

# **Memoirs of Louis XIV and His Court and of the Regency — Volume 10 eBook**

## **Memoirs of Louis XIV and His Court and of the Regency — Volume 10 by Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon**

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# Contents

<a href="#">Memoirs of Louis XIV and His Court and of the Regency — Volume 10 eBook.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Table of Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Page 1.....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Page 2.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Page 3.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Page 4.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Page 5.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Page 6.....</a>	<a href="#">13</a>
<a href="#">Page 7.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Page 8.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Page 9.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Page 10.....</a>	<a href="#">19</a>
<a href="#">Page 11.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Page 12.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Page 13.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Page 14.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Page 15.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">Page 16.....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>
<a href="#">Page 17.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Page 18.....</a>	<a href="#">28</a>
<a href="#">Page 19.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>
<a href="#">Page 20.....</a>	<a href="#">30</a>
<a href="#">Page 21.....</a>	<a href="#">31</a>
<a href="#">Page 22.....</a>	<a href="#">32</a>



[Page 23..... 34](#)

[Page 24..... 35](#)

[Page 25..... 36](#)

[Page 26..... 37](#)

[Page 27..... 38](#)

[Page 28..... 39](#)

[Page 29..... 41](#)

[Page 30..... 42](#)

[Page 31..... 44](#)

[Page 32..... 45](#)

[Page 33..... 46](#)

[Page 34..... 47](#)

[Page 35..... 49](#)

[Page 36..... 50](#)

[Page 37..... 51](#)

[Page 38..... 52](#)

[Page 39..... 53](#)

[Page 40..... 54](#)

[Page 41..... 55](#)

[Page 42..... 56](#)

[Page 43..... 58](#)

[Page 44..... 59](#)

[Page 45..... 61](#)

[Page 46..... 62](#)

[Page 47..... 63](#)

[Page 48..... 64](#)



[Page 49..... 66](#)  
[Page 50..... 67](#)  
[Page 51..... 68](#)

# Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
CHAPTER LXX		1
CHAPTER LXXI		9
CHAPTER LXXII		14
CHAPTER LXXIII		24
CHAPTER LXXIV		31
CHAPTER LXXV		34
CHAPTER LXXVI		39
CHAPTER LXXVII		46
ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:		51



# Page 1

## CHAPTER LXX

The reign of Louis XIV. was approaching its conclusion, so that there is now nothing more to relate but what passed during the last month of his life, and scarcely so much. These events, indeed, so curious and so important, are so mixed up with those that immediately followed the King's death, that they cannot be separated from them. It will be interesting and is necessary to describe the projects, the thoughts, the difficulties, the different resolutions, which occupied the brain of the Prince, who, despite the efforts of Madame de Maintenon and M. du Maine, was of necessity about to be called to the head of affairs during the minority of the young King. This is the place, therefore, to explain all these things, after which we will resume the narrative of the last month of the King's life, and go on to the events which followed his death.

But, as I have said, before entering upon this thorny path, it will be as well to make known, if possible, the chief personage of the story, the impediments interior and exterior in his path, and all that personally belonged to him.

M. le Duc d'Orleans was, at the most, of mediocre stature, full-bodied without being fat; his manner and his deportment were easy and very noble; his face was broad and very agreeable, high in colour; his hair black, and wig the same. Although he danced very badly, and had but ill succeeded at the riding-school, he had in his face, in his gestures, in all his movements, infinite grace, and so natural that it adorned even his most ordinary commonplace actions. With much ease when nothing constrained him, he was gentle, affable, open, of facile and charming access; the tone of his voice was agreeable, and he had a surprisingly easy flow of words upon all subjects which nothing ever disturbed, and which never failed to surprise; his eloquence was natural and extended even to his most familiar discourse, while it equally entered into his observations upon the most abstract sciences, on which he talked most perspicuously; the affairs of government, politics, finance, justice, war, the court, ordinary conversation, the arts, and mechanics. He could speak as well too upon history and memoirs, and was well acquainted with pedigrees. The personages of former days were familiar to him; and the intrigues of the ancient courts were to him as those of his own time. To hear him, you would have thought him a great reader. Not so. He skimmed; but his memory was so singular that he never forgot things, names, or dates, cherishing remembrance of things with precision; and his apprehension was so good, that in skimming thus it was, with him, precisely as though he had read very laboriously. He excelled in unpremeditated discourse, which, whether in the shape of repartee or jest, was always appropriate and vivacious. He often reproached me, and others more than he, with "not spoiling him;"



## Page 2

but I often gave him praise merited by few, and which belonged to nobody so justly as to him; it was, that besides having infinite ability and of various kinds, the singular perspicuity of his mind was joined to so much exactness, that he would never have made a mistake in anything if he had allowed the first suggestions of his judgment. He oftentimes took this my eulogy as a reproach, and he was not always wrong, but it was not the less true. With all this he had no presumption, no trace of superiority natural or acquired; he reasoned with you as with his equal, and struck the most able with surprise. Although he never forgot his own position, nor allowed others to forget it, he carried no constraint with him, but put everybody at his ease, and placed himself upon the level of all others.

He had the weakness to believe that he resembled Henry IV. in everything, and strove to affect the manners, the gestures, the bearing, of that monarch. Like Henry IV. he was naturally good, humane, compassionate; and, indeed, this man, who has been so cruelly accused of the blackest and most inhuman crimes, was more opposed to the destruction of others than any one I have ever known, and had such a singular dislike to causing anybody pain that it may be said, his gentleness, his humanity, his easiness, had become faults; and I do not hesitate to affirm that that supreme virtue which teaches us to pardon our enemies he turned into vice, by the indiscriminate prodigality with which he applied it; thereby causing himself many sad embarrassments and misfortunes, examples and proofs of which will be seen in the sequel.

I remember that about a year, perhaps, before the death of the King, having gone up early after dinner into the apartments of Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans at Marly, I found her in bed with the megrims, and M. d'Orleans alone in the room, seated in an armchair at her pillow. Scarcely had I sat down than Madame la Duchesse began to talk of some of those execrable imputations concerning M. d'Orleans unceasingly circulated by Madame de Maintenon and M. du Maine; and of an incident arising therefrom, in which the Prince and the Cardinal de Rohan had played a part against M. d'Orleans. I sympathised with her all the more because the Duke, I knew not why, had always distinguished and courted those two brothers, and thought he could count upon them. "And what will you say of M. d'Orleans," added the Duchesse, "when I tell you that since he has known this, known it beyond doubt, he treats them exactly the same as before?"

I looked at M. d'Orleans, who had uttered only a few words to confirm the story, as it was being told, and who was negligently lolling in his chair, and I said to him with warmth:

"Oh, as to that, Monsieur, the truth must be told; since Louis the Debonnaire, never has there been such a Debonnaire as you."



At these words he rose in his chair, red with anger to the very whites of his eyes, and blurted out his vexation against me for abusing him, as he pretended, and against Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans for encouraging me and laughing at him.



## Page 3

“Go on,” said I, “treat your enemies well, and rail at your friends. I am delighted to see you angry. It is a sign that I have touched the sore point, when you press the finger on it the patient cries. I should like to squeeze out all the matter, and after that you would be quite another man, and differently esteemed.”

He grumbled a little more, and then calmed down. This was one of two occasions only, on which he was ever really angry with me.

Two or three years after the death of the King, I was chatting in one of the grand rooms of the Tuileries, where the Council of the Regency was, according to custom, soon to be held, and M. d’Orleans at the other end was talking to some one in a window recess. I heard myself called from mouth to mouth, and was told that M. d’Orleans wished to speak to me. This often happened before the Council. I went therefore to the window where he was standing. I found a serious bearing, a concentrated manner, an angry face, and was much surprised.

“Monsieur,” said he to me at once, “I have a serious complaint against you; you, whom I have always regarded as my best of friends.”

“Against me! Monsieur!” said I, still more surprised. “What is the matter, then, may I ask?”

“The matter!” he replied with a mien still more angry; “something you cannot deny; verses you have made against me.”

“I—verses!” was my reply. “Why, who the devil has been telling you such nonsense? You have been acquainted with me nearly forty years, and do you not know, that never in my life have I been able to make a single verse—much less verses?”

“No, no, by Heaven,” replied he, “you cannot deny these;” and forthwith he began to sing to me a street song in his praise, the chorus of which was: ‘Our Regent is debonnaire, la la, he is debonnaire,’ with a burst of laughter.

“What!” said I, “you remember it still!” and smiling, I added also, “since you are revenged for it, remember it in good earnest.” He kept on laughing a long time before going to the Council, and could not hinder himself. I have not been afraid to write this trifle, because it seems to me that it paints the man.

M. d’Orleans loved liberty, and as much for others as for himself. He extolled England to me one day on this account, as a country where there are no banishments, no lettres de cachet, and where the King may close the door of his palace to anybody, but can keep no one in prison; and thereupon related to me with enjoyment, that besides the Duchess of Portsmouth, Charles the Second had many subordinate mistresses; that the Grand Prieur, young and amiable in those days, driven out of France for some folly, had



gone to England to pass his exile and had been well received by the King. By way of thanks, he seduced one of those mistresses, by whom the King was then so smitten, that he sued for mercy, offered money to the Grand Prieur, and undertook to obtain



## Page 4

his reconciliation in France. The Grand Prieur held firm. Charles prohibited him the palace. He laughed at this, and went every day to the theatre, with his conquest, and placed himself opposite the King. At last, Charles, not knowing what to do to deliver himself from his tormentor, begged our King to recall him, and this was done. But the Grand Prieur said he was very comfortable in England and continued his game. Charles, outraged, confided to the King (Louis XIV.) the state he was thrown into by the Grand Prieur, and obtained a command so absolute and so prompt, that his tormentor was afterwards obliged to go back into France.

M. d'Orleans admired this; and I know not if he would not have wished to be the Grand Prieur. He always related this story with delight. Thus, of ambition for reigning or governing, he had none. If he made a false move in Spain it was because he had been misdirected. What he would have liked best would have been to command armies while war lasted, and divert himself the rest of the time without constraint to himself or to others. He was, in fact, very fit for this. With much valour, he had also much foresight, judgment, coolness, and vast capacity. It may be said that he was captain, engineer, and army purveyor; that he knew the strength of his troops, the names and the company of the officers, and the most distinguished of each corps; that he knew how to make himself adored, at the same time keeping up discipline, and could execute the most difficult things, while unprovided with everything. Unfortunately there is another side of this picture, which it will be as well now to describe.

