen of Portugal. The Cardinal d'Estrees, also, was known to have remained her friend, after having been something more in their youth; and he gave information that the Cardinal Portocarrero had been much in love with her at Rome, and that they were then on very good terms. As it was through the latter Cardinal that it was necessary to govern everything, this circumstance was considered very important.

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Age and health were also appropriate; and likewise her appearance. She was rather tall than otherwise, a brunette, with blue eyes of the most varied expression, in figure perfect, with a most exquisite bosom; her face, without being beautiful, was charming; she was extremely noble in air, very majestic in demeanour, full of graces so natural and so continual in everything, that I have never seen any one approach her, either in form or mind. Her wit was copious and of all kinds: she was flattering, caressing, insinuating, moderate, wishing to please for pleasing's sake, with charms irresistible when she strove to persuade and win over; accompanying all this, she had a grandeur that encouraged instead of frightening; a delicious conversation, inexhaustible and very amusing, for she had seen many countries and persons; a voice and way of speaking extremely agreeable, and full of sweetness. She had read much, and reflected much. She knew how to choose the best society, how to receive them, and could even have held a court; was polite, distinguished; and above all was careful never to take a step in advance without dignity and discretion. She was eminently fitted for intrigue, in which, from taste; she had passed her time at Rome; with much ambition, but of that vast kind, far above her sex, and the common run of men—a desire to occupy a great position and to govern. A love for gallantry and personal vanity were her foibles, and these clung to her until her latest day; consequently, she dressed in a way that no longer became her, and as she advanced in life, removed further from propriety in this particular. She was an ardent and excellent friend—of a friendship that time and absence never enfeebled; and, consequently, an implacable enemy, pursuing her hatred to the infernal regions. While caring little for the means by which she gained her ends, she tried as much as possible to reach them by honest means. Secret, not only for herself, but for her friends, she was yet, of a decorous gaiety, and so governed her humours, that at all times and in everything she was mistress of herself. Such was the *Princesse des Ursins*.

From the first moment on which she entered the service of the Queen of Spain, it became her desire to govern not only the Queen, but the King; and by this means the realm itself. Such a grand project had need of support from our King, who, at the commencement, ruled the Court of Spain as much as his own Court, with entire influence over all matters.

The young Queen of Spain had been not less carefully educated than her sister, the *Duchesse de Bourgogne*. She had even when so young much intelligence and firmness, without being incapable of restraint; and as time went on, improved still further, and displayed a constancy and courage which were admirably set off by her meekness and natural graces. According to everything I have heard said in France and in Spain, she possessed all qualities that were necessary to make her adored. Indeed she became a divinity among the Spaniards, and to their affection for her, Philip V. was more than once indebted for his crown. Lords, ladies, soldiers, and the people still remember her with tears in their eyes; and even after the lapse of so many years, are not yet consoled for her loss.

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Madame des Ursins soon managed to obtain the entire confidence of this Queen; and during the absence of Philip V. in Italy, assisted her in the administration of all public offices. She even accompanied her to the junta, it not being thought proper that the Queen should be alone amid such an assemblage of men. In this way she became acquainted with everything that was passing, and knew all the affairs of the Government.

This step gained, it will be imagined that the Princesse des Ursins did not forget to pay her court most assiduously to our King and to Madame de Maintenon. She continually sent them an exact account of everything relating to the Queen—making her appear in the most favourable light possible. Little by little she introduced into her letters details respecting public events; without, however, conveying a suspicion of her own ambition, or that she wished to meddle in these matters. Anchored in this way, she next began to flatter Madame de Maintenon, and by degrees to hint that she might rule over Spain, even more firmly than she ruled over France, if she would entrust her commands to Madame des Ursins. Madame des Ursins offered, in fact, to be the instrument of Madame de Maintenon; representing how much better it would be to rule affairs in this manner, than through the instrumentality of the ministers of either country.

Madame de Maintenon, whose passion it was to know everything, to mix herself in everything, and to govern everything, was, enchanted by the siren. This method of governing Spain without ministers appeared to her an admirable idea. She embraced it with avidity, without reflecting that she would govern only in appearance, since she would know nothing except through the Princesse des Ursins, see nothing except in the light in which she presented it. From that time dates the intimate union which existed between these two important women, the unbounded authority of Madame des Ursins, the fall of all those who had placed Philip V. upon the throne, and of all our ministers in Spain who stood in the way of the new power.

Such an alliance being made between the two women, it was necessary to draw the King of Spain into the same net. This was not a very arduous task. Nature and art indeed had combined to make it easy.

Younger brother of an excitable, violent, and robust Prince, Philip V, had been bred up in a submission and dependence that were necessary for the repose of the Royal family. Until the testament of Charles II., the Duc d'Anjou was necessarily regarded as destined to be a subject all his life; and therefore could not be too much abased by education, and trained to patience and obedience: That supreme law, the reason of state, demanded this preference, for the safety and happiness of the kingdom, of the elder over the younger brother. His mind for this reason was purposely narrowed and beaten down, and his natural docility and gentleness greatly assisted in the process,

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He was quite formed to be led, although he had enough judgment left to choose the better of two courses proposed to him, and even to express himself in good phrase, when the slowness, not to say the laziness, of his mind did not prevent him from speaking at all. His great piety contributed to weaken his mind; and, being joined to very lively passions, made it disagreeable and even dangerous for him to be separated from his Queen. It may easily be conceived, therefore, how he loved her; and that he allowed himself to be guided by her in all things. As the Queen herself was guided in all things by Madame des Ursins, the influence of this latter was all-powerful.

Soon, indeed, the junta became a mere show. Everything was brought before the King in private, and he gave no decision until the Queen and Madame des Ursins had passed theirs. This conduct met with no opposition from our Court, but our ministers at the Court of Spain and the Spanish ministers here soon began to complain of it. The first to do so were Cardinals d'Estrees and Portocarrero. Madame de Maintenon laughed at them, and Madame des Ursins, of whom they were old friends, soon showed them that she did not mean to abate one jot of her power. She first endeavoured to bring about a coldness between the two, and this succeeded so well, that in consequence of the quarrels that resulted, the Spanish Cardinal, Portocarrero (who, it will be remembered, had played an important part in bringing Philip to the Spanish throne) wished to quit the junta. But Madame des Ursins, who thought that the time had not yet arrived for this step, persuaded him to remain, and endeavoured to flatter his vanity by an expedient altogether ridiculous. She gave him the command of a regiment of guards, and he, priest, archbishop, primate and cardinal, accepted it, and was, of course, well laughed at by everybody for his pains. The two cardinals soon after became reconciled to each other, feeling, perhaps, the necessity of uniting against the common enemy. But they could come to no better understanding with her. Disagreements continued, so that at last, feeling her position perfectly secure, the Princesse des Ursins begged permission to retire into Italy, knowing full well that she would not be taken at her word, and hoping by this means to deliver herself of these stumbling-blocks in her path.

Our ministers, who felt they would lose all control over Spanish affairs if Madame des Ursins was allowed to remain mistress, did all in their power to support the D'Estrees. But Madame de Maintenon pleaded so well with the King, representing the good policy of allowing a woman so much attached to him, and to the Spanish Queen, as was Madame des Ursins, to remain where she was, that he entirely swallowed the bait; the D'Estrees were left without support; the French ambassador at Madrid was virtually deprived of all power: the Spanish ministers were fettered in their every movement, and the authority of Madame des Ursins became stronger than ever. All public affairs passed through her hands. The King decided nothing without conferring with the Queen and her.

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While excluding almost all the ministers from public offices, Madame des Ursins admitted a few favourites into her confidence. Amongst them was D'Harcourt, who stood well with Madame de Maintenon, and who cared little for the means by which he obtained consideration; Orry, who had the management of the finances; and D'Aubigny, son of a Procureur in Paris. The last was a tall, handsome fellow, well made, and active in mind and body; who for many years had been with the Princess, as a sort of squire, and on very intimate terms with her. One day, when, followed by some of the ministers, she entered a room in which he was writing, he burst out into exclamations against her, without being aware that she was not alone, swore at her, asked her why she could not leave him an hour in peace, called her by the strangest names, and all this with so much impetuosity that she had no time to show him who were behind her. When he found it out, he ran from the room, leaving Madame des Ursins so confused that the ministers looked for two or three minutes upon the walls of the room in order to give her time to recover herself. Soon after this, D'Aubigny had a splendid suite of apartments, that had formerly been occupied by Maria Theresa (afterwards wife of Louis XIV.), placed at his disposal, with some rooms added, in despite of the murmurs that arose at a distinction so strange accorded to this favourite.

At length, Cardinal d'Estrees, continually in arms against Madame des Ursins, and continually defeated, could not bear his position any longer, but asked to be immediately recalled. All that the ministry could do was to obtain permission for the Abbe d'Estrees (nephew of the Cardinal) to remain as Ambassador of France at Madrid. As for Portocarrero, seeing the step his associate had taken, he resolved to quit public business also, and resigned his place accordingly. Several others who stood in the way of the Princesse des Ursins were got rid of at the same time, so that she was now left mistress of the field. She governed absolutely in all things; the ministers became instruments in her hands; the King and Queen agents to work out her will. She was at the highest pinnacle of power. Together with Orry she enjoyed a power such as no one had ever attained since the time of the Duke of Lerma and of Olivares.

In the mean time the Archduke was declared King of Spain by the Emperor, who made no mystery of his intention of attacking Spain by way of Portugal. The Archduke soon afterwards was recognised by Holland, England, Portugal, Brandenburg, Savoy, and Hanover, as King of Spain, under the title of Charles III., and soon after by the other powers of Europe. The Duke of Savoy had been treacherous to us, had shown that he was in league with the Emperor. The King accordingly had broken off all relations with him, and sent an army to invade his territory. It need be no cause of surprise, therefore, that the Archduke was recognised by Savoy. While our armies were fighting with varied fortune those of the Emperor and his allies, in different parts of Europe, notably upon the Rhine, Madame des Ursins was pressing matters to extremities in Spain. Dazzled by her success in expelling the two cardinals from public affairs, and all the ministers who had assisted in placing Philip V. upon the throne, she committed a blunder of which she soon had cause to repent.

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I have said, that when Cardinal d'Estrees quitted Spain, the Abbe d'Estrees was left behind, so that France should not be altogether unrepresented in an official manner at the Court of Madrid. Madame des Ursins did not like this arrangement, but as Madame de Maintenon insisted upon it, she was obliged to accept it with as good grace as possible. The Abbe, vain of his family and of his position, was not a man much to be feared as it seemed. Madame des Ursins accordingly laughed at and despised him. He was admitted to the council, but was quite without influence there, and when he attempted to make any representations to Madame des Ursins or to Orry, they listened to him without attending in the least to what he said. The Princess reigned supreme, and thought of nothing but getting rid of all who attempted to divide her authority. At last she obtained such a command over the poor Abbe d'Estrees, so teased and hampered him, that he consented to the hitherto unheard-of arrangement, that the Ambassador of France should not write to the King without first concerting his letter with her, and then show her its contents before he despatched it. But such restraint as this became, in a short time, so fettering, that the Abbe determined to break away from it. He wrote a letter to the King, without showing it to Madame des Ursins. She soon had scent of what he had done; seized the letter as it passed through the post, opened it, and, as she expected, found its contents were not of a kind to give her much satisfaction. But what piqued her most was, to find details exaggerating the authority of D'Aubigny, and a statement to the effect that it was generally believed she had married him. Beside herself with rage and vexation, she wrote with her own hand upon the margin of the letter, 'Pour mariee non' ("At any rate, not married"), showed it in this state to the King and Queen of Spain, to a number of other people, always with strange clamouring, and finally crowned her folly by sending it to the King (Louis XIV.), with furious complaints against the Abbe for writing it without her knowledge, and for inflicting upon her such an atrocious injury as to mention this pretended marriage. Her letter and its enclosure reached the King at a very inopportune moment. Just before, he had received a letter, which, taken in connection with this of the Princesse des Ursins, struck a blow at her power of the most decisive kind.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Some little time previously it had been thought necessary to send an army to the frontiers of Portugal to oppose the Archduke. A French general was wanted to command this army. Madame des Ursins, who had been very intimate with the King of England (James II.) and his Queen, thought she would please them if she gave this post to the Duke of Berwick, illegitimate son of King James. She proposed this therefore; and our King, out of regard for his brother monarch, and from a natural affection for bastards, consented to the appointment; but as the Duke of Berwick had never before commanded an army, he stipulated that Pursegur, known to be a skilful officer, should go with him and assist him with his counsels and advice.