M. d'Orleans, by disposition so adapted to become the honour and the master-piece of an education, was not fortunate in his teachers. Saint-Laurent, to whom he was first confided, was, it is true, the man in all Europe best fitted to act as the instructor of kings, but he died before his pupil was beyond the birch, and the young Prince, as I have related, fell entirely into the hands of the Abbe Dubois. This person has played such an important part in the state since the death of the King, that it is fit that he should be made known. The Abbe Dubois was a little, pitiful, wizened, herring-gutted man, in a flaxen wig, with a weazel's face, brightened by some intellect. In familiar terms, he was a regular scamp. All the vices unceasingly fought within him for supremacy, so that a continual uproar filled his mind. Avarice, debauchery, ambition; were his gods; perfidy, flattery, foot-licking his means of action; complete impiety was his repose; and he held the opinion as a great principle, that probity and honesty are chimeras, with which people deck themselves, but which have no existence. In consequence, all means were good to him. He excelled in low intrigues; he lived in them, and could not do without them; but they always had an aim, and he followed them with a patience terminated



## Page 5

only by success, or by firm conviction that he could not reach what he aimed at, or unless, as he wandered thus in deep darkness, a glimmer of light came to him from some other cranny. He passed thus his days in sapping and counter-sapping. The most impudent deceit had become natural to him, and was concealed under an air that was simple, upright, sincere, often bashful. He would have spoken with grace and forcibly, if, fearful of saying more than he wished, he had not accustomed himself to a fictitious hesitation, a stuttering—which disfigured his speech, and which, redoubled when important things were in question, became insupportable and sometimes unintelligible. He had wit, learning, knowledge of the world; much desire to please and insinuate himself, but all was spoiled by an odour of falsehood which escaped in spite of him through every pore of his body—even in the midst of his gaiety, which made whoever beheld it sad. Wicked besides, with reflection, both by nature and by argument, treacherous and ungrateful, expert in the blackest villainies, terribly brazen when detected; he desired everything, envied everything, and wished to seize everything. It was known afterwards, when he no longer could restrain himself, to what an extent he was selfish, debauched, inconsistent, ignorant of everything, passionate, headstrong, blasphemous and mad, and to what an extent he publicly despised his master, the state, and all the world, never hesitating to sacrifice everybody and everything to his credit, his power, his absolute authority, his greatness, his avarice, his fears, and his vengeance.

Such was the sage to whom M. le Duc d'Orleans was confided in early youth!

Such a good master did not lose his pains with his new disciple, in whom the excellent principles of Saint-Laurent had not had time to take deep root, whatever esteem and affection he may have preserved through life for that worthy man. I will admit here, with bitterness, for everything should be sacrificed to the truth, that M. le Duc d'Orleans brought into the world a failing—let us call things by their names—a weakness, which unceasingly spoiled all his talents, and which were of marvellous use to his preceptor all his life. Dubois led him into debauchery, made him despise all duty and all decency, and persuaded him that he had too much mind to be the dupe of religion, which he said was a politic invention to frighten ordinary, intellects, and keep the people in subjection. He filled him too with his favourite principle, that probity in man and virtue in woman, are mere chimeras, without existence in anybody except a few poor slaves of early training. This was the basis of the good ecclesiastic's doctrines, whence arose the license of falsehood, deceit, artifice, infidelity, perfidy; in a word, every villainy, every crime, was turned into policy, capacity, greatness, liberty and depth of intellect, enlightenment, good conduct, if it could be hidden, and if suspicions and common prejudices could be avoided.



## Page 6

Unfortunately all conspired in M. d'Orleans to open his heart and his mind to this execrable poison: a fresh and early youth, much strength and health, joy at escaping from the yoke as well as vexation at his marriage, the wearisomeness produced by idleness, the impulse of his passions, the example of other young men, whose vanity and whose interest it was to make him live like them. Thus he grew accustomed to debauchery, above all to the uproar of it, so that he could not do without it, and could only divert himself by dint of noise, tumult, and excess. It is this which led him often into such strange and such scandalous debauches, and as he wished to surpass all his companions, to mix up with his parties of pleasure the most impious discourses, and as a precious refinement, to hold the most outrageous orgies on the most holy days, as he did several times during his Regency on Good Friday, by choice, and on other similar days. The more debauched a man was, the more he esteemed him; and I have unceasingly seen him in admiration, that reached almost to veneration for the Grand Prieur,—because for forty years he had always gone to bed drunk, and had never ceased to keep mistresses in the most public manner, and to hold the most impious and irreligious discourses. With these principles, and the conduct that resulted from them, it is not surprising that M. le Duc d'Orleans was false to such an extent, that he boasted of his falsehood, and plumed himself upon being the most skilful deceiver in the world. He and Madame la Duchesse de Berry sometimes disputed which was the cleverer of the two; and this in public before M. le Duc de Berry, Madame de Saint-Simon, and others!

M. le Duc d'Orleans, following out the traditions of the Palais Royal, had acquired the detestable taste and habit of embroiling people one with the other, so as to profit by their divisions. This was one of his principal occupations during all the time he was at the head of affairs, and one that he liked the best; but which, as soon as discovered, rendered him odious, and caused him a thousand annoyances. He was not wicked, far from it; but he could not quit the habits of impiety, debauchery, and deceit into which Dubois had led him. A remarkable feature in his character is, that he was suspicious and full of confidence at the same time with reference to the very same people.

It is surprising that with all his talents he was totally without honest resources for amusing himself. He was born bored; and he was so accustomed to live out of himself, that it was insufferable to him to return, incapable as he was of trying even to occupy himself. He could only live in the midst of the movement and torrent of business; at the head of an army for instance, or in the cares that arose out of the execution of campaign projects, or in the excitement and uproar of debauchery. He began to languish as soon as he was without noise, excess, and tumult, the time painfully hanging upon his hands.



## Page 7

He cast himself upon painting, when his great fancy for chemistry had passed or grown deadened, in consequence of what had been said upon it. He painted nearly all the afternoon at Versailles and at Marly. He was a good judge of pictures, liked them, and made a collection, which in number and excellence was not surpassed by those of the Crown. He amused himself afterwards in making composition stones and seals over charcoal, the fumes of which often drove me away; and the strongest perfumes, which he was fond of all his life, but from which I turned him because the King was very much afraid of them, and soon sniffed them. In fact, never was man born with so many talents of all kinds, so much readiness and facility in making use of them, and yet never was man so idle, so given up to vacuity and weariness. Thus Madame painted him very happily by an illustration from fairy tales, of which she was full.

She said, that all the fairies had been invited to his birth; that all came, and that each gave him some talent, so that he had them all. But, unfortunately, an old fairy, who had disappeared so many years ago that she was no longer remembered, had been omitted from the invitation lists. Piqued at this neglect, she came supported upon her little wand, just at the moment when all the rest had endowed the child with their gifts. More and more vexed, she revenged herself by rendering useless all the talents he had received from the other fairies, not one of which, though possessing them all, in consequence of her malediction, was he able to make use of. It must be admitted, that on the whole this is a speaking portrait.

One of the misfortunes of this Prince was being incapable of following up anything, and an inability to comprehend, even, how any one else could do so. Another, was a sort of insensibility which rendered him indifferent to the most mortal and the most dangerous offences; and as the nerve and principle of hatred and friendship, of gratitude and vengeance, are the same, and as they were wanting in him, the consequences were infinite and pernicious. He was timid to excess, knew it, and was so ashamed that he affected to be exactly the reverse, and plumed himself upon his daring. But the truth is, as was afterwards seen, nothing could be obtained from him, neither grace, nor justice, except by working upon his fears, to which he was very susceptible; or by extreme importunity. He tried to put people off by words, then by promises, of which he was monstrously prodigal, but which he only kept when made to people who had good firm claws. In this manner he broke so many engagements that the most positive became counted as nothing; and he promised moreover to so many different people, what could only be given to one, that he thus opened out a copious source of discredit to himself and caused much discontent. Nothing deceived or injured him more than the opinion he had formed, that he could deceive all the world. He was no longer believed, even when he spoke with the best faith, and his facility much diminished the value of everything he did. To conclude, the obscure, and for the most part blackguard company, which he ordinarily frequented in his debauches, and which he did not scruple publicly to call his rouses, drove away all decent people, and did him infinite harm.

## Page 8

His constant mistrust of everything and everybody was disgusting, above all when he was at the head of affairs. The fault sprang from his timidity, which made him fear his most certain enemies, and treat them with more distinction than his friends; from his natural easiness, from a false imitation of Henry IV., in whom this quality was by no means the finest; and from the unfortunate opinion which he held, that probity was a sham. He was, nevertheless, persuaded of my probity; and would often reproach me with it as a fault and prejudice of education which had cramped my mind and obscured my understanding, and he said as much of Madame de Saint-Simon, because he believed her virtuous.

I had given him so many proofs of my attachment that he could not very well suspect me; and yet, this is what happened two or three years after the establishment of the Regency. I give it as one of the most striking of the touches that paint his portrait.

It was autumn. M. d'Orleans had dismissed the councils for a fortnight. I profited by this to go and spend the time at La Ferme. I had just passed an hour alone with the Duke, and had taken my leave of him and gone home, where in order to be in repose I had closed my door to everybody. In about an hour at most, I was told that Biron, with a message from M. le Duc d'Orleans, was at the door, with orders to see me, and that he would not go away without. I allowed Biron to enter, all the more surprised because I had just quitted M. le Duc d'Orleans, and eagerly asked him the news. Biron was embarrassed, and in his turn asked where was the Marquis de Ruffec (my son). At this my surprise increased, and I demanded what he meant. Biron, more and more confused, admitted that M. le Duc d'Orleans wanted information on this point, and had sent him for it. I replied, that my son was with his regiment at Besancon, lodging with M. de Levi, who commanded in Franche-Comte.

"Oh," said Biron, "I know that very well; but have you any letter from him?"

"What for?" I asked.

"Because, frankly, since I must tell you all," said he, "M. le Duc d'Orleans wishes to see his handwriting."

He added, that soon after I had quitted M. le Duc d'Orleans, whilst he was walking at Montmartre ma garden with his 'roues' and his harlots, some letters had been brought to him by a post-office clerk, to whom he had spoken in private; that afterwards he, Biron, had been called by the Duke, who showed him a letter from the Marquis de Ruffec to his master, dated "Madrid," and charged him, thereupon, with this present commission.

At this recital I felt a mixture of anger and compassion, and I did not constrain myself with Biron. I had no letters from my son, because I used to burn them, as I did all useless papers. I charged Biron to say to M. le Duc d'Orleans a part of what I felt; that I

had not the slightest acquaintance with anybody in Spain; that I begged him at once to despatch a courier there in order to satisfy himself that my son was at Besancon.



## Page 9

Biron, shrugging his shoulders, said all that was very good, but that if I could find a letter from the Marquis de Ruffec it would be much better; adding, that if one turned up and I sent it to him, he would take care that it reached M. le Duc d'Orleans, at table, in spite of the privacy of his suppers. I did not wish to return to the Palais Royal to make a scene there, and dismissed Biron. Fortunately, Madame de Saint-Simon came in some time after. I related to her this adventure. She found the last letter of the Marquis de Ruffec, and we sent it to Biron. It reached the table as he had promised. M. le Duc d'Orleans seized it with eagerness. The joke is that he did not know the handwriting. Not only did he look at the letter, but he read it; and as he found it diverting, regaled his company with it; it became the topic of their discourse, and entirely removed his suspicions. Upon my return from La Ferme, I found him ashamed of himself, and I rendered him still more so by what I said to him on the subject.

I learnt afterwards that this Madrid letter, and others that followed, came from a sham Marquis de Ruffec, that is to say, from the son of one of Madame's porters, who passed himself off as my son. He pretended that he had quarrelled with me, and wrote to Madame de Saint-Simon, begging her to intercede for him; and all this that his letters might be seen, and that he might reap substantial benefits from his imposture in the shape of money and consideration. He was a well-made fellow, had much address and effrontery, knew the Court very well, and had taken care to learn all about our family, so as to speak within limits. He was arrested at Bayonne, at the table of Dadoncourt, who commanded there, and who suddenly formed the resolution, suspecting him not to be a gentleman, upon seeing him eat olives with a fork! When in gaol he confessed who he was. He was not new at the trade and was confined some little time.