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Pursegur set out before the Duke of Berwick. From the Pyrenees as far as Madrid, he found every provision made for the subsistence of the French troops, and sent a very advantageous account to the King of this circumstance. Arrived at Madrid, he had interviews with Orry (who, as I have already mentioned, had the finances under his control, and who was a mere instrument in the hands of Madame des Ursins), and was assured by the minister that all the magazines along the line of route to the frontiers of Portugal were abundantly filled with supplies for the French troops, that all the money necessary was ready; and that nothing, in fact, should fail in the course of the campaign. Pursegur, who had found nothing wanting up to that time, never doubted but that these statements were perfectly correct; and had no suspicion that a minister would have the effrontery to show him in detail all these precautions if he had taken none. Pleased, then, to the utmost degree, he wrote to the King in praise of Orry, and consequently of Madame des Ursins and her wise government. Full of these ideas, he set out for the frontier of Portugal to reconnoitre the ground himself, and arrange everything for the arrival of the army and its general. What was his surprise, when he found that from Madrid to the frontier not a single preparation had been made for the troops, and that in consequence all that Orry had shown him, drawn out upon paper, was utterly fictitious. His vexation upon finding that nothing upon which he had reckoned was provided, may be imagined. He at once wrote to the King, in order to contradict all that he had recently written.

This conduct of Orry—his impudence, I may say—in deceiving a man who immediately after would have under his eyes the proof of his deceit, is a thing past all comprehension. It is easy to understand that rogues should steal, but not that they should have the audacity to do so in the face of facts which so quickly and so easily could prove their villainy.

It was Pursegur's letter then, detailing this rascality on the part of Orry, that had reached the King just before that respecting the Abbe d'Estrees. The two disclosed a state of things that could not be allowed any longer to exist. Our ministers, who, step by step, had been deprived of all control over the affairs of Spain, profited by the discontentment of the King to reclaim their functions. Harcourt and Madame de Maintenon did all they could to ward off the blow from Madame des Ursins, but without effect. The King determined to banish her to Rome and to dismiss Orry from his post.

It was felt, however, that these steps must be taken cautiously, to avoid offending too deeply the King and Queen of Spain, who supported their favourite through every emergency.

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In the first place, then, a simple reprimand was sent to the Princesse des Ursins for the violation of the respect due to the King, by opening a letter addressed to him by one of his ambassadors. The Abbe d'Estrees, who expected that Madame des Ursins would be at once disgraced, and who had made a great outcry when his letter was opened, fell into such despair when he saw how lightly she was let off, that he asked for his dismissal. He was taken at his word; and this was a new triumph for Madame des Ursins, who thought herself more secure than ever. Her triumph was of but short duration. The King wrote to Philip, recommending him to head in person the army for the frontiers of Portugal, which, in spite of Orry's deception, it was still determined to send. No sooner was Philip fairly away, separated from the Queen and Madame des Ursins, and no longer under their influence, than the King wrote to the Queen of Spain, requesting her, in terms that could not be disputed, to dismiss at once and for ever her favourite 'Camerera Mayor'. The Queen, in despair at the idea of losing a friend and adviser to whom she had been so much attached, believed herself lost. At the same time that the King wrote to the Queen of Spain, he also wrote to the Princesse des Ursins, ordering her to quit Madrid immediately, to leave Spain, and to retire into Italy.

At this conjuncture of affairs, when the Queen was in despair, Madame des Ursins did not lose her composure. She opened her eyes to all that had passed since she had violated D'Estrees' letter, and saw the vanity of the triumph she had recently enjoyed. She felt at once that for the present all was lost, that her only hope was to be allowed to remain in France. She made all her arrangements, therefore, so that affairs might proceed in her absence as much as possible as though she were present, and then prepared to set out. Dawdling day by day, she put off her departure as long as could be, and when at length she left Madrid only went to Alcala, a few leagues distant. She stopped there under various pretexts, and at length, after five weeks of delay, set out for Bayonne, journeying as slowly as she could and stopping as often as she dared.

She lost no opportunity of demanding an audience at Versailles, in order to clear herself of the charge which weighed upon her, and her importunities at length were not without effect. The most terrible storms at Court soon blow over. The King (Louis XIV.) was satisfied with the success of his plans. He had been revenged in every way, and had humbled the pride of the Princesse des Ursins. It was not necessary to excite the anger of the Queen and King of Spain by too great harshness against their fallen friend. Madame de Maintenon took advantage of this change in the temper of the King, and by dint of persuasion and scheming succeeded in obtaining from him the permission for Madame des Ursins to remain in France. Toulouse was fixed upon for her residence. It was a place that just suited her, and from which communication with Spain was easy. Here accordingly she took up her residence, determined to watch well the course of events, and to avail herself of every opportunity that could bring about her complete reconciliation with the King (Louis XIV.), and obtain for her in consequence the permission to return to Madrid.

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In the mean time, the King and Queen of Spain, distressed beyond measure at the loss of their favourite, thought only of the best means of obtaining her recall. They plotted with such ministers as were favourable to her; they openly quarrelled with and thwarted those who were her opponents, so that the most important matters perished in their hands. Nay more, upon the King of Spain's return, the Queen persuaded him to oppose in all things the wishes of the King (Louis XIV.), his grandfather, and to neglect his counsels with studied care. Our King complained of this with bitterness. The aim of it was to tire him out, and to make him understand that it was only Madame des Ursins, well treated and sent back, who could restore Spanish affairs to their original state, and cause his authority to be respected. Madame de Maintenon, on her side, neglected no opportunity of pressing the King to allow Madame des Ursins, not to return into Spain—that would have been to spoil all by asking too much but simply to come to Versailles in order to have the opportunity of justifying herself for her past conduct. From other quarters the King was similarly importuned. Tired at last of the obstinate opposition he met with in Spain from the Queen; who governed completely her husband, he gave permission to Madame des Ursins to come to Versailles to plead her own cause. Self-imprisoned as he was in seclusion, the truth never approached him, and he was the only man in the two kingdoms who had no suspicion that the arrival of Madame des Ursins at the Court was the certain sign of her speedy return to Spain more powerful than ever. But he was fatigued with the constant resistance he met with; with the disorder which this occasioned in public affairs at a time too when, as I will afterwards explain, the closest union was necessary between the two crowns in order to repel the common enemy, and these motives induced him, to the astonishment of his ministers, to grant the favour requested of him.

However well informed Madame des Ursins might be of all that was being done on her account, this permission surpassed her hopes. Her joy accordingly was very great; but it did not at all carry her away. She saw that her return to Spain would now depend upon herself. She determined to put on the air of one who is disgraced, but who hopes, and yet is humiliated. She instructed all her friends to assume the same manner; took all measures with infinite presence of mind; did not hurry her departure, and yet set out with sufficient promptness to prevent any coldness springing up, and to show with what eagerness she profited by the favour accorded to her, and which she had so much wished.

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No sooner was the courier gone who carried this news to her, than the rumour of her return was whispered all over the Court, and became publicly confirmed a few days afterwards. The movement that it produced at Court was inconceivable. Only the friends of Madame des Ursins were able to remain in a tolerably tranquil state. Everybody opened his eyes and comprehended that the return of such an important personage was a fact that could not be insignificant. People prepared themselves for a sort of rising sun that was going to change and renew many things in nature. On every side were seen people who had scarcely ever uttered her name, and who now boasted of their intimacy with her and of her friendship for them. Other people were seen, who, although openly allied with her enemies, had the baseness to affect transports of joy at her forthcoming return, and to flatter those whom they thought likely to favour them with her.

She reached Paris on Sunday, the 4th of January, 1705. The Duc d'Albe met her several miles out of the city, escorted her to his house, and gave a fete in her honour there. Several persons of distinction went out to meet her. Madame des Ursins had reason to be surprised at an entry so triumphant: she would not, however, stay with the Duc and Duchesse d'Albe, but took up her quarters with the Comtesse d'Egmont, niece of the Archbishop of Aix; the said Archbishop having been instrumental in obtaining her recall. The King was at Marly. I was there with Madame de Saint-Simon. During the remainder of the stay at Marly everybody flocked to the house of Madame des Ursins, anxious to pay her their court. However flattered she may have been by this concourse, she had matters to occupy her, pleaded want of repose, and shut her door to three people out of four who called upon her. Curiosity, perhaps fashion, drew this great crowd to her. The ministers were startled by it. Torcy had orders from the King to go, and see her: he did so; and from that moment Madame des Ursins changed her tone. Until then her manner had been modest, supplicating, nearly timid. She now saw and heard so much that from defendant, which she had intended to be, she thought herself in a condition to become accuser; and to demand justice of those who, abusing the confidence of the King, had drawn upon her such a long and cruel punishment, and made her a show for the two kingdoms. All that happened to her surpassed her hopes. Several times when with me she has expressed her astonishment; and with me has laughed at many people, often of much consideration, whom she scarcely knew, or who had been strongly opposed to her, and who basely crouched at her feet.

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The King returned to Versailles on Saturday, the 10th of January. Madame des Ursins arrived there the same day. I went immediately to see her, not having been able to do so before, because I could not quit Marly. My mother had seen a great deal of Madame des Ursins at Paris. I had always been on good terms with her, and had received on all occasions proofs of her friendship. She received me very well, spoke with much freedom, and said she promised herself the pleasure of seeing me again, and of talking with me more at her ease. On, the morrow, Sunday, she dined at home alone, dressed herself in grand style, and went to the King, with whom she remained alone two hours and a half conversing in his cabinet. From there she went to the Duchesse de Bourgogne, with whom she also conversed a long time alone. In the evening, the King said, while in Madame de Maintenon's apartments, that there were still many things upon which he had not yet spoken to Madame des Ursins. The next day she saw Madame de Maintenon in private for a long time, and much at her ease. She had an interview soon after with the King and Madame de Maintenon, which was also very long.

A month after this a special courier arrived from the King and Queen of Spain, to thank the King (Louis XIV.) for his conduct towards the Princesse des Ursins. From that moment it was announced that she would remain at Court until the month of April, in order to attend to her affairs and her health. It was already to have made a grand step to be mistress enough to announce thus her stay. Nobody in truth doubted of her return to Spain, but the word was not yet said. She avoided all explanations, and it may be believed did not have many indiscreet questions put to her upon the subject.

So many and such long audiences with the King, followed by so much serenity, had a great effect upon the world, and the crowd that flocked to see Madame des Ursins was greater than ever; but under various pretences she shut herself up and would see only a few intimate friends, foremost among which were Madame de Saint-Simon and myself. Whilst triumphant beyond all her hopes in Paris, she was at work in Spain, and with equal success. Rivas, who had drawn up the will of the late King Charles II., was disgraced, and never afterwards rose to favour. The Duc de Grammont, our ambassador at Madrid, was so overwhelmed with annoyance, that he asked for his recall. Amelot, whom Madame des Ursins favoured, was appointed in his place, and many who had been disgraced were reinstated in office; everything was ordered according to her wishes.

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We returned to Marly, where many balls took place. It need not be doubted that Madame des Ursins was among the invited. Apartments were given her, and nothing could equal the triumphant air with which she took possession of them, the continual attentions of the King to her, as though she were some little foreign queen just arrived at his Court, or the majestic fashion in which she received them, mingled with grace and respectful politeness, then almost out of date, and which recalled the stately old dames of the Queen-mother. She never came without the King, who appeared to be completely occupied with her, talking with her, pointing out objects for her inspection, seeking her opinion and her approbation with an air of gallantry, even of flattery, which never ceased. The frequent private conversations that she had with him in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, and which lasted an hour, and sometimes double that time; those that she very often had in the morning alone with Madame de Maintenon, rendered her the divinity of the Court. The Princesses encircled her the moment she appeared anywhere, and went to see her in her chamber. Nothing was more surprising than the servile eagerness with which the greatest people, the highest in power and the most in favour, clustered around her. Her very glances were counted, and her words, addressed even to ladies of the highest rank, imprinted upon them a look of rapture.