## CHAPTER LXXI

But to return to M. le Duc d'Orleans.

His curiosity, joined to a false idea of firmness and courage, had early led him to try and raise the devil and make him speak. He left nothing untried, even the wildest reading, to persuade himself there was no God; and yet believed meanwhile in the devil, and hoped to see him and converse with him! This inconsistency is hard to understand, and yet is extremely common. He worked with all sorts of obscure people; and above all with Mirepoix, sublieutenant of the Black Musketeers, to find out Satan. They passed whole nights in the quarries of Vanvres and of Vaugirard uttering invocations. M. le Duc d'Orleans, however, admitted to me that he had never succeeded in hearing or seeing anything, and at last had given up this folly.

At first it was only to please Madame d'Argenton, but afterwards from curiosity, that he tried to see the present and the future in a glass of water; so he said, and he was no liar. To be false and to be a liar are not one and the same thing, though they closely

resemble each other, and if he told a lie it was only when hard pressed upon some promise or some business, and in spite of himself, so as to escape from a dilemma.

## Page 10

Although we often spoke upon religion, to which I tried to lead him so long as I had hope of success, I never could unravel the system he had formed for himself, and I ended by becoming persuaded that he wavered unceasingly without forming any religion at all.

His passionate desire, like that of his companions in morals, was this, that it would turn out that there is no God; but he had too much enlightenment to be an atheist; who is a particular kind of fool much more rare than is thought. This enlightenment importuned him; he tried to extinguish it and could not. A mortal soul would have been to him a resource; but he could not convince himself of its existence. A God and an immortal soul, threw him into sad straits, and yet he could not blind himself to the truth of both the one and the other. I can say then this, I know of what religion he was not; nothing more. I am sure, however, that he was very ill at ease upon this point, and that if a dangerous illness had overtaken him, and he had had the time, he would have thrown himself into the hands of all the priests and all the Capuchins of the town. His great foible was to pride himself upon his impiety and to wish to surpass in that everybody else.

I recollect that one Christmas-time, at Versailles, when he accompanied the King to morning prayers and to the three midnight masses, he surprised the Court by his continued application in reading a volume he had brought with him, and which appeared to be, a prayer book. The chief femme de chambre of Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans, much attached to the family, and very free as all good old domestics are, transfixed with joy at M. le Duc d'Orleans's application to his book, complimented him upon it the next day, in the presence of others. M. le Duc d'Orleans allowed her to go on some time, and then said, "You are very silly, Madame Imbert. Do you know what I was reading? It was 'Rabelais,' that I brought with me for fear of being bored."

The effect of this reply may be imagined. The thing was too true, and was pure braggadocio; for, without comparison of the places, or of the things, the music of the chapel was much superior to that of the opera, and to all the music of Europe; and at Christmas it surpassed itself. There was nothing so magnificent as the decoration of the chapel, or the manner in which it was lighted. It was full of people; the arches of the tribune were crowded with the Court ladies, in undress, but ready for conquest. There was nothing so surprising as the beauty of the spectacle. The ears were charmed also. M. le Duc d'Orleans loved music extremely; he could compose, and had amused himself by composing a kind of little opera, La Fare writing the words, which was performed before the King. This music of the chapel, therefore, might well have occupied him in the most agreeable manner, to say nothing of the brilliant scene, without his having recourse to Rabelais. But he must needs play the impious, and the wag.



## Page 11

Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans was another kind of person. She was tall, and in every way majestic; her complexion, her throat, her arms, were admirable; she had a tolerable mouth, with beautiful teeth, somewhat long; and cheeks too broad, and too hanging, which interfered with, but did not spoil, her beauty. What disfigured her most was her eyebrows, which were, as it were, peeled and red, with very little hair; she had, however, fine eyelashes, and well-set chestnut-coloured hair. Without being hump-backed or deformed, she had one side larger than the other, and walked awry. This defect in her figure indicated another, which was more troublesome in society, and which inconvenienced herself. She had a good deal of intellect, and spoke with much ability. She said all she wished, and often conveyed her meaning to you without directly expressing it; saying, as it were, what she did not say. Her utterance was, however, slow and embarrassed, so that unaccustomed ears with difficulty followed her.

Every kind of decency and decorum centred themselves in her, and the most exquisite pride was there upon its throne. Astonishment will be felt at what I am going to say, and yet, however, nothing is more strictly true: it is, that at the bottom of her soul she believed that she, bastard of the King, had much honoured M. d'Orleans in marrying him! M. le Duc d'Orleans often laughed at her pride, called her Madame Lucifer, in speaking to her, and she admitted that the name did not displease her. She always received his advances with coldness, and a sort of superiority of greatness. She was a princess to the backbone, at all hours, and in all places. Yet, at the same time, her timidity was extreme. The King could have made her feel ill with a single severe look; and Madame de Maintenon could have done likewise, perhaps. At all events, Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans trembled before her; and upon the most commonplace matters never replied to either him or her without hesitation, fear printed on her face.

M. le Duc and Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans lived an idle, languishing, shameful, indecent, and despised life, abandoned by all the Court. This, I felt, was one of the first things that must be remedied. Accordingly, I induced Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans to make an effort to attract people to her table. She did so, persevering against the coldness and aversion she met with, and in time succeeded in drawing a tolerably numerous company to her dinners. They were of exquisite quality, and people soon got over their first hesitation, when they found everything orderly, free, and unobjectionable. At these dinners, M. d'Orleans kept within bounds, not only in his discourse, but in his behaviour. But oftentimes his ennui led him to Paris, to join in supper parties and debauchery. Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans tried to draw him from these pleasures by arranging small parties at her pretty little villa, l'Etoile (in the park of Versailles),



## Page 12

which the King had given to her, and which she had furnished in the most delightful manner. She loved good cheer, the guests loved it also, and at table she was altogether another person—free, gay, exciting, charming. M. le Duc d'Orleans cared for nothing but noise, and as he threw off all restraint at these parties, there was much difficulty in selecting guests, for the ears of many people would have been much confused at his loose talk, and their eyes much astonished to see him get drunk at the very commencement of the repast, in the midst of those who thought only of amusing and recreating themselves in a decent manner, and who never approached intoxication.

As the King became weaker in health, and evidently drew near his end, I had continued interviews with Madame d'Orleans upon the subject of the Regency, the plan of government to be adopted, and the policy she should follow. Hundreds of times before we had reasoned together upon the faults of the Government, and the misfortunes that resulted from them. What we had to do was to avoid those faults, educate the young King in good and rational maxims, so that when he succeeded to power he might continue what the Regency had not had time to finish. This, at least, was my idea; and I laboured hard to make it the idea of M. le Duc d'Orleans. As the health of the King diminished I entered more into details; as I will explain.

What I considered the most important thing to be done, was to overthrow entirely the system of government in which Cardinal Mazarin had imprisoned the King and the realm. A foreigner, risen from the dregs of the people, who thinks of nothing but his own power and his own greatness, cares nothing for the state, except in its relation to himself. He despises its laws, its genius, its advantages: he is ignorant of its rules and its forms; he thinks only of subjugating all, of confounding all, of bringing all down to one level. Richelieu and his successor, Mazarin, succeeded so well in this policy that the nobility, by degrees, became annihilated, as we now see them. The pen and the robe people, on the other hand, were exalted; so that now things have reached such a pretty pass that the greatest lord is without power, and in a thousand different manners is dependent upon the meanest plebeian. It is in this manner that things hasten from one extreme to the other.

My design was to commence by introducing the nobility into the ministry, with the dignity and authority due to them, and by degrees to dismiss the pen and robe people from all employ not purely judicial. In this manner the administration of public affairs would be entirely in the hands of the aristocracy. I proposed to abolish the two offices of secretary of state for the war department, and for foreign affairs, and to supply their place by councils; also, that the offices of the navy should be managed by a council. I insisted upon the distinct and perfect separation of these councils, so that their authority should never be confounded, and the public should never have the slightest trouble in finding out where to address itself for any kind of business.



## Page 13

M. le Duc d'Orleans exceedingly relished my project, which we much discussed. This point arrived at, it became necessary to debate upon the persons who were to form these councils. I suggested names, which were accepted or set aside, according as they met his approval or disapprobation. "But," said M. le Duc d'Orleans, after we had been a long time at this work, "you propose everybody and never say a word of yourself. What do you wish to be?"

I replied, that it was not for me to propose, still less to choose any office, but for him to see if he wished to employ me, believing me capable, and in that case to determine the place he wished me to occupy. This was at Marly, in his chamber, and I shall never forget it.

After some little debate, that between equals would have been called complimentary, he proposed to me the Presidency of the Council of Finance. But I had good reasons for shrinking from this office. I saw that disordered as the finances had become there was only one remedy by which improvement could be effected; and this was National Bankruptcy. Had I occupied the office, I should have been too strongly tempted to urge this view, and carry it out, but it was a responsibility I did not wish to take upon myself before God and man. Yet, I felt as I said, that to declare the State bankrupt would be the wisest course, and I am bold enough to think, that there is not a man, having no personal interest in the continuance of imposts, who of two evils, *viz.*, vastly increased taxation, and national failure, would not prefer the latter. We were in the condition of a man who unfortunately must choose between passing twelve or fifteen years in his bed, in continual pain, or having his leg cut off. Who can doubt this? he would prefer the loss of his leg by a painful operation, in order to find himself two months after quite well, free from suffering and in the enjoyment of all his faculties.

I shrunk accordingly from the finances for the reason I have above given, and made M. le Duc d'Orleans so angry by my refusal to accept the office he had proposed to me, that for three weeks he sulked and would not speak to me, except upon unimportant matters.

At the end of that time, in the midst of a languishing conversation, he exclaimed, "Very well, then. You stick to your text, you won't have the finances?"

I respectfully lowered my eyes and replied, in a gentle tone, that I thought that question was settled. He could not restrain some complaints, but they were not bitter, nor was he angry, and then rising and taking a few turns in the room, without saying a word, and his head bent, as was his custom when embarrassed, he suddenly spun round upon me, and exclaimed, "But whom shall we put there?"

I suggested the Duc de Noailles, and although the suggestion at first met with much warm opposition from M. le Duc d'Orleans, it was ultimately accepted by him.



## Page 14

The moment after we had settled this point he said to me, "And you! what will you be?" and he pressed me so much to explain myself that I said at last if he would put me in the council of affairs of the interior, I thought I should do better there than elsewhere.

"Chief, then," replied he with vivacity.

"No, no! not that," said I; "simply a place in the council."

We both insisted, he for, I against. "A place in that council," he said, "would be ridiculous, and cannot be thought of. Since you will not be chief, there is only one post which suits you, and which suits me also. You must be in the council I shall be in the Supreme Council."

I accepted the post, and thanked him. From that moment this distinction remained fixed.

I will not enter into all the suggestions I offered to M. le Duc d'Orleans respecting the Regency, or give the details of all the projects I submitted to him. Many of those projects and suggestions were either acted upon only partially, or not acted upon at all, although nearly every one met with his approval. But he was variable as the winds, and as difficult to hold. In my dealings with him I had to do with a person very different from that estimable Dauphin who was so rudely taken away from us.

But let me, before going further, describe the last days of the King, his illness, and death, adding to the narrative a review of his life and character.

## CHAPTER LXXII

*Louis XIV.* began, as I have before remarked, sensibly to decline, and his appetite, which had always been good and uniform, very considerably diminished. Even foreign countries became aware of this. Bets were laid in London that his life would not last beyond the first of September, that is to say, about three months, and although the King wished to know everything, it may be imagined that nobody was very eager to make him acquainted with the news. He used to have the Dutch papers read to him in private by Torcy, often after the Council of State. One day as Torcy was reading, coming unexpectedly—for he had not examined the paper—upon the account of these bets, he stopped, stammered, and skipped it. The King, who easily perceived this, asked him the cause of his embarrassment; what he was passing over, and why? Torcy blushed to the very whites of his eyes, and said it was a piece of impertinence unworthy of being read. The King insisted; Torcy also: but at last thoroughly confused, he could not resist the reiterated command he received, and read the whole account of the bets. The King pretended not to be touched by it, but he was, and profoundly, so that sitting down to

table immediately afterwards, he could not keep himself from speaking of it, though without mentioning the gazette.

## Page 15

This was at Marly, and by chance I was there that day. The King looked at me as at the others, but as though asking for a reply. I took good care not to open my mouth, and lowered my eyes. Cheverny, (a discreet man,) too, was not so prudent, but made a long and ill-timed rhapsody upon similar reports that had come to Copenhagen from Vienna while he was ambassador at the former place seventeen or eighteen years before. The King allowed him to say on, but did not take the bait. He appeared touched, but like a man who does not wish to seem so. It could be seen that he did all he could to eat, and to show that he ate with appetite. But it was also seen that the mouthfuls loitered on their way. This trifle did not fail to augment the circumspection of the Court, above all of those who by their position had reason to be more attentive than the rest. It was reported that an aide-de-camp of Lord Stair, who was then English ambassador to our Court, and very much disliked for his insolent bearing and his troublesome ways, had caused these bets by what he had said in England respecting the health of the King. Stair, when told this, was much grieved, and said 'twas a scoundrel he had dismissed.

As the King sensibly declined I noticed that although terror of him kept people as much away from M. d'Orleans as ever, I was approached even by the most considerable. I had often amused myself at the expense of these prompt friends; I did so now, and diverted M. d'Orleans by warning him beforehand what he had to expect.

On Friday, the 9th of August, 1715, the King hunted the stag after dinner in his caleche, that he drove himself as usual. 'Twas for the last time. Upon his return he appeared much knocked up. There was a grand concert in the evening in Madame de Maintenon's apartment.

On Saturday, the 10th of August, he walked before dinner in his gardens at Marly; he returned to Versailles about six o'clock in the evening, and never again saw that strange work of his hands. In the evening he worked with the Chancellor in Madame de Maintenon's rooms, and appeared to everybody very ill. On Sunday, the eleventh of August, he held the Council of State, walked, after dinner to Trianon, never more to go out again during life.

On the morrow, the 12th of August, he took medicine as usual, and lived as usual the following days. It was known that he complained of sciatica in the leg and thigh. He had never before had sciatica, or rheumatism, or a cold; and for a long time no touch of gout. In the evening there was a little concert in Madame de Maintenon's rooms. This was the last time in his life that he walked alone.



## Page 16

On Tuesday, the 13th of August, he made a violent effort, and gave a farewell audience to a sham Persian ambassador, whom Pontchartrain had imposed upon him; this was the last public action of his life. The audience, which was long, fatigued the King. He resisted the desire for sleep which came over him, held the Finance Council, dined, had himself carried to Madame de Maintenon's, where a little concert was given, and on leaving his cabinet stopped for the Duchesse de la Rochefoucauld, who presented to him the Duchesse de la Rocheguyon, her daughter-in-law, who was the last lady presented to him. She took her tabouret that evening at the King's grand supper, which was the last he ever gave. On the morrow he sent some precious stones to the Persian ambassador just alluded to. It was on this day that the Princesse des Ursins set off for Lyons, terrified at the state of the King as I have already related.

For more than a year the health of the King had diminished. His valets noticed this first, and followed the progress of the malady, without one of them daring to open his mouth. The bastards, or to speak exactly, M, du Maine saw it; Madame de Maintenon also; but they did nothing. Fagon, the chief physician, much fallen off in mind and body, was the only one of the King's intimates who saw nothing. Marechal, also chief physician, spoke to him (Fagon) several times, but was always harshly repulsed. Pressed at last by his duty and his attachment, he made bold one morning towards Whitsuntide to go to Madame de Maintenon. He told her what he saw and how grossly Fagon was mistaken. He assured her that the, King, whose pulse he had often felt, had had for some time a slow internal fever; that his constitution was so good that with remedies and attention all would go well, but that if the malady were allowed to grow there would no longer be any resource. Madame de Maintenon grew angry, and all he obtained for his zeal was her anger. She said that only the personal enemies of Fagon could find fault with his opinion upon the King's health, concerning which the capacity, the application, the experience of the chief physician could not be deceived. The best of it is that Marechal, who had formerly operated upon Fagon for stone, had been appointed chief surgeon by him, and they had always lived on the best of terms. Marechal, annoyed as he related to me, could do nothing more, and began from that time to lament the death of his master. Fagon was in fact the first physician in Europe, but for a long time his health had not permitted him to maintain his experience; and the high point of authority to which his capacity and his favour had carried him, had at last spoiled him. He would not hear reason, or submit to reply, and continued to treat the King as he had treated him in early years; and killed him by his obstinacy.



## Page 17

The gout of which the King had had long attacks, induced Fagon to swaddle him, so to say, every evening in a heap of feather pillows, which made him sweat all night to such an extent that it was necessary in the morning to rub him down and change his linen before the grand chamberlain and the first gentleman of the chamber could enter. For many years he had drunk nothing but Burgundy wine, half mixed with water, and so old that it was used up instead of the best champagne which he had used all his life. He would pleasantly say sometimes that foreign lords who were anxious to taste the wine he used, were often mightily deceived. At no time had he ever drunk pure wine, or made use in any way of spirits, or even tea, coffee, or chocolate. Upon rising, instead of a little bread and wine and water, he had taken for a long time two glasses of sage and veronica; often between his meals, and always on going to bed, glasses of water with a little orange-flower water in them, and always iced. Even on the days when he had medicine he drank this, and always also at his meals, between which he never ate anything except some cinnamon lozenges that he put into his pocket at his dessert, with a good many cracknels for the bitches he kept in his cabinet.

As during the last year of his life the King became more and more costive, Fagon made him eat at the commencement of his repasts many iced fruits, that is to say, mulberries, melons, and figs rotten from ripeness; and at his dessert many other fruits, finishing with a surprising quantity of sweetmeats. All the year round he ate at supper a prodigious quantity of salad. His soups, several of which he partook of morning and evening, were full of gravy, and were of exceeding strength, and everything that was served to him was full of spice, to double the usual extent, and very strong also. This regimen and the sweetmeats together Fagon did not like, and sometimes while seeing the King eat, he would make most amusing grimaces, without daring however to say anything except now and then to Livry and Benoist, who replied that it was their business to feed the King, and his to doctor him. The King never ate any kind of venison or water-fowl, but otherwise partook of everything, fete days and fast days alike, except that during the last twenty years of his life he observed some few days of Lent.

This summer he redoubled his regime of fruits and drinks. At last the former clogged his stomach, taken after soup, weakened the digestive organs and took away his appetite, which until then had never failed him all his life, though however late dinner might be delayed he never was hungry or wanted to eat. But after the first spoonfuls of soup, his appetite came, as I have several times heard him say, and he ate so prodigiously and so solidly morning and evening that no one could get accustomed to see it. So much water and so much fruit unconnected by anything spirituous, turned his blood into gangrene;



## Page 18

while those forced night sweats diminished its strength and impoverished it; and thus his death was caused, as was seen by the opening of his body. The organs were found in such good and healthy condition that there is reason to believe he would have lived beyond his hundredth year. His stomach above all astonished, and also his bowels by their volume and extent, double that of the ordinary, whence it came that he was such a great yet uniform eater. Remedies were not thought of until it was no longer time, because Fagon would never believe him ill, or Madame de Maintenon either; though at the same time she had taken good care to provide for her own retreat in the case of his death. Amidst all this, the King felt his state before they felt it, and said so sometimes to his valets: Fagon always reassured him, but did nothing. The King was contented with what was said to him without being persuaded: but his friendship for Fagon restrained him, and Madame de Maintenon still more.

On Wednesday, the 14th of August, the King was carried to hear mass for the last time; held the Council of State, ate a meat dinner, and had music in Madame de Maintenon's rooms. He supped in his chamber, where the Court saw him as at his dinner; was with his family a short time in his cabinet, and went to bed a little after ten.

On Thursday, the Festival of the Assumption, he heard mass in his bed. The night had been disturbed and bad. He dined in his bed, the courtiers being present, rose at five and was carried to Madame de Maintenon's, where music was played. He supped and went to bed as on the previous evening. As long as he could sit up he did the same.

On Friday, the 16th of August, the night had been no better; much thirst and drink. The King ordered no one to enter until ten. Mass and dinner in his bed as before; then he was carried to Madame de Maintenon's; he played with the ladies there, and afterwards there was a grand concert.

On Saturday, the 17th of August, the night as the preceding. He held the Finance Council, he being in bed; saw people at his dinner, rose immediately after; gave audience in his cabinet to the General of the order of Sainte-Croix de la Bretonnerie; passed to Madame de Maintenon's, where he worked with the Chancellor. At night, Fagon slept for the first time in his chamber.

Sunday, the 18th of August, passed like the preceding days, Fagon pretended there had been no fever. The King held a Council of State before and after his dinner; worked afterwards upon the fortifications with Pelletier; then passed to Madame de Maintenon's, where there was music.



## Page 19

Monday, the 19th, and Tuesday, the 20th of August, passed much as the previous days, excepting that on the latter the King supped in his dressing-gown, seated in an armchair; and that after this evening he never left his room or dressed himself again. That same day Madame de Saint-Simon, whom I had pressed to return, came back from the waters of Forges. The king, entering after supper into his cabinet, perceived her. He ordered his chair to be stopped; spoke to her very kindly upon her journey and her return; then had himself wheeled on by Bloin into the other cabinet. She was the last Court lady to whom he spoke. I don't count those who were always near him, and who came to him when he could no longer leave his room. Madame de Saint-Simon said to me in the evening that she should not have recognised the King if she had met him anywhere else. Yet she had left Marly for Forges only on the 6th of July.

On Wednesday, the 21st of August, four physicians saw the King, but took care to do nothing except praise Fagon, who gave him cassia. For some days it had been perceived that he ate meat and even bread with difficulty, (though all his life he had eaten but little of the latter, and for some time only the crumb, because he had no teeth). Soup in larger quantity, hash very light, and eggs compensated him; but he ate very sparingly.