I went nearly every morning to her house: she always rose very early, dressed herself at once, so that she was never seen at her toilette. I was in advance of the hour fixed for the most important visitors, and we talked with the same liberty as of yore. I learnt from her many details, and the opinion of the King and of Madame de Maintenon upon many people. We often used to laugh in concert at the truckling to her of persons the most considerable, and of the disdain they drew upon themselves, although she did not testify it to them. We laughed too at the falsehood of others, who after having done her all the injury in their power ever since her arrival, lavished upon her all kinds of flatteries, and boasted of their affection for her and of zeal in her cause. I was flattered with this confidence of the dictatress of the Court. It drew upon me a sudden consideration; for people of the greatest distinction often found me alone with her in the morning, and the messengers who rained down at that time reported that they had found me with her, and that they had not been able to speak to her. Oftentimes in the salon she called me to her, or at other times I went to her and whispered a word in her ear, with an air of ease and liberty much envied but little imitated. She never met Madame de Saint-Simon without going to her, praising her, making her join in the conversation that was passing around; oftentimes leading her to the glass and adjusting her head-dress or her robe as she might have done in private to a daughter. People asked with surprise and much annoyance whence came such a great friendship which had never been suspected by anybody? What completed the torment of the majority, was to see Madame des Ursins, as soon as she quitted the chamber of Madame de Maintenon, go immediately to Madame de Saint-Simon, lead her aside, and speak to her in a low tone. This opened the eyes of everybody and drew upon us many civilities.

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A more solid gratification to us were the kind things Madame des Ursins said in our behalf to the King and Madame de Maintenon. She spoke in the highest praise of Madame de Saint-Simon, and declared that there was no woman at Court so fitting as she, so expressly made by her virtue, good conduct, and ability, to be lady of the Palace, or even lady-of-honour to Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne, should the post become vacant. Madame des Ursins did not forget me; but a woman was more susceptible of her praise. It made, therefore, all the more impression. This kind manner towards us did not change during all her stay at Court.

At all the balls which Madame des Ursins attended, she was treated with much distinction, and at one she obtained permission for the Duc and Duchesse d'Albe to be present, but with some little trouble. I say with some little trouble, because no ambassador, no foreigner, had ever, with one exception, been admitted to Marly. It was a great favour, therefore, for Madame des Ursins to obtain. The King, too, treated the Duc and Duchesse d'Albe, throughout the evening with marked respect, and placed the latter in the most distinguished position, not only in the ball-room but at supper. When he went to bed, too, he gave the Duc d'Albe his candlestick; an honour the importance of which I have already described.

At the other balls Madame des Ursins seated herself near the Grand Chamberlain, and looked at everybody with her lorgnette. At every moment the King turned round to speak to her and Madame de Maintenon, who came for half an hour or so to these balls, and on her account displaced the Grand Chamberlain, who put himself behind her. In this manner she joined Madame des Ursins, and was close to the King—the conversation between the three being continual. What appeared extremely singular was to see Madame des Ursins in the salon with a little spaniel in her arms, as though she had been in her own house. People could not sufficiently express their astonishment at a familiarity which even Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne would not have dared to venture; still less could they do so when they saw the King caress this little dog over and over again. In fine, such a high flight has never been seen. People could not accustom themselves to it, and those who knew the King and his Court are surprised still, when they think of it, after so many years. There was no longer any doubt that Madame des Ursins would return into Spain. All her frequent private conversations with the King and Madame de Maintenon were upon that country. I will only add here that her return took place in due time; and that her influence became more paramount than ever.

CHAPTER XXIX

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In relating what happened to Madame des Ursins upon her return to Spain, I have carried the narrative into the year 1705. It is not necessary to retrace our steps. Towards the end of 1703 Courtin died. He had early shone at the Council, and had been made Intendant of Picardy. M. de Chaulnes, whose estates were there, begged him to tax them as lightly as possible. Courtin, who was a very intimate friend of M. de Chaulnes, complied with his request; but the next year, in going over his accounts, he found that to do a good turn to M. de Chaulnes he had done an ill turn to many others—that is to say, he had relieved M. de Chaulnes at the expense of other parishes, which he had overcharged. The trouble this caused him made him search deeply into the matter, and he found that the wrong he had done amounted to forty thousand francs. Without a second thought he paid back this money, and asked to be recalled. As he was much esteemed, his request was not at once complied with, but he represented so well that he could not pass his life doing wrong, and unable to serve his friends, that at last what he asked was granted. He afterwards had several embassies, went to England as ambassador, and was very successful in that capacity. I cannot quit Courtin without relating an adventure he had one day with Fieubet, a Councillor of State like himself. As they were going to Saint Germain they were stopped by several men and robbed; robbery was common in those days, and Fieubet lost all he had in his pockets. When the thieves had left them, and while Fieubet was complaining of his misfortune, Courtin began to applaud himself for having saved his watch and fifty pistoles that he had time to slip into his trowsers. Immediately on hearing this, Fieubet put his head out of the coach window, and called back the thieves, who came sure enough to see what he wanted.

“Gentlemen,” said he, “you appear to be honest folks in distress; it is not reasonable that you should be the dupes of this gentleman, who has swindled you out of fifty pistoles and his watch.” And then turning to Courtin, he smilingly said: “You told me so yourself, monsieur; so give the things up like a man, without being searched.”

The astonishment and indignation of Courtin were such that he allowed money and watch to be taken from him without uttering a single word; but when the thieves were gone away, he would have strangled Fieubet had not this latter been the stronger of the two. Fieubet only laughed at him; and upon arriving at Saint Germain told the adventure to everybody he met. Their friends had all the trouble in the world to reconcile them.

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The year finished with an affair in which I was not a little interested. During the year there were several grand fetes, at which the King went to High Mass and vespers. On these occasions a lady of the Court, named by the Queen, or when there was none, by the Dauphiness, made a collection for the poor. The house of Lorraine, always anxious to increase its importance, shirked impudently this duty, in order thereby to give itself a new distinction, and assimilate its rank to that of the Princes of the blood. It was a long time before this was perceived. At last the Duchesse de Noailles, the Duchesse de Guiche, her daughter, the Marechal de Boufflers, and others, took notice of it; and I was soon after informed of it. I determined that the matter should be arranged, and that justice should be done.

The Duchesse de Lude was first spoken to on the subject; she, weak and timid, did not dare to do anything; but at last was induced to speak to Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne, who, wishing to judge for herself as to the truth of the matter, ordered Madame de Montbazon to make the collection for the poor at the next fete that took place. Although very well, Madame de Montbazon pretended to be ill, stopped in bed half a day, and excused herself on this ground from performing the duty. Madame de Bourgogne was annoyed, but she did not dare to push matters farther; and, in consequence of this refusal, none of the Duchesses would make the collection. Other ladies of quality soon perceived this, and they also refused to serve; so that the collection fell into all sorts of hands, and sometimes was not made at all. Matters went on so far, indeed, that the King at last grew angry, and threatened to make Madame de Bourgogne herself take this office. But refusals still followed upon refusals, and the bomb thus at length was ready to burst.

The King, who at last ordered the daughter of M. le Grand to take the plate on New Year's Day, 1704., had, it seems, got scent of the part I was taking in this matter, and expressed himself to Madame de Maintenon, as I learnt, as very discontented with me and one or two other Dukes. He said that the Dukes were much less obedient to him than the Princes; and that although many Duchesses had refused to make the collection, the moment he had proposed that the daughter of M. le Grand should take it, M. le Grand consented. On the next day, early in the morning, I saw Chamillart, who related to me that on the previous evening, before he had had time to open his business, the King had burst out in anger against me, saying it was very strange, but that since I had quitted the army I did nothing but meddle in matters of rank and bring actions against everybody; finishing, by declaring that if he acted well he should send me so far away that I should be unable to importune him any more. Chamillart added, that he had done all in his power to appease the King, but with little effect.

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After consulting with my friends, I determined to go up to the King and boldly ask to speak to him in his cabinet, believing that to be the wisest course I could pursue. He was not yet so reconciled to me as he afterwards became, and, in fact, was sorely out of humour with me. This step did not seem, therefore, altogether unattended with danger; but, as I have said, I resolved to take it. As he passed, therefore, from his dinner that same day, I asked permission to follow him into his cabinet. Without replying to me, he made a sign that I might enter, and went into the embrasure of the window.

When we were quite alone I explained, at considerable length, my reasons for acting in this matter, declaring that it was from no disrespect to his Majesty that I had requested Madame de Saint-Simon and the other Duchesses to refuse to collect for the poor, but simply to bring those to account who had claimed without reason to be exempt from this duty. I added, keeping my eyes fixed upon the King all the time, that I begged him to believe that none of his subjects were more submissive to his will or more willing to acknowledge the supremacy of his authority in all things than the Dukes. Until this his tone and manner had been very severe; but now they both softened, and he said, with much goodness and familiarity, that “that was how it was proper to speak and think,” and other remarks equally gracious. I took then the opportunity of expressing the sorrow I felt at seeing, that while my sole endeavour was to please him, my enemies did all they could to blacken me in his eyes, indicating that I suspected M. le Grand, who had never pardoned me for the part I took in the affair of the Princesse d’Harcourt, was one of the number. After I had finished the King remained still a moment, as if ready to hear if I had anything more to say, and then quitted me with a bow, slight but very gracious, saying it was well, and that he was pleased with me.

I learnt afterwards that he said the same thing of me in the evening to Chamillart, but, nevertheless, that he did not seem at all shaken in his prejudice in favour of M. le Grand. The King was in fact very easy to prejudice, difficult to lead back, and most unwilling to seek enlightenment, or to listen to any explanations, if authority was in the slightest degree at stake. Whoever had the address to make a question take this shape, might be assured that the King would throw aside all consideration of justice, right, and reason, and dismiss all evidence. It was by playing on this chord that his ministers knew how to manage him with so much art, and to make themselves despotic masters, causing him to believe all they wished, while at the same time they rendered him inaccessible to explanation, and to those who might have explained.

I have, perhaps, too much expanded an affair which might have been more compressed. But in addition to the fact that I was mixed up in it, it is by these little private details, as it seems to me, that the characters of the Court and King are best made known.

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In the early part of the next year, 1704., the King made La Queue, who was a captain of cavalry, campmaster. This La Queue was seigneur of the place of which he bore the name, distant six leagues from Versailles, and as much from Dreux. He had married a girl that the King had had by a gardener's wife. Bontems, the confidential valet of the King, had brought about the marriage without declaring the names of the father or the mother of the girl; but La Queue knew it, and promised himself a fortune. The girl herself was tall and strongly resembled the King. Unfortunately for her, she knew the secret of her birth, and much envied her three sisters—recognised, and so grandly married. She lived on very good terms with her husband—always, however, in the greatest privacy—and had several children by him. La Queue himself, although by this marriage son-in-law of the King, seldom appeared at the Court, and, when there, was on the same footing as the simplest soldier. Bontems did not fail from time to time to give him money. The wife of La Queue lived very melancholily for twenty years in her village, never left it, and scarcely ever went abroad for fear of betraying herself.

On Wednesday, the 25th of June, Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne had a son born to him. This event caused great joy to the King and the Court. The town shared their delight, and carried their enthusiasm almost to madness, by the excess of their demonstration and their fetes. The King gave a fete at Marly, and made the most magnificent presents to Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne when she left her bed. But we soon had reason to repent of so much joy, for the child died in less than a year—and of so much money unwisely spent, in fetes when it was wanted for more pressing purposes. Even while these rejoicings were being celebrated, news reached us which spread consternation in every family, and cast a gloom over the whole city.

I have already said that a grand alliance, with the Emperor at its head, had been formed against France, and that our troops were opposing the Allies in various parts of Europe. The Elector of Bavaria had joined his forces to ours, and had already done us some service. On the 12th of August he led his men into the plain of Hochstedt, where, during the previous year, he had gained a victory over the Imperialists. In this plain he was joined by our troops, who took up positions right and left of him, under the command of Tallard and Marsin. The Elector himself had command of all. Soon after their arrival at Hochstedt, they received intelligence that Prince Eugene, with the Imperialist forces, and the Duke of Marlborough with the English were coming to meet them. Our generals had, however, all the day before them to choose their ground, and to make their dispositions. It would have been difficult to succeed worse, both with the one and the other. A brook, by no means of a miry kind, ran parallel to our army; and in front

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of it a spring, which formed a long and large quagmire, nearly separated the two lines of Marshal Tallard. It was a strange situation for a general to take up, who is master of a vast plain; and it became, as will be seen, a very sad one. At his extreme right was the large village of Blenheim, in which, by a blindness without example, he had placed twenty-six battalions of infantry, six regiments of dragoons, and a brigade of cavalry. It was an entire army merely for the purpose of holding this village, and supporting his right, and of course he had all these troops the less to aid him in the battle which took place. The first battle of Hochstedt afforded a lesson which ought to have been studied on this occasion. There were many officers present, too, who had been at that battle; but they were not consulted. One of two courses was open, either to take up a position behind the brook, and parallel to it, so as to dispute its passage with the enemies, or to take advantage of the disorder they would be thrown into in crossing it by attacking them then. Both these plans were good; the second was the better; but neither was adopted. What was done was, to leave a large space between our troops and the brook, that the enemy might pass at their ease, and be overthrown afterwards, as was said. With such dispositions it is impossible to doubt but that our chiefs were struck with blindness. The Danube flowed near enough to Blenheim to be of sufficient support to our right, better indeed than that village, which consequently there was no necessity to hold.

The enemies arrived on the 13th of August at the dawn, and at once took up their position on the banks of the brook. Their surprise must have been great to see our army so far off, drawn up in battle array. They profited by the extent of ground left to them, crossed the brook at nearly every point, formed themselves in several lines on the side to which they crossed, and then extended themselves at their ease, without receiving the slightest opposition. This is exact truth, but without any appearance of being so; and posterity will with difficulty believe it. It was nearly eight o'clock before all these dispositions, which our troops saw made without moving, were completed. Prince Eugene with his army had the right; the Duke of Marlborough the left. The latter thus opposed to the forces of Tallard, and Prince Eugene to those of Marsin.

The battle commenced; and in one part was so far favourable to us that the attack of Prince Eugene was repulsed by Marsin, who might have profited by this circumstance but for the unfortunate position of our right. Two things contributed to place us at a disadvantage. The second line, separated by the quagmire I have alluded to from the first line, could not sustain it properly; and in consequence of the long bend it was necessary to make round this quagmire, neither line, after receiving or making a charge, could retire

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quickly to rally and return again to the attack. As for the infantry, the twenty-six battalions shut up in Blenheim left a great gap in it that could not fail to, be felt. The English, who soon perceived the advantage they might obtain from this want of infantry, and from the difficulty with which our cavalry of the right was rallied, profited by these circumstances with the readiness of people who have plenty of ground at their disposal. They redoubled their charges, and to say all in one word, they defeated at their first attack all this army, notwithstanding the efforts of our general officers and of several regiments to repel them. The army of the Elector, entirely unsupported, and taken in flank by the English, wavered in its turn. All the valour of the Bavarians, all the prodigies of the Elector, were unable to remedy the effects of this wavering. Thus was seen, at one and the same time, the army of Tallard beaten and thrown into the utmost disorder; that of the Elector sustaining itself with great intrepidity, but already in retreat; and that of Marsin charging and gaining ground upon Prince Eugene. It was not until Marsin learnt of the defeat of Tallard and of the Elector, that he ceased to pursue his advantages, and commenced his retreat. This retreat he was able to make without being pursued.

[Illustration: After The Battle of Blenheim—Painted by R. Canton Woodville—354]

In the mean time the troops in Blenheim had been twice attacked, and had twice repulsed the enemy. Tallard had given orders to these troops on no account to leave their positions, nor to allow a single man even to quit them. Now, seeing his army defeated and in flight, he wished to countermand these orders. He was riding in hot haste to Blenheim to do so, with only two attendants, when all three were surrounded, recognised, and taken prisoners.

These troops shut up in Blenheim had been left under the command of Blansac, camp-marshal, and Clerembault, lieutenant-general. During the battle this latter was missed, and could nowhere be found. It was known afterwards that, for fear of being killed, he had endeavoured to escape across the Danube on horseback attended by a single valet. The valet passed over the river in safety, but his master went to the bottom. Blansac, thus left alone in command, was much troubled by the disorders he saw and heard, and by the want which he felt of fresh orders. He sent a messenger to Tallard for instructions how to act, but his messenger was stopped on the road, and taken prisoner. I only repeat what Blansac himself reported in his defence, which was equally ill-received by the King and the public, but which had no contradictors, for nobody was witness of what took place at Blenheim except those actually there, and they all, the principals at least, agreed in their story. What some of the soldiers said was not of a kind that could altogether be relied upon.

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While Blansac was in this trouble, he saw Denonville, one of our officers who had been taken prisoner, coming towards the village, accompanied by an officer who waved a handkerchief in the air and demanded a parley. Denonville was a young man, very handsome and well made, who being a great favourite with Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne had become presumptuous and somewhat audacious. Instead of speaking in private to Blansac and the other principal officers—since he had undertaken so strange a mission—Denonville, who had some intellect, plenty of fine talk, and a mighty opinion of himself, set to work haranguing the troops, trying to persuade them to surrender themselves prisoners of war, so that they might preserve themselves for the service of the King. Blansac, who saw the wavering this caused among the troops, sharply told Denonville to hold his tongue, and began himself to harangue the troops in a contrary spirit. But it was too late. The mischief was done. Only one regiment, that of Navarre, applauded him, all the rest maintained a dull silence. I remind my readers that it is Blansac's version of the story I am giving.

Soon after Denonville and his companion had returned to the enemy, an English lord came, demanding a parley with the commandant. He was admitted to Blansac, to whom he said that the Duke of Marlborough had sent him to say that he had forty battalions and sixty pieces of cannon at his disposal, with reinforcements to any extent at command; that he should surround the village on all sides; that the army of Tallard was in flight, and the remains of that of the Elector in retreat; that Tallard and many general officers were prisoners; that Blansac could hope for no reinforcements; and that, therefore, he had better at once make an honourable capitulation, and surrender, himself with all his men prisoners of war, than attempt a struggle in which he was sure to be worsted with great loss. Blansac wanted to dismiss this messenger at once, but the Englishman pressed him to advance a few steps out of the village, and see with his own eyes the defeat of the Electoral army, and the preparations that were made on the other side to continue the battle. Blansac accordingly, attended by one of his officers, followed this lord, and was astounded to see with his own eyes that all he had just heard was true. Returned into Bleinheim, Blansac assembled all his principal officers, made them acquainted with the proposition that had been made, and told them what he had himself seen. Every one comprehended what a frightful shock it would be for the country when it learnt that they had surrendered themselves prisoners of war; but all things well considered, it was thought best to accept these terms, and so preserve to the King the twenty-six battalions and the twelve squadrons of dragoons who were there. This terrible capitulation was at once, therefore, drawn up and signed by Blansac, the general officers, and the heads of every corps except that of Navarre, which was thus the sole one which refused.

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The number of prisoners that fell to the enemy in this battle was infinite. The Duke of Marlborough took charge of the most distinguished, until he could carry them away to England, to grace his triumph there. He treated them all, even the humblest, with the utmost attention, consideration, and politeness, and with a modesty that did him even more honour than his victory. Those that came under the charge of Prince Louis of Baden were much less kindly treated.

The King received the cruel news of this battle on the 21st of August, by a courier from the Marechal de Villeroy. By this courier the King learnt that a battle had taken place on the 13th; had lasted from eight o'clock in the morning until evening; that the entire army of Tallard was killed or taken prisoners; that it was not known what had become of Tallard himself, or whether the Elector and Marsin had been at the action. The private letters that arrived were all opened to see what news they contained, but no fresh information could be got from them. For six days the King remained in this uncertainty as to the real losses that had been sustained. Everybody was afraid to write bad news; all the letters which from time to time arrived, gave, therefore, but an unsatisfactory account of what had taken place. The King used every means in his power to obtain some news. Every post that came in was examined by him, but there was little found to satisfy him. Neither the King nor anybody else could understand, from what had reached them, how it was that an entire army had been placed inside a village, and had surrendered itself by a signed capitulation. It puzzled every brain. At last the details, that had oozed out little by little, augmented to a perfect stream, by the arrival of one of our officers, who, taken prisoner, had been allowed by the Duke of Marlborough to go to Paris to relate to the King the misfortune that had happened to him.

We were not accustomed to misfortunes. This one, very reasonably, was utterly unexpected. It seemed in every way the result of bad generalship, of an unjustifiable disposition of troops, and of a series of gross and incredible errors. The commotion was general. There was scarcely an illustrious family that had not had one of its members killed, wounded, or taken prisoner. Other families were in the same case. The public sorrow and indignation burst out without restraint. Nobody who had taken part in this humiliation was spared; the generals and the private soldiers alike came in for blame. Denonville was ignominiously broken for the speech he had made at Blenheim. The generals, however, were entirely let off. All the punishment fell upon certain regiments, which were broken, and upon certain unimportant officers—the guilty and innocent mixed together. The outcry was universal. The grief of the King at this ignominy and this loss, at the moment when he imagined that the fate of the Emperor was in his hands, may be imagined. At a time when he might have counted upon striking a decisive blow, he saw himself reduced to act simply on the defensive, in order to preserve his troops; and had to repair the loss of an entire army, killed or taken prisoners. The sequel showed not less that the hand of God was weighty upon us. All judgment was lost. We trembled even in the midst of Alsace.

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In the midst of all this public sorrow, the rejoicing and the fetes for the birth of the Duc de Bretagne son of Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne, were not discontinued. The city gave a firework fete upon the river, that Monseigneur, the Princes, his sons, and Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne, with many ladies and courtiers, came to see from the windows of the Louvre, magnificent cheer and refreshments being provided for them. This was a contrast which irritated the people, who would not understand that it was meant for magnanimity. A few days afterwards the King gave an illumination and a fete at Marly, to which the Court of Saint Germain was invited; and which was all in honour of Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne. He thanked the Prevot des Marchand for the fireworks upon the river, and said that Monseigneur and Madame had found them very beautiful.

Shortly after this, I received a letter from one of my friends, the Duc de Montfort, who had always been in the army of the Marechal de Villeroy. He sent word to me, that upon his return he intended to break his sword, and retire from the army. His letter was written in such a despairing tone that, fearing lest with his burning courage he might commit some martial folly, I conjured him not to throw himself into danger for the sake of being killed. It seemed that I had anticipated his intentions. A convoy of money was to be sent to Landau. Twice he asked to be allowed to take charge of this convoy, and twice he was told it was too insignificant a charge for a camp-marshal to undertake. The third time that he asked this favour, he obtained it by pure importunity. He carried the money safely into Landau, without meeting with any obstacle. On his return he saw some hussars roving about. Without a moment's hesitation he resolved to give chase to them. He was with difficulty restrained for some time, and at last, breaking away, he set off to attack them, followed by only two officers. The hussars dispersed themselves, and retreated; the Duc de Montfort followed them, rode into the midst of them, was surrounded on all sides, and soon received a blow which overturned him. In a few moments after, being carried off by his men, he died, having only had time to confess himself, and to arrive at his quarters. He was infinitely regretted by everybody who had known him. The grief of his family may be imagined.