On Thursday, the 22nd of August, the King was still worse. He saw four other physicians, who, like the first four, did nothing but admire the learned and admirable treatment of Fagon, who made him take towards evening some Jesuit bark and water and intended to give him at night, ass's milk. This same day, the King ordered the Duc de la Rochefoucauld to bring him his clothes on the morrow, in order that he might choose which he would wear upon leaving off the mourning he wore for a son of Madame la Duchesse de Lorraine. He had not been able to quit his chamber for some days; he could scarcely eat anything solid; his physician slept in his chamber, and yet he reckoned upon being cured, upon dressing himself again, and wished to choose his dress! In like manner there was the same round of councils, of work, of amusements. So true it is, that men do not wish to die, and dissimulate from themselves the approach of death as long as possible. Meanwhile, let me say, that the state of the King, which nobody was ignorant of, had already changed M. d'Orleans' desert into a crowded city.

Friday, the 23rd of August, the night was as usual, the morning also. The King worked with Pere Tellier, who tried, but in vain, to make him fill up several benefices that were vacant; that is to say, Pere Tellier wished to dispose of them himself, instead of leaving them to M. le Duc d'Orleans. Let me state at once, that the feebler the King grew the more Pere Tellier worried him; so as not to lose such a rich prey, or miss the opportunity of securing fresh creatures for his service. But he could not succeed. The King declared to him that he had enough to render account of to God, without charging himself with this nomination, and forbade him to speak again upon the subject.



## Page 20

On Saturday evening, the 24th of August, he supped in his dressing-gown, in presence of the courtiers, for the last time. I noticed that he could only swallow liquids, and that he was troubled if looked at. He could not finish his supper, and begged the courtiers to pass on, that is to say, go away. He went to bed, where his leg, on which were several black marks, was examined. It had grown worse lately and had given him much pain. He sent for Pere Tellier and made confession. Confusion spread among the doctors at this. Milk, and Jesuit bark and water had been tried and abandoned in turns; now, nobody knew what to try. The doctors admitted that they believed he had had a slow fever ever since Whitsuntide; and excused themselves for doing nothing on the ground that he did not wish for remedies.

On Sunday, the 25th of August, no more mystery was made of the King's danger. Nevertheless, he expressly commanded that nothing should be changed in the usual order of this day (the fete of St. Louis), that is to say, that the drums and the hautboys, assembled beneath his windows, should play their accustomed music as soon as he awoke, and that the twenty-four violins should play in the ante-chamber during his dinner. He worked afterwards with the Chancellor, who wrote, under his dictation, a codicil to his will, Madame de Maintenon being present. She and M. du Maine, who thought incessantly of themselves, did not consider the King had done enough for them by his will; they wished to remedy this by a codicil, which equally showed how enormously they abused the King's weakness in this extremity, and to what an excess ambition may carry us. By this codicil the King submitted all the civil and military household of the young King to the Duc du Maine, and under his orders to Marechal de Villeroy, who, by this disposition became the sole masters of the person and the dwelling place of the King, and of Paris, by the troops placed in their hands; so that the Regent had not the slightest shadow of authority and was at their mercy; certainly liable to be arrested or worse, any time it should please M. du Maine.

Soon after the Chancellor left the King, Madame de Maintenon, who remained, sent for the ladies; and the musicians came at seven o'clock in the evening. But the King fell asleep during the conversation of the ladies. He awoke; his brain confused, which frightened them and made them call the doctors. They found his pulse so bad that they did not hesitate to propose to him, his senses having returned, to take the sacrament without delay. Pere Tellier was sent for; the musicians who had just prepared their books and their instruments, were dismissed, the ladies also; and in a quarter of an hour from that time, the King made confession to Pere Tellier, the Cardinal de Rohan, meanwhile, bringing the Holy Sacrament from the chapel, and sending for the Cure and holy oils. Two of the King's chaplains, summoned by the



## Page 21

Cardinal, came, and seven or eight candlesticks were carried by valets. The Cardinal said a word or two to the King upon this great and last action, during which the King appeared very firm, but very penetrated with what he was doing. As soon as he had received Our Saviour and the holy oils, everybody left the chamber except Madame de Maintenon and the Chancellor. Immediately afterwards, and this was rather strange, a kind of book or little tablet was placed upon the bed, the codicil was presented to the King, and at the bottom of it he wrote four or five lines, and restored the document to the Chancellor.

After this, the King sent for M. le Duc d'Orleans, showed him much esteem, friendship, and confidence; but what is terrible with Jesus Christ still upon his lips—the Sacrament he had just received—he assured him, he would find nothing in his will with which he would not feel pleased. Then he recommended to him the state and the person of the future King.

On Monday, the 26th of August, the King called to him the Cardinals de Rohan and de Bissy, protested that he died in the faith, and in submission to the Church, then added, looking at them, that he was sorry to leave the affairs of the Church as they were; that they knew he had done nothing except what they wished; that it was therefore for them to answer before God for what he had done; that his own conscience was clear, and that he was as an ignorant man who had abandoned himself entirely to them. What a frightful thunderbolt was this to the two Cardinals; for this was an allusion to the terrible constitution they had assisted Pere Tellier in forcing upon him. But their calm was superior to all trial. They praised him and said he had done well, and that he might be at ease as to the result.

This same Monday, 26th of August, after the two Cardinals had left the room, the King dined in his bed in the presence of those who were privileged to enter. As the things were being cleared away, he made them approach and addressed to them these words, which were stored up in their memory:—"Gentlemen, I ask your pardon for the bad example I have given you. I have much to thank you for the manner in which you have served me, and for the attachment and fidelity you have always shown for me. I am very sorry I have not done for you all I should have wished to do; bad times have been the cause. I ask for my grandson the same application and the same fidelity you have had for me. He is a child who may experience many reverses. Let your example be one for all my other subjects. Follow the orders my nephew will give you; he is to govern the realm; I hope he will govern it well; I hope also that you will all contribute to keep up union, and that if any one falls away you will aid in bringing him back. I feel that I am moved, and that I move you also. I ask your pardon. Adieu, gentlemen, I hope you will sometimes remember me."



## Page 22

A short time after he called the Marechal de Villeroy to him, and said he had made him governor of the Dauphin. He then called to him M. le Duc and M. le Prince de Conti, and recommended to them the advantage of union among princes. Then, hearing women in the cabinet, questioned who were there, and immediately sent word they might enter. Madame la Duchesse de Berry, Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans, and the Princesses of the blood forthwith appeared, crying. The King told them they must not cry thus, and said a few friendly words to them, and dismissed them. They retired by the cabinet, weeping and crying very loudly, which caused people to believe outside that the King was dead; and, indeed, the rumour spread to Paris, and even to the provinces.

Some time after the King requested the Duchesse de Ventadour to bring the little Dauphin to him. He made the child approach, and then said to him, before Madame de Maintenon and the few privileged people present, "My child, you are going to be a great king; do not imitate me in the taste I have had for building, or in that I have had for war; try, on the contrary, to be at peace with your neighbours. Render to God what you owe Him; recognise the obligations you are under to Him; make Him honoured by your subjects. Always follow good counsels; try to comfort your people, which I unhappily have not done. Never forget the obligation you owe to Madame de Ventadour. Madame (addressing her), let me embrace him (and while embracing him), my dear child, I give you my benediction with my whole heart."

As the little Prince was about to be taken off the bed, the King redemanded him, embraced him again, and raising hands and eyes to Heaven, blessed him once more. This spectacle was extremely touching.

On Tuesday, the 27th of August, the King said to Madame de Maintenon, that he had always heard, it was hard to resolve to die; but that as for him, seeing himself upon the point of death, he did not find this resolution so difficult to form. She replied that it was very hard when we had attachments to creatures, hatred in our hearts, or restitutions to make. "Ah," rejoined the King, "as for restitutions, to nobody in particular do I owe any; but as for those I owe to the realm, I hope in the mercy of God."

The night which followed was very agitated. The King was seen at all moments joining his hands, striking his breast, and was heard repeating the prayers he ordinarily employed.

On Wednesday morning, the 28th of August, he paid a compliment to Madame de Maintenon, which pleased her but little, and to which she replied not one word. He said, that what consoled him in quitting her was that, considering the age she had reached, they must soon meet again!

About seven o'clock in the morning, he saw in the mirror two of his valets at the foot of the bed weeping, and said to them, "Why do you weep? Is it because you thought me



immortal? As for me, I have not thought myself so, and you ought, considering my age, to have been prepared to lose me.”



## Page 23

A very clownish Provençal rustic heard of the extremity of the King, while on his way from Marseilles to Paris, and came this morning to Versailles with a remedy, which he said would cure the gangrene. The King was so ill, and the doctors so at their wits' ends, that they consented to receive him. Fagon tried to say something, but this rustic, who was named Le Brun, abused him very coarsely, and Fagon, accustomed to abuse others, was confounded. Ten drops of Le Brun's mixture in Alicante wine were therefore given to the King about eleven o'clock in the morning. Some time after he became stronger, but the pulse falling again and becoming bad, another dose was given to him about four o'clock, to recall him to life, they told him. He replied, taking the mixture, "To life or to death as it shall please God."

Le Brun's remedy was continued. Some one proposed that the King should take some broth. The King replied that it was not broth he wanted, but a confessor, and sent for him. One day, recovering from loss of consciousness, he asked Pere Tellier to give him absolution for all his sins. Pere Tellier asked him if he suffered much. "No," replied the King, "that's what troubles me: I should like to suffer more for the expiation of my sins."

On Thursday, the 29th of August, he grew a little better; he even ate two little biscuits steeped in wine, with a certain appetite. The news immediately spread abroad that the King was recovering. I went that day to the apartments of M. le Duc d'Orleans, where, during the previous eight days, there had been such a crowd that, speaking exactly, a pin would not have fallen to the ground. Not a soul was there! As soon as the Duke saw me he burst out laughing, and said, I was the first person who had been to see him all the day! And until the evening he was entirely deserted. Such is the world!

In the evening it was known that the King had only recovered for the moment. In giving orders during the day, he called the young Dauphin "the young King." He saw a movement amongst those around him. "Why not?" said he, "that does not trouble me." Towards eight o'clock he took the elixir of the rustic. His brain appeared confused; he himself said he felt very ill. Towards eleven o'clock his leg was examined. The gangrene was found to be in the foot and the knee; the thigh much inflamed. He swooned during this examination. He had perceived with much pain that Madame de Maintenon was no longer near him. She had in fact gone off on the previous day with very dry eyes to Saint-Cyr, not intending to return. He asked for her several times during the day. Her departure could not be hidden. He sent for her to Saint-Cyr, and she came back in the evening.

Friday, August the 30th, was a bad day preceded by a bad night. The King continually lost his reason. About five o'clock in the evening Madame de Maintenon left him, gave away her furniture to the domestics, and went to Saint-Cyr never to leave it.



## Page 24

On Saturday, the 31st of August, everything went from bad to worse. The gangrene had reached the knee and all the thigh. Towards eleven o'clock at night the King was found to be so ill that the prayers for the dying were said. This restored him to himself. He repeated the prayers in a voice so strong that it rose above all the other voices. At the end he recognised Cardinal de Rohan, and said to him, "These are the last favours of the Church." This was the last man to whom he spoke. He repeated several times, "Nunc et in hora mortis", then said, "Oh, my God, come to my aid: hasten to succour me."