CHAPTER XXX

The King did not long remain without some consolation for the loss of the battle of Hochstedt (Blenheim). The Comte de Toulouse—very different in every respect from his brother, the Duc du Maine—was wearied with cruising in the Mediterranean, without daring to attack enemies that were too strong for him. He had, therefore, obtained reinforcements this year, so that he was in a state to measure his forces with any opponent. The English fleet was under the command of Admiral Rooks. The Comte

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de Toulouse wished above all things to attack. He asked permission to do so, and, the permission being granted, he set about his enterprise. He met the fleet of Admiral Rooks near Malaga, on the 24th of September of this year, and fought with it from ten o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock in the evening. The fleets, as far as the number of vessels was concerned, were nearly equal. So furious or so obstinate a sea-fight had not been seen for a long time. They had always the wind upon our fleet, yet all the advantage was on the side of the Comte de Toulouse, who could boast that he had obtained the victory, and whose vessel fought that of Rooks, dismasted it, and pursued it all next day towards the coast of Barbary, where the Admiral retired. The enemy lost six thousand men; the ship of the Dutch Vice-Admiral was blown up; several others were sunk, and some dismasted. Our fleet lost neither ship nor mast, but the victory cost the lives of many distinguished people, in addition to those of fifteen hundred soldiers or sailors killed or wounded.

Towards evening on the 25th, by dint of maneuvers, aided by the wind, our fleet came up again with that of Rooks. The Comte de Toulouse was for attacking it again on the morrow, and showed that if the attack were successful, Gibraltar would be the first result of the victory. That famous place, which commands the important strait of the same name, had been allowed to fall into neglect, and was defended by a miserable garrison of forty men. In this state it had of course easily fallen into the hands of the enemies. But they had not yet had time to man it with a much superior force, and Admiral Rooks once defeated, it must have surrendered to us.

The Comte de Toulouse urged his advice with all the energy of which he was capable, and he was supported in opinion by others of more experience than himself. But D'O, the mentor of the fleet, against whose counsel he had been expressly ordered by the King never to act, opposed the project of another attack with such disdainful determination, that the Comte had no course open but to give way. The annoyance which this caused throughout the fleet was very great. It soon was known what would have become of the enemy's fleet had it been attacked, and that Gibraltar would have been found in exactly the same state as when abandoned. The Comte de Toulouse acquired great honour in this campaign, and his stupid teacher lost little, because he had little to lose.

M. de Mantua having surrendered his state to the King, thereby rendering us a most important service in Italy, found himself ill at ease in his territory, which had become the theatre of war, and had come incognito to Paris. He had apartments provided for him in the Luxembourg, furnished magnificently with the Crown furniture, and was very graciously received by the King. The principal object of his journey was to marry some French lady; and as he made no secret

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of this intention, more than one plot was laid in order to provide him with a wife. M. de Vaudemont, intent upon aggrandizing the house of Lorraine, wished. M de Mantua to marry a member of that family, and fixed upon Mademoiselle d'Elboeuf for his bride. The Lorraines did all in their power to induce M. de Mantua to accept her. But M. le Prince had also his designs in this matter. He had a daughter; whom he knew not how to get off his hands, and he thought that in more ways than one it would be to his advantage to marry her to the Duke of Mantua. He explained his views to the King, who gave him permission to follow them out, and promised to serve him with all his protection. But when the subject was broached to M. de Mantua, he declined this match in such a respectful, yet firm, manner that M. le Prince felt he must abandon all hope of carrying it out. The Lorraines were not more successful in their designs. When M. de Vaudemont had first spoken of Mademoiselle d'Elboeuf, M. de Mantua had appeared to listen favourably. This was in Italy. Now that he was in Paris he acted very differently. It was in vain that Mademoiselle d'Elboeuf was thrust in his way, as though by chance, at the promenades, in the churches; her beauty, which might have touched many others, made no impression upon him. The fact was that M. de Mantua, even long before leaving his state, had fixed upon a wife.

Supping one evening with the Duc de Lesdiguieres, a little before the death of the latter, he saw a ring with a portrait in it; upon the Duke's finger. He begged to be allowed to look at the portrait, was charmed with it, and said he should be very happy to have such a beautiful mistress. The Duke at this burst out laughing, and said it was the portrait of his wife. As soon as the Duc de Lesdiguieres was dead, de Mantua thought only of marrying the young widowed Duchess. He sought her everywhere when he arrived in Paris, but without being able to find her; because she was in the first year of her widowhood. He therefore unbosomed himself to Torcy, who reported the matter to the King. The King approved of the design of M. de Mantua, and charged the Marechal de Duras to speak to the Duchesse de Lesdiguieres, who was his daughter. The Duchess was equally surprised and afflicted when she learned what was in progress. She testified to her father her repugnance to abandon herself to the caprices and the jealousy of an old Italian 'debauche' the horror she felt at the idea of being left alone with him in Italy; and the reasonable fear she had of her health, with a man whose own could not be good.

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I was promptly made acquainted with this affair; for Madame de Lesdiguières and Madame de Saint-Simon were on the most intimate terms. I did everything in my power to persuade Madame de Lesdiguières to content to the match, insisting at once on her family position, on the reason of state, and on the pleasure of ousting Madame d'Elboeuf,—but it was all in vain. I never saw such firmness. Pontchartrain, who came and reasoned with her, was even less successful than I, for he excited her by threats and menaces. M. le Prince himself supported us—having no longer any hope for himself, and fearing, above all things, M. de Mantua's marriage with a Lorraine—and did all he could to persuade Madame de Lesdiguières to give in. I renewed my efforts in the same direction, but with no better success than before. Nevertheless, M. de Mantua, irritated by not being able to see Madame de Lesdiguières, resolved to go and wait for her on a Sunday at the Minimes. He found her shut up in a chapel, and drew near the door in order to see her as she went out. He was not much gratified; her thick crape veil was lowered; it was with difficulty he could get a glance at her. Resolved to succeed, he spoke to Torcy, intimating that Madame de Lesdiguières ought not to refuse such a slight favour as to allow herself to be seen in a church. Torcy communicated this to the King, who sent word to Madame de Lesdiguières that she must consent to the favour M. de Mantua demanded. She could not refuse after this. M. de Mantua went accordingly, and waited for her in the same place, where he had once already so badly seen her. He found her, in the chapel, and drew near the door, as before. She came out, her veil raised, passed lightly before him, made him a sliding courtesy as she glided by, in reply to his bow, and reached her coach.

M. de Mantua was charmed; he redoubled his efforts with the King and M. de Duras; the matter was discussed in full council, like an affair of state—indeed it was one; and it was resolved to amuse M. de Mantua, and yet at the same time to do everything to vanquish this resistance of Madame de Lesdiguières, except employing the full authority of the King, which the King himself did not wish to exert. Everything was promised to her on the part of the King: that it should be his Majesty who would make the stipulations of the marriage contract; that it should be his Majesty who would give her a dowry, and would guarantee her return to France if she became a widow, and assure her his protection while she remained a wife; in one word, everything was tried, and in the gentlest and most honourable manner, to persuade her. Her mother lent us her house one afternoon, in order that we might speak more at length and more at our ease there to Madame de Lesdiguières than we could at the Hotel de Duras. We only gained a torrent of tears for our pains.

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A few days after this, I was very much astonished to hear Chamillart relate to me all that had passed at this interview. I learnt afterwards that Madame de Lesdiguières, fearing that if, entirely unsupported, she persisted in her refusal, it might draw upon her the anger of the King, had begged Chamillart to implore his Majesty not to insist upon this marriage. M. de Mantua hearing this, turned his thoughts elsewhere; and she was at last delivered of a pursuit which had become a painful persecution to her. Chamillart served her so well that the affair came to an end; and the King, flattered perhaps by the desire this young Duchess showed to remain his subject instead of becoming a sovereign, passed a eulogium upon her the same evening in his cabinet to his family and to the Princesses, by whom it was spread abroad through society.

I may as well finish this matter at once. The Lorraines, who had watched very closely the affair up to this point, took hope again directly they heard of the resolution M. de Mantua had formed to abandon his pursuit of Madame de Lesdiguières. They, in their turn, were closely watched by M. le Prince, who so excited the King against them, that Madame d'Elboeuf received orders from him not to continue pressing her suit upon M. de Mantua. That did not stop them. They felt that the King would not interfere with them by an express prohibition, and sure, by past experience, of being on better terms with him afterwards than before, they pursued their object with obstinacy. By dint of much plotting and scheming, and by the aid of their creatures, they contrived to overcome the repugnance of M. de Mantua to Mademoiselle d'Elboeuf, which at bottom could be only caprice—her beauty, her figure, and her birth taken into account. But Mademoiselle d'Elboeuf, in her turn, was as opposed to marriage with M. de Mantua as Madame de Lesdiguières had been. She was, however, brought round ere long, and then the consent of the King was the only thing left to be obtained. The Lorraines made use of their usual suppleness in order to gain that. They represented the impolicy of interfering with the selection of a sovereign who was the ally of France, and who wished to select a wife from among her subjects, and succeeded so well, that the King determined to become neutral; that is to say, neither to prohibit nor to sanction this match. M. le Prince was instrumental in inducing the King to take this neutral position; and he furthermore caused the stipulation to be made, that it should not be celebrated in France, but at Mantua.

After parting with the King, M. de Mantua, on the 21st of September, went to Nemours, slept there, and then set out for Italy. At the same time Madame and Mademoiselle d'Elboeuf, with Madame de Pompadour, sister of the former, passed through Fontainebleau without going to see a soul, and followed their prey lest he should change his mind and escape them until the road he was to take branched off from that they

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were to go by; he in fact intending to travel by sea and they by land. On the way their fears redoubled. Arrived at Nevers, and lodged in a *hostelrie*, they thought it would not be well to commit themselves further without more certain security: Madame de Pompadour therefore proposed to M. de Mantua not to delay his happiness any longer, but to celebrate his marriage at once. He defended himself as well as he could, but was at last obliged to give in. During this indecent dispute, the Bishop was sent to. He had just died, and the Grand Vicar, not knowing what might be the wishes of the King upon this marriage, refused to celebrate it. The chaplain was therefore appealed to, and he at once married Mademoiselle d'Elboeuf to M. de Mantua in the hotel. As soon as the ceremony was over, Madame d'Elboeuf wished to leave her daughter alone with M. de Mantua, and although he strongly objected to this, everybody quitted the room, leaving only the newly married couple there, and Madame de Pompadour outside upon the step listening to what passed between them. But finding after a while that both were very much embarrassed, and that M. de Mantua did little but cry out for the company to return, she conferred with her sister, and they agreed to give him his liberty. Immediately he had obtained it, he mounted his horse, though it was not early, and did not see them again until they reached Italy—though all went the same road as far as Lyons. The news of this strange celebration of marriage was soon spread abroad with all the ridicule which attached to it.

The King was very much annoyed when he learnt that his orders had been thus disobeyed. The Lorraines plastered over the affair by representing that they feared an affront from M. de Mantua, and indeed it did not seem at all unlikely that M. de Mantua, forced as it were into compliance with their wishes, might have liked nothing better than to reach Italy and then laugh at them. Meanwhile, Madame d'Elboeuf and her daughter embarked on board the royal galleys and started for Italy. On the way they were fiercely chased by some African corsairs, and it is a great pity they were not taken to finish the romance.

However, upon arriving in Italy, the marriage was again celebrated, this time with all the forms necessary for the occasion. But Madame d'Elboeuf had no cause to rejoice that she had succeeded in thus disposing of her daughter. The new Duchesse de Mantua was guarded by her husband with the utmost jealousy. She was not allowed to see anybody except her mother, and that only for an hour each day. Her women entered her apartment only to dress and undress her. The Duke walled up very high all the windows of his house, and caused his wife to be guarded by old women. She passed her days thus in a cruel prison. This treatment, which I did not expect, and the little consideration, not to say contempt, shown here for M. de Mantua since his departure, consoled me much for the invincible

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obstinacy of Madame de Lesdiguières. Six months after, Madame d'Elboeuf returned, beside herself with vexation, but too vain to show it. She disguised the misfortune of her daughter, and appeared to be offended if it was spoken of; but all our letters from the army showed that the news was true. The strangest thing of all is, that the Lorraines after this journey were as well treated by the King as if they had never undertaken it; a fact which shows their art and ascendancy.