These were his last words. All the night he was without consciousness and in a long agony, which finished on Sunday, the 1st September, 1715, at a quarter past eight in the morning, three days before he had accomplished his seventy-seventh year, and in the seventy-second of his reign. He had survived all his sons and grandsons, except the King of Spain. Europe never saw so long a reign or France a King so old.

### CHAPTER LXXIII

I shall pass over the stormy period of Louis XIV.'s minority. At twenty-three years of age he entered the great world as King, under the most favourable auspices. His ministers were the most skilful in all Europe; his generals the best; his Court was filled with illustrious and clever men, formed during the troubles which had followed the death of Louis XIII.

Louis XIV. was made for a brilliant Court. In the midst of other men, his figure, his courage, his grace, his beauty, his grand mien, even the tone of his voice and the majestic and natural charm of all his person, distinguished him till his death as the King Bee, and showed that if he had only been born a simple private gentleman, he would equally have excelled in fetes, pleasures, and gallantry, and would have had the greatest success in love. The intrigues and adventures which early in life he had been engaged in—when the Comtesse de Soissons lodged at the Tuileries, as superintendent of the Queen's household, and was the centre figure of the Court group—had exercised an unfortunate influence upon him: he received those impressions with which he could never after successfully struggle. From this time, intellect, education, nobility of sentiment, and high principle, in others, became objects of suspicion to him, and soon of hatred. The more he advanced in years the more this sentiment was confirmed in him. He wished to reign by himself. His jealousy on this point unceasingly became weakness. He reigned, indeed, in little things; the great he could never reach: even in the former, too, he was often governed. The superior ability of his early ministers and his early generals soon wearied him. He liked nobody to be in any way superior to him. Thus he chose his ministers, not for their knowledge, but for their ignorance; not for their capacity, but for their want of it. He



## Page 25

liked to form them, as he said; liked to teach them even the most trifling things. It was the same with his generals. He took credit to himself for instructing them; wished it to be thought that from his cabinet he commanded and directed all his armies. Naturally fond of trifles, he unceasingly occupied himself with the most petty details of his troops, his household, his mansions; would even instruct his cooks, who received, like novices, lessons they had known by heart for years. This vanity, this unmeasured and unreasonable love of admiration, was his ruin. His ministers, his generals, his mistresses, his courtiers, soon perceived his weakness. They praised him with emulation and spoiled him. Praises, or to say truth, flattery, pleased him to such an extent, that the coarsest was well received, the vilest even better relished. It was the sole means by which you could approach him. Those whom he liked owed his affection for them to their untiring flatteries. This is what gave his ministers so much authority, and the opportunities they had for adulating him, of attributing everything to him, and of pretending to learn everything from him. Suppleness, meanness, an admiring, dependent, cringing manner—above all, an air of nothingness—were the sole means of pleasing him.

This poison spread. It spread, too, to an incredible extent, in a prince who, although of intellect beneath mediocrity, was not utterly without sense, and who had had some experience. Without voice or musical knowledge, he used to sing, in private, the passages of the opera prologues that were fullest of his praises.

He was drowned in vanity; and so deeply, that at his public suppers—all the Court present, musicians also—he would hum these self-same praises between his teeth, when the music they were set to was played!

And yet, it must be admitted, he might have done better. Though his intellect, as I have said, was beneath mediocrity, it was capable of being formed. He loved glory, was fond of order and regularity; was by disposition prudent, moderate, discreet, master of his movements and his tongue. Will it be believed? He was also by disposition good and just! God had sufficiently gifted him to enable him to be a good King; perhaps even a, tolerably great King! All the evil came to him from elsewhere. His early education was so neglected that nobody dared approach his apartment. He has often been heard to speak of those times with bitterness, and even to relate that, one evening he was found in the basin of the Palais Royal garden fountain, into which he had fallen! He was scarcely taught how to read or write, and remained so ignorant, that the most familiar historical and other facts were utterly unknown to him! He fell, accordingly, and sometimes even in public, into the grossest absurdities.



## Page 26

It was his vanity, his desire for glory, that led him, soon after the death of the King of Spain, to make that event the pretext for war; in spite of the renunciations so recently made, so carefully stipulated, in the marriage contract. He marched into Flanders; his conquests there were rapid; the passage of the Rhine was admirable; the triple alliance of England, Sweden, and Holland only animated him. In the midst of winter he took Franche-Comte, by restoring which at the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, he preserved his conquests in Flanders. All was flourishing then in the state. Riches everywhere. Colbert had placed the finances, the navy, commerce, manufactures, letters even, upon the highest point; and this age, like that of Augustus, produced in abundance illustrious men of all kinds,-even those illustrious only in pleasures.

Le Tellier and Louvois, his son, who had the war department, trembled at the success and at the credit of Colbert, and had no difficulty in putting into the head of the King a new war, the success of which caused such fear to all Europe that France never recovered from it, and after having been upon the point of succumbing to this war, for a long time felt the weight and misfortune of it. Such was the real cause of that famous Dutch war, to which the King allowed himself to be pushed, and which his love for Madame de Montespan rendered so unfortunate for his glory and for his kingdom. Everything being conquered, everything taken, and Amsterdam ready to give up her keys, the King yields to his impatience, quits the army, flies to Versailles, and destroys in an instant all the success of his arms! He repaired this disgrace by a second conquest, in person, of Franche-Comte, which this time was preserved by France.

In 1676, the King having returned into Flanders, took Conde; whilst Monsieur took Bouchain. The armies of the King and of the Prince of Orange approached each other so suddenly and so closely, that they found themselves front to front near Heurtebise. According even to the admission of the enemy, our forces were so superior to those of the Prince of Orange, that we must have gained the victory if we had attacked. But the King, after listening to the opinions of his generals, some for, and some against giving battle, decided for the latter, turned tail, and the engagement was talked of no more. The army was much discontented. Everybody wished for battle. The fault therefore of the King made much impression upon the troops, and excited cruel railleries against us at home and in the foreign courts. The King stopped but little longer afterwards in the army, although we were only in the month of May. He returned to his mistress.

The following year he returned to Flanders, and took Cambrai; and Monsieur besieged Saint-Omer. Monsieur got the start of the Prince of Orange, who was about to assist the place, gave him battle near Corsel, obtained a complete victory, immediately took Saint-Omer, and then joined the King. This contrast so affected the monarch that never afterwards did he give Monsieur command of an army! External appearances were perfectly kept up, but from that moment the resolution was taken and always well sustained.



## Page 27

The year afterwards the King led in person the siege of Ghent. The peace of Nimeguen ended this year the war with Holland, Spain, &c.; and on the commencement of the following year, that with the Emperor and the Empire. America, Africa, the Archipelago, Sicily, acutely felt the power of France, and in 1684 Luxembourg was the price of the delay of the Spaniards in fulfilling all the conditions of the peace. Genoa, bombarded, was forced to come in the persons of its doge and four of its senators, to sue for peace at the commencement of the following year. From this date, until 1688, the time passed in the cabinet less in fetes than in devotion and constraint. Here finishes the apogee of this reign, and the fulness of glory and prosperity. The great captains, the great ministers, were no more, but their pupils remained. The second epoch of the reign was very different from the first; but the third was even more sadly dissimilar.

I have related the adventure which led to the wars of this period; how an ill-made window-frame was noticed at the Trianon, then building; how Louvois was blamed for it; his alarm lest his disgrace should follow; his determination to engage the King in a war which should turn him from his building fancies. He carried out his resolve: with what result I have already shown. France was ruined at home; and abroad, despite the success of her arms, gained nothing. On the contrary, the withdrawal of the King from Gembloux, when he might have utterly defeated the Prince of Orange, did us infinite harm, as I have shown in its place. The peace which followed this war was disgraceful. The King was obliged to acknowledge the Prince of Orange as King of England, after having so long shown hatred and contempt for him. Our precipitation, too, cost us Luxembourg; and the ignorance of our plenipotentiaries gave our enemies great advantages in forming their frontier. Such was the peace of Ryswick, concluded in September, 1697.

This peace seemed as though it would allow France some breathing time. The King was sixty years of age, and had, in his own opinion, acquired all sorts of glory. But scarcely were we at peace, without having had time to taste it, than the pride of the King made him wish to astonish all Europe by the display of a power that it believed prostrated. And truly he did astonish Europe. But at what a cost! The famous camp of Compiègne—for 'tis to that I allude—was one of the most magnificent spectacles ever seen; but its immense and misplaced prodigality was soon regretted. Twenty years afterwards, some of the regiments who took part in it were still in difficulties from this cause.



## Page 28

Shortly afterwards,—by one of the most surprising and unheard-of pieces of good fortune, the crown of Spain fell into the hands of the Duc d'Anjou, grandson of the King. It seemed as though golden days had come back again to France. Only for a little time, however, did it seem so. Nearly all Europe, as it has been seen, banded against France, to dispute the Spanish crown. The King had lost all his good ministers, all his able generals, and had taken good pains they should leave no successors. When war came, then, we were utterly unable to prosecute it with success or honour. We were driven out of Germany, of Italy, of the Low Countries. We could not sustain the war, or resolve to make peace. Every day led us nearer and nearer the brink of the precipice, the terrible depths of which were for ever staring us in the face. A misunderstanding amongst our enemies, whereby England became detached from the grand alliance; the undue contempt of Prince Eugene for our generals, out of which arose the battle of Denain; saved us from the gulf. Peace came, and a peace, too, infinitely better than that we should have ardently embraced if our enemies had agreed amongst themselves beforehand. Nevertheless, this peace cost dear to France, and cost Spain half its territory—Spain, of which the King had said not even a windmill would he yield! But this was another piece of folly he soon repented of.

Thus, we see this monarch, grand, rich, conquering, the arbiter of Europe; feared and admired as long as the ministers and captains existed who really deserved the name. When they were no more, the machine kept moving some time by impulsion, and from their influence. But soon afterwards we saw beneath the surface; faults and errors were multiplied, and decay came on with giant strides; without, however, opening the eyes of that despotic master, so anxious to do everything and direct everything himself, and who seemed to indemnify himself for disdain abroad by increasing fear and trembling at home.

So much for the reign of this vain-glorious monarch.

Let me touch now upon some other incidents in his career, and upon some points in his character.

He early showed a disinclination for Paris. The troubles that had taken place there during his minority made him regard the place as dangerous; he wished, too, to render himself venerable by hiding himself from the eyes of the multitude; all these considerations fixed him at Saint-Germain soon after the death of the Queen, his mother. It was to that place he began to attract the world by fetes and gallantries, and by making it felt that he wished to be often seen.

His love for Madame de la Valliere, which was at first kept secret, occasioned frequent excursions to Versailles, then a little card castle, which had been built by Louis XIII.—annoyed, and his suite still more so, at being frequently obliged to sleep in a wretched inn there, after he had been out hunting in the forest of Saint Leger. That monarch rarely slept at Versailles more than one night, and then from necessity; the King, his



son, slept there, so that he might be more in private with his mistress, pleasures unknown to the hero and just man, worthy son of Saint-Louis, who built the little chateau.



## Page 29

These excursions of Louis XIV. by degrees gave birth to those immense buildings he erected at Versailles; and their convenience for a numerous court, so different from the apartments at Saint-Germain, led him to take up his abode there entirely shortly after the death of the Queen. He built an infinite number of apartments, which were asked for by those who wished to pay their court to him; whereas at Saint-Germain nearly everybody was obliged to lodge in the town, and the few who found accommodation at the chateau were strangely inconvenienced.