I have dwelt too long perhaps upon this matter. It appeared to me to merit attention by its singularity, and still more so because it is by facts of this sort that is shown what was the composition of the Court of the King.

About this time the Comtesse d'Auvergne finished a short life by an illness very strange and uncommon. When she married the Comte d'Auvergne she was a Huguenot, and he much wanted to make her turn Catholic. A famous advocate of that time, who was named Chardon, had been a Huguenot, and his wife also; they had made a semblance, however, of abjuring, but made no open profession of Catholicism. Chardon was sustained by his great reputation, and by the number of protectors he had made for himself.

One morning he and his wife were in their coach before the Hotel-Dieu, waiting for a reply that their lackey was a very long time in bringing them. Madame Chardon glanced by chance upon the grand portal of Notre Dame, and little by little fell into a profound reverie, which might be better called reflection. Her husband, who at last perceived this, asked her what had sent her into such deep thought, and pushed her elbow even to draw a reply from her. She told him then what she was thinking about. Pointing to Notre Dame, she said that it was many centuries before Luther and Calvin that those images of saints had been sculptured over that portal; that this proved that saints had long since been invoked; the opposition of the reformers to this ancient opinion was a novelty; that this novelty rendered suspicious other dogmas against the antiquity of Catholicism that they taught; that these reflections, which she had never before made, gave her much disquietude, and made her form the resolution to seek to enlighten herself.

Chardon thought his wife right, and from that day they laid themselves out to seek the truth, then to consult, then to be instructed. This lasted a year, and then they made a new abjuration, and both ever afterwards passed their lives in zeal and good works. Madame Chardon converted many Huguenots. The Comte d'Auvergne took his wife to her. The Countess was converted by her, and became a very good Catholic. When she died she was extremely regretted by all the relatives of her husband, although at first they had looked upon her coldly.

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In the month of this September, a strange attempt at assassination occurred. Vervins had been forced into many suits against his relatives, and was upon the point of gaining them all, when one of his cousins-german, who called himself the Abbe de Pre, caused him to be attacked as he passed in his coach along the Quai de la Tournelle, before the community of Madame de Miramion. Vervins was wounded with several sword cuts, and also his coachman, who wished to defend him. In consequence of the complaint Vervins made, the Abbe escaped abroad, whence he never returned, and soon after, his crime being proved, was condemned to be broken alive on the wheel. Vervins had long been menaced with an attack by the Abbe. Vervins was an agreeable, well-made man, but very idle. He had entered the army; but quitted it soon, and retired to his estates in Picardy. There he shut himself up without any cause of disgust or of displeasure, without being in any embarrassment, for on the contrary he was well to do, and all his affairs were in good order, and he never married; without motives of piety, for piety was not at all in his vein; without being in bad health, for his health was always perfect; without a taste for improvement, for no workmen were ever seen in his house; still less on account of the chase, for he never went to it. Yet he stayed in his house for several years, without intercourse with a soul, and, what is most incomprehensible, without budging from his bed, except to allow it to be made. He dined there, and often all alone; he transacted what little business he had to do there, and received while there the few people he could not refuse admission to; and each day, from the moment he opened his eyes until he closed them again, worked at tapestry, or read a little; he persevered until his death in this strange fashion of existence; so uniquely singular, that I have wished to describe it.

CHAPTER XXXI

There presents itself to my memory an anecdote which it would be very prudent perhaps to be silent upon, and which is very curious for anybody who has seen things so closely as I have, to describe. What determines me to relate it is that the fact is not altogether unknown, and that every Court swarms with similar adventures. Must it be said then? We had amongst us a charming young Princess who, by her graces, her attentions, and her original manners, had taken possession of the hearts of the King, of Madame de Maintenon, and of her husband, Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne. The extreme discontent so justly felt against her father, M. de Savoie, had not made the slightest alteration in their tenderness for her. The King, who hid nothing from her, who worked with his ministers in her presence whenever she liked to enter, took care not to say a word in her hearing against her father. In private, she clasped the King round the neck at all hours, jumped upon his knees, tormented him with all sorts of sportiveness,

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rummaged among his papers, opened his letters and read them in his presence, sometimes in spite of him; and acted in the same manner with Madame de Maintenon. Despite this extreme liberty, she never spoke against any one: gracious to all, she endeavoured to ward off blows from all whenever she could; was attentive to the private comforts of the King, even the humblest: kind to all who served her, and living with her ladies, as with friends, in complete liberty, old and young; she was the darling of the Court, adored by all; everybody, great and small, was anxious to please her; everybody missed her when she was away; when she reappeared the void was filled up; in a word, she had attached all hearts to her; but while in this brilliant situation she lost her own.

Nangis, now a very commonplace Marshal of France, was at that time in full bloom. He had an agreeable but not an uncommon face; was well made, without anything marvellous; and had been educated in intrigue by the Marechale de Rochefort, his grandmother, and Madame de Blansac, his mother, who were skilled mistresses of that art. Early introduced by them into the great world of which they were, so to speak, the centre, he had no talent but that of pleasing women, of speaking their language, and of monopolising the most desirable by a discretion beyond his years, and which did not belong to his time. Nobody was more in vogue than he. He had had the command of a regiment when he was quite a child. He had shown firmness, application, and brilliant valour in war, that the ladies had made the most of, and they sufficed at his age; he was of the Court of Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne, about the same age, and well treated by him.

The Duc de Bourgogne, passionately in love with his wife, was not so well made as Nangis; but the Princess reciprocated his ardor so perfectly that up to his death he never suspected that her glances had wandered to any one else. They fell, however, upon Nangis, and soon redoubled. Nangis was not ungrateful, but he feared the thunderbolt; and his heart, too, was already engaged. Madame de la Vrilliere, who, without beauty, was pretty and grateful as Love, had made this conquest. She was, as I have said, daughter of Madame de Mailly, Dame d'Atours of Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne; and was always near her. Jealousy soon enlightened her as to what was taking place. Far from yielding her conquest to the Duchess; she made a point of preserving it, of disputing its possession, and carrying it off. This struggle threw Nangis into a terrible embarrassment. He feared the fury of Madame de la Vrilliere, who affected to be more ready to break out than in reality she was. Besides his love for her, he feared the result of an outburst, and already saw his fortune lost. On the other hand, any reserve of his towards the Duchess, who had so much power in her hands—and seemed destined to have more—and who he knew was not likely to suffer a rival — might,

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he felt, be his ruin. This perplexity, for those who were aware of it, gave rise to continual scenes. I was then a constant visitor of Madame de Blansac, at Paris, and of the Marechale de Rochefort, at Versailles; and, through them and several other ladies of the Court, with whom I was intimate, I learnt, day by day, everything that passed. In addition to the fact that nothing diverted me more, the results of this affair might be great; and it was my especial ambition to be well informed of everything. At length, all members of the Court who were assiduous and enlightened understood the state of affairs; but either through fear or from love to the Duchess, the whole Court was silent, saw everything, whispered discreetly, and actually kept the secret that was not entrusted to it. The struggle between the two ladies, not without bitterness, and sometimes insolence on the part of Madame de la Vrilliere, nor without suffering and displeasure gently manifested on the part of Madame de Bourgogne, was for a long time a singular sight.

Whether Nangis, too faithful to his first love, needed some grains of jealousy to excite him, or whether things fell out naturally, it happened that he found a rival. Maulevrier, son of a brother of Colbert who had died of grief at not being named Marshal of France, was this rival. He had married a daughter of the Marechal de Tesse, and was not very agreeable in appearance—his face, indeed, was very commonplace. He was by no means framed for gallantry; but he had wit, and a mind fertile in intrigues, with a measureless ambition that was sometimes pushed to madness. His wife was pretty, not clever, quarrelsome, and under a virginal appearance; mischievous to the last degree. As daughter of a man for whom Madame de Bourgogne had much gratitude for the part he had taken in negotiating her marriage, and the Peace of Savoy, she was easily enabled to make her way at Court, and her husband with her. He soon sniffed what was passing in respect to Nangis, and obtained means of access to Madame de Bourgogne, through the influence of his father-in-law; was assiduous in his attentions; and at length, excited by example, dared to sigh. Tired of not being understood, he ventured to write. It is pretended that he sent his letters through one of the Court ladies, who thought they came from Tesse, delivered them, and handed him back the answers, as though for delivery by him. I will not add what more was believed. I will simply say that this affair was as soon perceived as had been the other, and was treated, with the same silence.

Under pretext of friendship, Madame de Bourgogne went more than once—on account of the speedy departure of her husband (for the army), attended some, times by La Maintenon,—to the house of Madame de Maulevrier, to weep with her. The Court smiled. Whether the tears were for Madame de Maulevrier or for Nangis, was doubtful. But Nangis, nevertheless, aroused by this rivalry, threw Madame de la Vrilliere into terrible grief, and into a humour over which she was not mistress.

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This tocsin made itself heard by Maulevrier. What will not a man think of doing when possessed to excess by love or ambition? He pretended to have something the matter with his chest, put himself on a milk diet, made believe that he had lost his voice, and was sufficiently master of himself to refrain from uttering an intelligible word during a whole year; by these means evading the campaign and remaining at the Court. He was mad enough to relate this project, and many others, to his friend the Duc de Lorges, from whom, in turn, I learnt it. The fact was, that bringing himself thus to the necessity of never speaking to anybody except in their ear, he had the liberty of speaking low to—Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne before all the Court without impropriety and without suspicion. In this manner he said to her whatever he wished day by day, and was never overheard. He also contrived to say things the short answers to which were equally unheard. He so accustomed people to this manner of speaking that they took no more notice of it than was expressed in pity for such a sad state; but it happened that those who approached the nearest to Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne when Maulevrier was at her side, soon knew enough not to be eager to draw near her again when she was thus situated. This trick lasted more than a year: his conversation was principally composed of reproaches—but reproaches rarely succeed in love. Maulevrier, judging by the ill-humour of Madame de la Vrilliere, believed Nangis to be happy. Jealousy and rage transported him at last to the extremity of folly.

One day, as Madame de Bourgogne was coming from mass and he knew that Dangeau, her chevalier d'honneur, was absent, he gave her his hand. The attendants had accustomed themselves to let him have this honour, on account of his distinguished voice, so as to allow him to speak by the way, and retired respectfully so as not to hear what he said. The ladies always followed far behind, so that, in the midst of all the Court, he had, from the chapel to the apartments of Madame de Bourgogne, the full advantages of a private interview—advantages that he had availed himself of several times. On this day he railed against Nangis to Madame de Bourgogne, called him by all sorts of names, threatened to tell everything to the King and to Madame de Maintenon, and to the Duc de Bourgogne, squeezed her fingers as if he would break them, and led her in this manner, like a madman as he was, to her apartments. Upon entering them she was ready to swoon. Trembling all over she entered her wardrobe, called one of her favourite ladies, Madame de Nogaret, to her, related what had occurred, saying she knew not how she had reached her rooms, or how it was she had not sunk beneath the floor, or died. She had never been so dismayed. The same day Madame de Nogaret related this to Madame de Saint-Simon and to me, in the strictest confidence. She counselled the Duchess to behave gently with

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such a dangerous madman, and to avoid committing herself in any way with him. The worst was, that after this he threatened and said many things against Nangis, as a man with whom he was deeply offended, and whom he meant to call to account. Although he gave no reason for this, the reason was only too evident. The fear of Madame de Bourgogne at this may be imagined, and also that of Nangis. He was brave and cared for nobody; but to be mixed up in such an affair as this made him quake with fright. He beheld his fortune and his happiness in the hands of a furious madman. He shunned Maulevrier from that time as much as possible, showed himself but little, and held his peace.