The frequent fetes, the private promenades at Versailles, the journeys, were means on which the King seized in order to distinguish or mortify the courtiers, and thus render them more assiduous in pleasing him.

He felt that of real favours he had not enough to bestow; in order to keep up the spirit of devotion, he therefore unceasingly invented all sorts of ideal ones, little preferences and petty distinctions, which answered his purpose as well.

He was exceedingly jealous of the attention paid him. Not only did he notice the presence of the most distinguished courtiers, but those of inferior degree also. He looked to the right and to the left, not only upon rising but upon going to bed, at his meals, in passing through his apartments, or his gardens of Versailles, where alone the courtiers were allowed to follow him; he saw and noticed everybody; not one escaped him, not even those who hoped to remain unnoticed. He marked well all absentees from the Court, found out the reason of their absence, and never lost an opportunity of acting towards them as the occasion might seem to justify. With some of the courtiers (the most distinguished), it was a demerit not to make the Court their ordinary abode; with others 'twas a fault to come but rarely; for those who never or scarcely ever came it was certain disgrace. When their names were in any way mentioned, "I do not know them," the King would reply haughtily. Those who presented themselves but seldom were thus Characterise: "They are people I never see;" these decrees were irrevocable. He could not bear people who liked Paris.

Louis XIV. took great pains to be well informed of all that passed everywhere; in the public places, in the private houses, in society and familiar intercourse. His spies and tell-tales were infinite. He had them of all species; many who were ignorant that their information reached him; others who knew it; others who wrote to him direct, sending their letters through channels he indicated; and all these letters were seen by him alone, and always before everything else; others who sometimes spoke to him secretly in his cabinet, entering by the back stairs. These unknown means ruined an infinite number of people of all classes, who never could discover the cause; often ruined them very unjustly; for the King, once prejudiced, never altered his opinion, or so rarely, that nothing

## Page 30

was more rare. He had, too, another fault, very dangerous for others and often for himself, since it deprived him of good subjects. He had an excellent memory; in this way, that if he saw a man who, twenty years before, perhaps, had in some manner offended him, he did not forget the man, though he might forget the offence. This was enough, however, to exclude the person from all favour. The representations of a minister, of a general, of his confessor even, could not move the King. He would not yield.

The most cruel means by which the King was informed of what was passing— for many years before anybody knew it—was that of opening letters. The promptitude and dexterity with which they were opened passes understanding. He saw extracts from all the letters in which there were passages that the chiefs of the post-office, and then the minister who governed it, thought ought to go before him; entire letters, too, were sent to him, when their contents seemed to justify the sending. Thus the chiefs of the post, nay, the principal clerks were in a position to suppose what they pleased and against whom they pleased. A word of contempt against the King or the government, a joke, a detached phrase, was enough. It is incredible how many people, justly or unjustly, were more or less ruined, always without resource, without trial, and without knowing why. The secret was impenetrable; for nothing ever cost the King less than profound silence and dissimulation.

This last talent he pushed almost to falsehood, but never to deceit, pluming himself upon keeping his word,—therefore he scarcely ever gave it. The secrets of others he kept as religiously as his own. He was even flattered by certain confessions and certain confidences; and there was no mistress, minister, or favourite, who could have wormed them out, even though the secret regarded themselves.

We know, amongst many others, the famous story of a woman of quality, who, after having been separated a year from her husband, found herself in the family way just as he was on the point of returning from the army, and who, not knowing what else to do, in the most urgent manner begged a private interview of the King. She obtained it, and confined to him her position, as to the worthiest man in his realm, as she said. The King counselled her to profit by her distress, and live more wisely for the future, and immediately promised to retain her husband on the frontier as long as was necessary, and to forbid his return under any pretext, and in fact he gave orders the same day to Louvois, and prohibited the husband not only all leave of absence, but forbade him to quit for a single day the post he was to command all the winter. The officer, who was distinguished, and who had neither wished nor asked to be employed all the winter upon the frontier, and Louvois, who had in no way thought of it, were equally surprised and vexed. They were obliged, however, to obey to the letter, and without asking why; and the King never mentioned the circumstance until many years afterwards, when he

was quite sure nobody could find out either husband or wife, as in fact they never could, or even obtain the most vague or the most uncertain suspicion.



## Page 31

### CHAPTER LXXIV

Never did man give with better grace than Louis XIV., or augmented so much, in this way, the price of his benefits. Never did man sell to better profit his words, even his smiles,—nay, his looks. Never did disobliging words escape him; and if he had to blame, to reprimand, or correct, which was very rare, it was nearly always with goodness, never, except on one occasion (the admonition of Courtenvaux, related in its place), with anger or severity. Never was man so naturally polite, or of a politeness so measured, so graduated, so adapted to person, time, and place. Towards women his politeness was without parallel. Never did he pass the humblest petticoat without raising his hat; even to chamber-maids, that he knew to be such, as often happened at Marly. For ladies he took his hat off completely, but to a greater or less extent; for titled people, half off, holding it in his hand or against his ear some instants, more or less marked. For the nobility he contented himself by putting his hand to his hat. He took it off for the Princes of the blood, as for the ladies. If he accosted ladies he did not cover himself until he had quitted them. All this was out of doors, for in the house he was never covered. His reverences, more or less marked, but always light, were incomparable for their grace and manner; even his mode of half raising himself at supper for each lady who arrived at table. Though at last this fatigued him, yet he never ceased it; the ladies who were to sit down, however, took care not to enter after supper had commenced.

If he was made to wait for anything while dressing, it was always with patience. He was exact to the hours that he gave for all his day, with a precision clear and brief in his orders. If in the bad weather of winter, when he could not go out, he went to Madame de Maintenon's a quarter of an hour earlier than he had arranged (which seldom happened), and the captain of the guards was not on duty, he did not fail afterwards to say that it was his own fault for anticipating the hour, not that of the captain of the guards for being absent. Thus, with this regularity which he never deviated from, he was served with the utmost exactitude.

He treated his valets well, above all those of the household. It was amongst them that he felt most at ease, and that he unbosomed himself the most familiarly, especially to the chiefs. Their friendship and their aversion have often had grand results. They were unceasingly in a position to render good and bad offices: thus they recalled those powerful enfranchised slaves of the Roman emperors, to whom the senate and the great people paid court and basely truckled. These valets during Louis XIV.'s reign were not less courted. The ministers, even the most powerful, openly studied their caprices; and the Princes of the blood, nay, the bastards,—not to mention people of lower grade, did the same. The majority were accordingly insolent enough; and if you could not avoid their insolence, you were forced to put up with it.

## Page 32

The King loved air and exercise very much, as long as he could make use of them. He had excelled in dancing, and at tennis and mall. On horseback he was admirable, even at a late age. He liked to see everything done with grace and address. To acquit yourself well or ill before him was a merit or a fault. He said that with things not necessary it was best not to meddle, unless they were done well. He was very fond of shooting, and there was not a better or more graceful shot than he. He had always, in his cabinet seven or eight pointer bitches, and was fond of feeding them, to make himself known to them. He was very fond, too, of stag hunting; but in a caleche, since he broke his arm, while hunting at Fontainebleau, immediately after the death of the Queen. He rode alone in a species of "box," drawn by four little horses—with five or six relays, and drove himself with an address and accuracy unknown to the best coachmen. His postilions were children from ten to fifteen years of age, and he directed them.

He liked splendour, magnificence, and profusion in everything: you pleased him if you shone through the brilliancy of your houses, your clothes, your table, your equipages. Thus a taste for extravagance and luxury was disseminated through all classes of society; causing infinite harm, and leading to general confusion of rank and to ruin.

As for the King himself, nobody ever approached his magnificence. His buildings, who could number them? At the same time, who was there who did not deplore the pride, the caprice, the bad taste seen in them? He built nothing useful or ornamental in Paris, except the Pont Royal, and that simply by necessity; so that despite its incomparable extent, Paris is inferior to many cities of Europe. Saint-Germain, a lovely spot, with a marvellous view, rich forest, terraces, gardens, and water he abandoned for Versailles; the dullest and most ungrateful of all places, without prospect, without wood, without water, without soil; for the ground is all shifting sand or swamp, the air accordingly bad.

But he liked to subjugate nature by art and treasure.

He built at Versailles, on, on, without any general design, the beautiful and the ugly, the vast and the mean, all jumbled together. His own apartments and those of the Queen, are inconvenient to the last degree, dull, close, stinking. The gardens astonish by their magnificence, but cause regret by their bad taste. You are introduced to the freshness of the shade only by a vast torrid zone, at the end of which there is nothing for you but to mount or descend; and with the hill, which is very short, terminate the gardens. The violence everywhere done to nature repels and wearies us despite ourselves. The abundance of water, forced up and gathered together from all parts, is rendered green, thick, muddy; it disseminates humidity, unhealthy and evident; and an odour still more so. I might never finish upon the monstrous defects of a palace so immense and so immensely dear, with its accompaniments, which are still more so.



## Page 33

But the supply of water for the fountains was all defective at all moments, in spite of those seas of reservoirs which had cost so many millions to establish and to form upon the shifting sand and marsh. Who could have believed it? This defect became the ruin of the infantry which was turned out to do the work. Madame de Maintenon reigned. M. de Louvois was well with her, then. We were at peace. He conceived the idea of turning the river Eure between Chartres and Maintenon, and of making it come to Versailles. Who can say what gold and men this obstinate attempt cost during several years, until it was prohibited by the heaviest penalties, in the camp established there, and for a long time kept up; not to speak of the sick,—above all, of the dead,—that the hard labour and still more the much disturbed earth, caused? How many men were years in recovering from the effects of the contagion! How many never regained their health at all! And not only the sub-officers, but the colonels, the brigadiers and general officers, were compelled to be upon the spot, and were not at liberty to absent themselves a quarter of an hour from the works. The war at last interrupted them in 1688, and they have never since been undertaken; only unfinished portions of them exist which will immortalise this cruel folly.

At last, the King, tired of the cost and bustle, persuaded himself that he should like something little and solitary. He searched all around Versailles for some place to satisfy this new taste. He examined several neighbourhoods, he traversed the hills near Saint-Germain, and the vast plain which is at the bottom, where the Seine winds and bathes the feet of so many towns, and so many treasures in quitting Paris. He was pressed to fix himself at Lucienne, where Cavoye afterwards had a house, the view from which is enchanting; but he replied that, that fine situation would ruin him, and that as he wished to go to no expense, so he also wished a situation which would not urge him into any. He found behind Lucienne a deep narrow valley, completely shut in, inaccessible from its swamps, and with a wretched village called Marly upon the slope of one of its hills. This closeness, without drain or the means of having any, was the sole merit of the valley. The King was overjoyed at his discovery. It was a great work, that of draining this sewer of all the environs, which threw there their garbage, and of bringing soil thither! The hermitage was made. At first, it was only for sleeping in three nights, from Wednesday to Saturday, two or three times a-year, with a dozen at the outside of courtiers, to fill the most indispensable posts.