For six weeks Madame de Bourgogne lived in the most measured manner, and in mortal tremors of fear, without, however, anything happening. I know not who warned Tesse of what was going on. But when he learnt it he acted like a man of ability. He persuaded his son-in-law, Maulevrier, to follow him to Spain, as to a place where his fortune was assured to him. He spoke to Fagon, who saw all and knew all. He understood matters in a moment, and at once said, that as so many remedies had been tried ineffectually for Maulevrier, he must go to a warmer climate, as a winter in France would inevitably kill him. It was then as a remedy, and as people go to the waters, that he went to Spain. The King and all the Court believed this, and neither the King nor Madame de Maintenon offered any objections. As soon as Tesse knew this he hurried his son-in-law out of the realm, and so put a stop to his follies and the mortal fear they had caused. To finish this adventure at once, although it will lead me far beyond the date of other matters to be spoken of after, let me say what became of Maulevrier after this point of the narrative.

He went first to Spain with Tesse. On the way they had an interview with Madame des Ursins, and succeeded in gaining her favour so completely, that, upon arriving at Madrid, the King and Queen of Spain, informed of this, welcomed them with much cordiality. Maulevrier soon became a great favourite with the Queen of Spain. It has been said, that he wished to please her, and that he succeeded. At all events he often had long interviews with her in private, and these made people think and talk.

Maulevrier began to believe it time to reap after having so well sown. He counted upon nothing less than being made grandee of Spain, and would have obtained this favour but for his indiscretion. News of what was in store for him was noised abroad. The Duc de Grammont, then our ambassador at Madrid, wrote word to the King of the rumours that were in circulation of Maulevrier's audacious conduct towards the Queen of Spain, and of the reward it was to meet with. The King at once sent a very strong letter to the King of Spain about Maulevrier, who, by the same courier, was prohibited from accepting any favour that might be offered him. He was

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ordered at the same time to join Tesse at Gibraltar. He had already done so at the instance of Tesse himself; so the courier went from Madrid to Gibraltar to find him. His rage and vexation upon seeing himself deprived of the recompense he had considered certain were very great. But they yielded in time to the hopes he formed of success, and he determined to set off for Madrid and thence to Versailles. His father-in-law tried to retain him at the siege, but in vain. His representations and his authority were alike useless. Maulevrier hoped to gain over the King and Queen of Spain so completely, that our King would be forced, as it were, to range himself on their side; but the Duc de Grammont at once wrote word that Maulevrier had left the siege of Gibraltar and returned to Madrid. This disobedience was at once chastised. A courier was immediately despatched to Maulevrier, commanding him to set out for France. He took leave of the King and Queen of Spain like a man without hope, and left Spain. The most remarkable thing is, that upon arriving at Paris, and finding the Court at Marly, and his wife there also, he asked permission to go too, the husbands being allowed by right to accompany their wives there, and the King, to avoid a disturbance, did not refuse him.

At first everything seemed to smile upon Maulevrier. He had, as I have said, made friends with Madame des Ursins when he was on the road to Spain. He had done so chiefly by vaunting his intimacy with Madame de Bourgogne, and by showing to Madame des Ursins that he was in many of the secrets of the Court. Accordingly, upon his return, she took him by the hand and showed a disposition towards him which could not fail to reinstate him in favour. She spoke well of him to Madame de Maintenon, who, always much smitten with new friends, received him well, and often had conversations with him which lasted more than three hours. Madame de Maintenon mentioned him to the King, and Maulevrier, who had returned out of all hope, now saw himself in a more favourable position than ever.

But the old cause of trouble still existed, and with fresh complications. Nangis was still in favour, and his appearance made Maulevrier miserable. There was a new rival too in the field, the Abbe de Polignac.

Pleasing, nay most fascinating in manner, the Abbe was a man to gain all hearts. He stopped at no flattery to succeed in this. One day when following the King through the gardens of Marly, it came on to rain. The King considerably noticed the Abbe's dress, little calculated to keep off rain. "It is no matter, Sire," said De Polignac, "the rain of Marly does not wet." People laughed much at this, and these words were a standing reproach to the soft-spoken Abbe.

One of the means by which the Abbe gained the favour of the King was by being the lover of Madame du Maine. His success at length was great in every direction. He even envied the situations of Nangis and Maulevrier; and sought to participate in the

same happiness. He took the same road. Madame d'O and the Marechale de Coeuvres became his friends.

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He sought to be heard, and was heard. At last he faced the danger of the Swiss, and on fine nights was seen with the Duchess in the gardens. Nangis diminished in favour. Maulevrier on his return increased in fury. The Abbe met with the same fate as they: everything was perceived: people talked about the matter in whispers, but silence was kept. This triumph, in spite of his age, did not satisfy the Abbe: he aimed at something more solid. He wished to arrive at the cardinalship, and to further his views he thought it advisable to ingratiate himself into the favour of Monsieur de Bourgogne. He sought introduction to them through friends of mine, whom I warned against him as a man without scruple, and intent only upon advancing himself. My warnings were in vain. My friends would not heed me, and the Abbe de Polignac succeeded in gaining the confidence of Monsieur de Bourgogne, as well as the favour of Madame de Bourgogne.

Maulevrier had thus two sources of annoyance—the Abbe de Polignac and Nangis. Of the latter he showed himself so jealous, that Madame de Maulevrier, out of pique, made advances to him. Nangis, to screen himself the better, replied to her. Maulevrier perceived this. He knew his wife to be sufficiently wicked to make him fear her. So many troubles of heart and brain transported him. He lost his head.

One day the Marechale de Coeuvres came to see him, apparently on some message of reconciliation. He shut the door upon her; barricaded her within, and through the door quarrelled with her, even to abuse, for an hour, during which she had the patience to remain there without being able to see him. After this he went rarely to Court, but generally kept himself shut up at home.

Sometimes he would go out all alone at the strangest hours, take a fiacre and drive away to the back of the Chartreux or to other remote spots. Alighting there, he would whistle, and a grey-headed old man would advance and give him a packet, or one would be thrown to him from a window, or he would pick up a box filled with despatches, hidden behind a post. I heard of these mysterious doings from people to whom he was vain and indiscreet enough to boast of them. He continually wrote letters to Madame de Bourgogne, and to Madame de Maintenon, but more frequently to the former. Madame Cantin was their agent; and I know people who have seen letters of hers in which she assured Maulevrier, in the strongest terms, that he might ever reckon on the Duchess.

He made a last journey to Versailles, where he saw his mistress in private, and quarrelled with her cruelly. After dining with Torcy he returned to Paris. There, torn by a thousand storms of love, of jealousy, of ambition, his head was so troubled that doctors were obliged to be called in, and he was forbidden to see any but the most indispensable persons, and those at the hours when he was least ill. A hundred visions passed through his brain. Now like a

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madman he would speak only of Spain, of Madame de Bourgogne, of Nangis, whom he wished to kill or to have assassinated; now full of remorse towards M. de Bourgogne, he made reflections so curious to hear, that no one dared to remain with him, and he was left alone. At other times, recalling his early days, he had nothing but ideas of retreat and penitence. Then a confession was necessary in order to banish his despair as to the mercy of God. Often he thought himself very ill and upon the point of death.

The world, however, and even his nearest friends persuaded themselves that he was only playing a part; and hoping to put an end to it, they declared to him that he passed for mad in society, and that it behoved him to rise out of such a strange state and show himself. This was the last blow and it overwhelmed him. Furious at finding that this opinion was ruining all the designs of his ambition, he delivered himself up to despair. Although watched with extreme care by his wife, by particular friends, and by his servants, he took his measures so well, that on the Good Friday of the year 1706, at about eight o'clock in the morning, he slipped away from them all, entered a passage behind his room, opened the window, threw himself into the court below, and dashed out his brains upon the pavement. Such was the end of an ambitious man, who, by his wild and dangerous passions, lost his wits, and then his life, a tragic victim of himself.

Madame de Bourgogne learnt the news at night. In public she showed no emotion, but in private some tears escaped her. They might have been of pity, but were not so charitably interpreted. Soon after, it was noticed that Madame de Maintenon seemed embarrassed and harsh towards Madame de Bourgogne. It was no longer doubted that Madame de Maintenon had heard the whole story. She often had long interviews with Madame de Bourgogne, who always left them in tears. Her sadness grew so much, and her eyes were so often red, that Monsieur de Bourgogne at last became alarmed. But he had no suspicion of the truth, and was easily satisfied with the explanation he received. Madame de Bourgogne felt the necessity, however, of appearing gayer, and showed herself so. As for the Abbe de Polignac, it was felt that that dangerous person was best away. He received therefore a post which called him away, as it were, into exile; and though he delayed his departure as long as possible, was at length obliged to go. Madame de Bourgogne took leave of him in a manner that showed how much she was affected. Some rather insolent verses were written upon this event; and were found written on a balustrade by Madame, who was not discreet enough or good enough to forget them. But they made little noise; everybody loved Madame de Bourgogne, and hid these verses as much as possible.

CHAPTER XXXII

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At the beginning of October, news reached the Court, which was at Fontainebleau, that M. de Duras was at the point of death. Upon hearing this, Madame de Saint-Simon and Madame de Lauzun, who were both related to M. Duras, wished to absent themselves from the Court performances that were to take place in the palace that evening. They expressed this wish to Madame de Bourgogne, who approved of it, but said she was afraid the King would not do the same. He had been very angry lately because the ladies had neglected to go full dressed to the Court performances. A few words he had spoken made everybody take good care not to rouse his anger on this point again. He expected so much accordingly from everybody who attended the Court, that Madame de Bourgogne was afraid he would not consent to dispense with the attendance of Madame de Saint-Simon and Madame de Lauzun on this occasion. They compromised the matter, therefore, by dressing themselves, going to the room where the performance was held, and, under pretext of not finding places, going away; Madame de Bourgogne agreeing to explain their absence in this way to the King. I notice this very insignificant bagatelle to show how the King thought only of himself, and how much he wished to be obeyed; and that that which would not have been pardoned to the nieces of a dying man, except at the Court, was a duty there, and one which it needed great address to escape from, without seriously infringing the etiquette established.

After the return of the Court from Fontainebleau this year, Puysieux came back from Switzerland, having been sent there as ambassador. Puysieux was a little fat man, very agreeable, pleasant, and witty, one of the best fellows in the world, in fact. As he had much wit, and thoroughly knew the King, he bethought himself of making the best of his position; and as his Majesty testified much friendship for him on his return, and declared himself satisfied with his mission in Switzerland, Puysieux asked if what he heard was not mere compliment, and whether he could count upon it. As the King assured him that he might do so, Puysieux assumed a brisk air, and said that he was not so sure of that, and that he was not pleased with his Majesty.

“And why not?” said the King.

“Why not?” replied Puysieux; “why, because although the most honest man in your realm, you have not kept to a promise you made me more than fifty years ago.”

“What promise?” asked the King.

“What promise, Sire?” said Puysieux; “you have a good memory, you cannot have forgotten it. Does not your Majesty remember that one day, having the honour to play at blindman’s buff with you at my grandmother’s, you put your cordon bleu on my back, the better to hide yourself; and that when, after the game, I restored it to you, you promised to give it me when you became master; you have long been so, thoroughly master, and nevertheless that cordon bleu is still to come.”

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The King, who recollected the circumstance, here burst out laughing, and told Puysieux he was in the right, and that a chapter should be held on the first day of the new year expressly for the purpose of receiving him into the order. And so in fact it was, and Puysieux received the cordon bleu on the day the King had named. This fact is not important, but it is amusing. It is altogether singular in connection with a prince as serious and as imposing as Louis XIV.; and it is one of those little Court anecdotes which are curious.

Here is another more important fact, the consequences of which are still felt by the State. Pontchartrain, Secretary of State for the Navy, was the plague of it, as of all those who were under his cruel dependence. He was a man who, with some amount of ability, was disagreeable and pedantic to an excess; who loved evil for its own sake; who was jealous even of his father; who was a cruel tyrant towards his wife, a woman all docility and goodness; who was in one word a monster, whom the King kept in office only because he feared him. An admiral was the abhorrence of Pontchartrain, and an admiral who was an illegitimate son of the King, he loathed. There was nothing, therefore, that he had not done during the war to thwart the Comte de Toulouse; he laid some obstacles everywhere in his path; he had tried to keep him out of the command of the fleet, and failing this, had done everything to render the fleet useless.

These were bold strokes against a person the King so much loved, but Pontchartrain knew the weak side of the King; he knew how to balance the father against the master, to bring forward the admiral and set aside the son. In this manner the Secretary of State was able to put obstacles in the way of the Comte de Toulouse that threw him almost into despair, and the Count could do little to defend himself. It was a well-known fact at sea and in the ports where the ships touched, and it angered all the fleet. Pontchartrain accordingly was abhorred there, while the Comte de Toulouse, by his amiability and other good qualities, was adored.

At last, the annoyance he caused became so unendurable, that the Comte de Toulouse, at the end of his cruise in the Mediterranean, returned to Court and determined to expose the doings of Pontchartrain to the King.

The very day he had made up his mind to do this, and just before he intended to have his interview with the King, Madame Pontchartrain, casting aside her natural timidity and modesty, came to him, and with tears in her eyes begged him not to bring about the ruin of her husband. The Comte de Toulouse was softened. He admitted afterwards that he could not resist the sweetness and sorrow of Madame de Pontchartrain, and that all his resolutions, his weapons, fell from his hands at the thought of the sorrow which the poor woman would undergo, after the fall of her brutal husband, left entirely in the hands of such a furious

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Cyclops. In this manner Pontchartrain was saved, but it cost dear to the State. The fear he was in of succumbing under the glory or under the vengeance of an admiral who was son of the King determined him to ruin the fleet itself, so as to render it incapable of receiving the admiral again. He determined to do this, and kept to his word, as was afterwards only too clearly verified by the facts. The Comte de Toulouse saw no more either ports or vessels, and from that time only very feeble squadrons went out, and even those very seldom. Pontchartrain, had the impudence to boast of this before my face.

When I last spoke of Madame des Ursins, I described her as living in the midst of the Court, flattered and caressed by all, and on the highest terms of favour with the King and Madame de Maintenon. She found her position, indeed, so far above her hopes, that she began to waver in her intention of returning to Spain. The age and the health of Madame de Maintenon tempted her. She would have preferred to govern here rather than in Spain. Flattered by the attentions paid her, she thought those attentions, or, I may say, rather those servile adorations, would continue for ever, and that in time she might arrive at the highest point of power. The Archbishop of Aix and her brother divined her thoughts, for she did not dare to avow them, and showed her in the clearest way that those thoughts were calculated to lead her astray. They explained to her that the only interest Madame de Maintenon had in favouring her was on account of Spain. Madame des Ursins—once back in that country, Madame de Maintenon looked forward to a recommencement of those relations which had formerly existed between them, by which the government of Spain in appearance, if not in reality, passed through her hands. They therefore advised Madame des Ursins on no account to think of remaining in France, at the same time suggesting that it would not be amiss to stop there long enough to cause some inquietude to Madame de Maintenon, so as to gain as much advantage as possible from it.

The solidity of these reasons persuaded Madame des Ursins to follow the advice given her. She resolved to depart, but not until after a delay by which she meant to profit to the utmost. We shall soon see what success attended her schemes. The terms upon which I stood with her enabled me to have knowledge of all the sentiments that had passed through her mind: her extreme desire, upon arriving in Paris, to return to Spain; the intoxication which seized her in consequence of the treatment she received, and which made her balance this desire; and her final resolution. It was not until afterwards, however, that I learnt all the details I have just related.

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It was not long before Madame de Maintenon began to feel impatient at the long-delayed departure of Madame des Ursins. She spoke at last upon the subject, and pressed Madame des Ursins to set out for Spain. This was just what the other wanted. She said that as she had been driven out of Spain like a criminal, she must go back with honour, if Madame de Maintenon wished her to gain the confidence and esteem of the Spaniards. That although she had been treated by the King with every consideration and goodness, many people in Spain were, and would be, ignorant of it, and that, therefore, her return to favour ought to be made known in as public and convincing a manner as was her disgrace. This was said with all that eloquence and persuasiveness for which Madame des Ursins was remarkable. The effect of it exceeded her hopes.

The favours she obtained were prodigious. Twenty thousand livres by way of annual pension, and thirty thousand for her journey. One of her brothers, M. de Noirmoutiers, blind since the age of eighteen or twenty, was made hereditary duke; another, the Abbe de la Tremoille, of exceeding bad life, and much despised in Rome, where he lived, was made cardinal. What a success was this! How many obstacles had to be overcome in order to attain it! Yet this was what Madame des Ursins obtained, so anxious was Madame de Maintenon to get rid of her and to send her to reign in Spain, that she might reign there herself. Pleased and loaded with favour as never subject was before, Madame des Ursins set out towards the middle of July, and was nearly a month on the road. It may be imagined what sort of a reception awaited her in Spain. The King and the Queen went a day's journey out of Madrid to meet her. Here, then, we see again at the height of power this woman, whose fall the King but a short time since had so ardently desired, and whose separation from the King and Queen of Spain he had applauded himself for bringing about with so much tact. What a change in a few months!

The war continued this year, but without bringing any great success to our arms. Villars, at Circk, outmanoeuvred Marlborough in a manner that would have done credit to the greatest general. Marlborough, compelled to change the plan of campaign he had determined on, returned into Flanders, where the Marechal de Villeroy was stationed with his forces. Nothing of importance occurred during the campaign, and the two armies went into winter quarters at the end of October.

I cannot quit Flanders without relating another instance of the pleasant malignity of M. de Lauzun. In marrying a daughter of the Marechal de Lorges, he had hoped, as I have already said, to return into the confidence of the King by means of the Marechal, and so be again entrusted with military command. Finding these hopes frustrated, he thought of another means of reinstating himself in favour. He determined to go to the waters of Aix-la-Chapelle, not, as may

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be believed, for his health, but in order to ingratiate himself with the important foreigners whom he thought to find there, learn some of the enemy's plans, and come back with an account of them to the King, who would, no doubt, reward him for his zeal. But he was deceived in his calculation. Aix-la-Chapelle, generally so full of foreigners of rank, was this year, owing to the war, almost empty. M. de Lauzun found, therefore, nobody of consequence from whom he could obtain any useful information. Before his return, he visited the Marechal de Villeroy, who received him with all military honours, and conducted him all over the army, pointing out to him the enemy's post; for the two armies were then quite close to each other. His extreme anxiety, however, to get information, and the multitude of his questions, irritated the officers who were ordered to do the honours to him; and, in going about, they actually, at their own risk, exposed him often to be shot or taken. They did not know that his courage was extreme; and were quite taken aback by his calmness, and, his evident readiness to push on even farther than they chose to venture.

On returning to Court, M. de Lauzun was of course pressed by everybody to relate all he knew of the position of the two armies. But he held himself aloof from all questioners, and would not answer. On the day after his arrival he went to pay his court to Monseigneur, who did not like him, but who also was no friend to the Marechal de Villeroy. Monseigneur put many questions to him upon the situation of the two armies, and upon the reasons which had prevented them from engaging each other. M. de Lauzun shirked reply, like a man who wished to be pressed; did not deny that he had well inspected the position of the two armies, but instead of answering Monseigneur, dwelt upon the beauty of our troops, their gaiety at finding themselves so near an enemy, and their eagerness to fight. Pushed at last to the point at which he wished to arrive, "I will tell you, Monseigneur," said he, "since you absolutely command me; I scanned most minutely the front of the two armies to the right and to the left, and all the ground between them. It is true there is no brook, and that I saw; neither are there any ravines, nor hollow roads ascending or descending; but it is true that there were other hindrances which I particularly remarked."

"But what hindrance could there be," said Monseigneur, "since there was nothing between the two armies?"

M. de Lauzun allowed himself to be pressed upon this point, constantly repeating the list of hindrances that did not exist, but keeping silent upon the others. At last, driven into a corner, he took his snuff-box from his pocket.

"You see," said he, to Monseigneur, "there is one thing which much embarrasses the feet, the furze that grows upon the ground, where M. le Marechal de Villeroy is encamped. The furze, it is true, is not mixed with any other plant, either hard or thorny;

but it is a high furze, as high, as high, let me see, what shall I say?"—and he looked all around to find some object of comparison—"as high, I assure you, as this snuffbox!"

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Monseigneur burst out laughing at this sally, and all the company followed his example, in the midst of which M. de Lauzun turned on his heel and left the room. His joke soon spread all over the Court and the town, and in the evening was told to the King. This was all the thanks M. de Villeroy obtained from M. de Lauzun for the honours he had paid him; and this was M. de Lauzun's consolation for his ill-success at Aix-la-Chapelle.

In Italy our armies were not more successful than elsewhere. From time to time, M. de Vendome attacked some unimportant post, and, having carried it, despatched couriers to the King, magnifying the importance of the exploit. But the fact was, all these successes led to nothing. On one occasion, at Cassano, M. de Vendome was so vigorously attacked by Prince Louis of Baden that, in spite of his contempt and his audacity, he gave himself up for lost. When danger was most imminent, instead of remaining at his post, he retired from the field of battle to a distant country-house, and began to consider how a retreat might be managed. The Grand Prieur, his brother, was in command under him, and was ordered to remain upon the field; but he was more intent upon saving his skin than on obeying orders, and so, at the very outset of the fight, ran away to a country-house hard by. M. de Vendome strangely enough had sat down to eat at the country-house whither he had retired, and was in the midst of his meal when news was brought him that, owing to the prodigies performed by one of his officers, Le Guerchois, the fortunes of the day had changed, and Prince Louis of Baden was retiring. M. Vendome had great difficulty to believe this, but ordered his horse, mounted, and, pushing on, concluded the combat gloriously. He did not fail, of course, to claim all the honours of this victory, which in reality was a barren one; and sent word of his triumph to the King. He dared to say that the loss of the enemy was more than thirteen thousand; and our loss less than three thousand—whereas, the loss was at least equal. This exploit, nevertheless, resounded at the Court and through the town as an advantage the most complete and the most decisive, and due entirely to the vigilance, valour, and capacity of Vendome. Not a word was said of his country-house, or the interrupted meal. These facts were only known after the return of the general officers. As for the Grand Prieur, his poltroonery had been so public, his flight so disgraceful—for he had taken troops with him to protect the country-house in which he sought shelter—that he could not be pardoned. The two brothers quarrelled upon these points, and in the end the Grand Prieur was obliged to give up his command. He retired to his house at Clichy, near Paris; but, tiring of that place, he went to Rome, made the acquaintance there of the Marquise de Richelieu, a wanderer like himself, and passed some time with her at Genoa. Leaving that city, he went to Chalons-sur-Saone, which

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had been fixed upon as the place of his a exile, and there gave himself up to the debaucheries in which he usually lived. From this time until the Regency we shall see nothing more of him. I shall only add, therefore, that he never went sober to bed during thirty years, but was always carried thither dead drunk: was a liar, swindler, and thief; a rogue to the marrow of his bones, rotted with vile diseases; the most contemptible and yet most dangerous fellow in the world.

One day-I am speaking of a time many years previous to the date of the occurrences just related-one day there was a great hunting party at Saint Germain. The chase was pursued so long, that the King gave up, and returned to Saint Germain. A number of courtiers, among whom was M. de Lauzun, who related this story to me, continued their sport; and just as darkness was coming on, discovered that they had lost their way. After a time, they espied a light, by which they guided their steps, and at length reached the door of a kind of castle. They knocked, they called aloud, they named themselves, and asked for hospitality. It was then between ten and eleven at night, and towards the end of autumn. The door was opened to them. The master of the house came forth. He made them take their boots off, and warm themselves; he put their horses into his stables; and at the same time had a supper prepared for his guests, who stood much in need of it. They did not wait long for the meal; yet when served it proved excellent; the wines served with it, too, were of several kinds, and excellent likewise: as for the master of the house, he was so polite and respectful, yet without being ceremonious or eager,

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

His great piety contributed to weaken his mind
Of a politeness that was unendurable
Reproaches rarely succeed in love
Spoil all by asking too much
Teacher lost little, because he had little to lose
There was no end to the outrageous civilities of M. de Coislin