## Page 34

By degrees, the hermitage was augmented, the hills were pared and cut down, to give at least the semblance of a prospect; in fine, what with buildings, gardens, waters, aqueducts, the curious and well known machine, statues, precious furniture, the park, the ornamental enclosed forest,—Marly has become what it is to-day, though it has been stripped since the death of the King. Great trees were unceasingly brought from Compiègne or farther, three-fourths of which died and were immediately after replaced; vast spaces covered with thick wood, or obscure alleys, were suddenly changed into immense pieces of water, on which people were rowed in gondolas; then they were changed again into forest (I speak of what I have seen in six weeks); basins were changed a hundred times; cascades the same; carp ponds adorned with the most exquisite painting, scarcely finished, were changed and differently arranged by the same hands; and this an infinite number of times; then there was that prodigious machine just alluded to, with its immense aqueducts, the conduit, its monstrous resources solely devoted to Marly, and no longer to Versailles; so that I am under the mark in saying that Versailles, even, did not cost so much as Marly.

Such was the fate of a place the abode of serpents, and of carrion, of toads and frogs, solely chosen to avoid expense. Such was the bad taste of the King in all things, and his proud haughty pleasure in forcing nature; which neither the most mighty war, nor devotion could subdue!

## CHAPTER LXXV

Let me now speak of the amours of the King in which were even more fatal to the state than his building mania. Their scandal filled all Europe; stupefied France, shook the state, and without doubt drew upon the King those maledictions under the weight of which he was pushed so near the very edge of the precipice, and had the misfortune of seeing his legitimate posterity within an ace of extinction in France. These are evils which became veritable catastrophes and which will be long felt.

Louis XIV., in his youth more made for love than any of his subjects— being tired of gathering passing sweets, fixed himself at last upon La Valliere. The progress and the result of his love are well known.

Madame de Montespan was she whose rare beauty touched him next, even during the reign of Madame de La Valliere. She soon perceived it, and vainly pressed her husband to carry her away into Guienne. With foolish confidence he refused to listen to her. She spoke to him more in earnest. In vain. At last the King was listened to, and carried her off from her husband, with that frightful hubbub which resounded with horror among all nations, and which gave to the world the new spectacle of two mistresses at once! The King took them to the frontiers, to the camps, to the armies, both of them in the Queen's coach. The people ran from all parts to look at the three queens; and asked one another in their simplicity if they had seen them. In the end, Madame de



Montespan triumphed, and disposed of the master and his Court with an eclat that knew no veil; and in order that nothing should be wanting to complete the licence of this life, M. de Montespan was sent to the Bastille; then banished to Guienne, and his wife was appointed superintendent of the Queen's household.



## Page 35

The accouchements of Madame de Montespan were public. Her circle became the centre of the Court, of the amusements, of the hopes and of the fears of ministers and the generals, and the humiliation of all France. It was also the centre of wit, and of a kind so peculiar, so delicate, and so subtle, but always so natural and so agreeable, that it made itself distinguished by its special character.

Madame de Montespan was cross, capricious, ill-tempered, and of a haughtiness in everything which, readied to the clouds, and from the effects of which nobody, not even the King, was exempt. The courtiers avoided passing under her windows, above all when the King was with her. They used to say it was equivalent to being put to the sword, and this phrase became proverbial at the Court. It is true that she spared nobody, often without other design than to divert the King; and as she had infinite wit and sharp pleasantry, nothing was more dangerous than the ridicule she, better than anybody, could cast on all. With that she loved her family and her relatives, and did not fail to serve people for whom she conceived friendship. The Queen endured with difficulty her haughtiness—very different from the respect and measure with which she had been treated by the Duchesse de la Valliere, whom she always loved; whereas of Madame de Montespan she would say, “That strumpet will cause my death.” The retirement, the austere penitence, and the pious end of Madame de Montespan have been already described.

During her reign she did not fail to have causes for jealousy. There was Mademoiselle de Fontange, who pleased the King sufficiently to become his mistress. But she had no intellect, and without that it was impossible to maintain supremacy over the King. Her early death quickly put an end to this amour. Then there was Madame de Soubise, who, by the infamous connivance of her husband, prostituted herself to the King, and thus secured all sorts of advantages for that husband, for herself, and for her children. The love of the King for her continued until her death, although for many years before that he had ceased to see her in private. Then there was the beautiful Ludre, demoiselle of Lorraine, and maid of honour to Madame, who was openly loved for a moment. But this amour was a flash of lightning, and Madame de Montespan remained triumphant.

Let us now pass to another kind of amour which astonished all the world as much as the other had scandalised it, and which the King carried with him to the tomb. Who does not already recognise the celebrated Françoise d’Aubigne, Marquise de Maintenon, whose permanent reign did not last less than thirty-two years?



## Page 36

Born in the American islands, where her father, perhaps a gentleman, had gone to seek his bread, and where he was stifled by obscurity, she returned alone and at haphazard into France. She landed at La Rochelle, and was received in pity by Madame de Neuillant, mother of the Marechale Duchesse de Navailles, and was reduced by that avaricious old woman to keep the keys of her granary, and to see the hay measured out to her horses, as I have already related elsewhere. She came afterwards to Paris, young, clever, witty, and beautiful, without friends and without money; and by lucky chance made acquaintance with the famous Scarron. He found her amiable; his friends perhaps still more so. Marriage with this joyous and learned cripple appeared to her the greatest and most unlooked-for good fortune; and folks who were, perhaps, more in want of a wife than he, persuaded him to marry her, and thus raise this charming unfortunate from her misery.

The marriage being brought about, the new spouse pleased the company which went to Scarron's house. It was the fashion to go there: people of the Court and of the city, the best and most distinguished went. Scarron was not in a state to leave his house, but the charm of his genius, of his knowledge, of his imagination, of that incomparable and ever fresh gaiety which he showed in the midst of his afflictions, that rare fecundity, and that humour, tempered by so much good taste that is still admired in his writings, drew everybody there.

Madame Scarron made at home all sorts of acquaintances, which, however, at the death of her husband, did not keep her from being reduced to the charity of the parish of Saint-Eustace. She took a chamber for herself and for a servant, where she lived in a very pinched manner. Her personal charms by degrees improved her condition. Villars, father of the Marechal; Beuvron, father of D'Harcourt; the three Villarceaux, and many others kept her.

This set her afloat again, and, step by step, introduced her to the Hotel d'Albret, and thence to the Hotel de Richelieu, and elsewhere; so she passed from one house to the other. In these houses Madame Scarron was far from being on the footing of the rest of the company. She was more like a servant than a guest. She was completely at the beck and call of her hosts; now to ask for firewood; now if a meal was nearly ready; another time if the coach of so-and-so or such a one had returned; and so on, with a thousand little commissions which the use of bells, introduced a long time after, differently disposes of.

It was in these houses, principally in the Hotel de Richelieu, much more still in the Hotel d'Albret, where the Marechal d'Albret lived in great state, that Madame Scarron made the majority of her acquaintances. The Marechal was cousin-german of M. de Montespan, very intimate with him, and with Madame de Montespan. When she became the King's mistress he became her counsellor, and abandoned her husband.



## Page 37

To the intimacy between the Marechal d'Albret and Madame de Montespan, Madame de Maintenon owed the good fortune she met with fourteen or fifteen years later. Madame de Montespan continually visited the Hotel d'Albret, and was much impressed with Madame Scarron. She conceived a friendship for the obliging widow, and when she had her first children by the King—M. du Maine and Madame la Duchesse, whom the King wished to conceal—she proposed that they should be confided to Madame Scarron. A house in the Marais was accordingly given to her, to lodge in with them, and the means to bring them up, but in the utmost secrecy. Afterwards, these children were taken to Madame de Montespan, then shown to the King, and then by degrees drawn from secrecy and avowed. Their governess, being established with them at the Court, more and more pleased Madame de Montespan, who several times made the King give presents to her. He, on the other hand, could not endure her; what he gave to her, always little, was by excess of complaisance and with a regret that he did not hide.

The estate of Maintenon being for sale, Madame de Montespan did not let the King rest until she had drawn from him enough to buy it for Madame Scarron, who thenceforth assumed its name. She obtained enough also for the repair of the chateau, and then attacked the King for means to arrange the garden, which the former owners had allowed to go to ruin.

It was at the toilette of Madame de Montespan that these demands were made. The captain of the guards alone followed the King there. M. le Marechal de Lorges, the truest man that ever lived, held that post then, and he has often related to me the scene he witnessed. The King at first turned a deaf ear to the request of Madame de Montespan, and then refused. Annoyed that she still insisted, he said he had already done more than enough for this creature; that he could not understand the fancy of Madame de Montespan for her, and her obstinacy in keeping her after he had begged her so many times to dismiss her; that he admitted Madame Scarron was insupportable to him, and provided he never saw her more and never heard speak of her, he would open his purse again; though, to say truth, he had already given too much to a creature of this kind! Never did M. le Marechel de Lorges forget these words; and he has always repeated them to me and others precisely as they are given here, so struck was he with them, and much more after all that he saw since, so astonishing and so contradictory. Madame de Montespan stopped short, very much troubled by having too far pressed the King.

M. du Maine was extremely lame; this was caused, it was said, by a fall he had from his nurse's arms. Nothing done for him succeeded; the resolution was then taken to send him to various practicians in Flanders, and elsewhere in the realm, then to the waters, among others to Bareges. The letters that the governess wrote to Madame de Montespan, giving an account of these journeys, were shown to the King. He thought them well written, relished them, and the last ones made his aversion for the writer diminish.



## Page 38

The ill-humour of Madame de Montespan finished the work. She had a good deal of that quality, and had become accustomed to give it full swing. The King was the object of it more frequently than anybody; he was still amorous; but her ill-humour pained him. Madame de Maintenon reproached Madame de Montespan for this, and thus advanced herself in the King's favour. The King, by degrees, grew accustomed to speak sometimes to Madame de Maintenon; to unbosom to her what he wished her to say to Madame de Montespan; at last to relate to her the chagrin this latter caused him, and to consult her thereupon.

Admitted thus into the intimate confidence of the lover and the mistress, and this by the King's own doing, the adroit waiting-woman knew how to cultivate it, and profited so well by her industry that by degrees she supplanted Madame de Montespan, who perceived, too late, that her friend had become necessary to the King. Arrived at this point, Madame de Maintenon made, in her turn, complaints to the King of all she had to suffer, from a mistress who spared even him so little; and by dint of these mutual complaints about Madame de Montespan, Madame de Maintenon at last took her place, and knew well how to keep it.

Fortune, I dare not say Providence, which was preparing for the haughtiest of kings, humiliation the most profound, the most-public, the most durable, the most unheard-of, strengthened more and more his taste for this woman, so adroit and expert at her trade; while the continued ill-humour and jealousy of Madame de Montespan rendered the new union still more solid. It was this that Madame de Sevigne so prettily paints, enigmatically, in her letters to Madame de Grignan, in which she sometimes talks of these Court movements; for Madame de Maintenon had been in Paris in the society of Madame de Sevigne, of Madame de Coulange, of Madame de La Fayette, and had begun to make them feel her importance. Charming touches are to be seen in the same style upon the favour, veiled but brilliant enjoyed by Madame de Soubise.

It was while the King was in the midst of his partiality for Madame de Maintenon that the Queen died. It was at the same time, too, that the ill-humour of Madame de Montespan became more and more insupportable. This imperious beauty, accustomed to domineer and to be adored, could not struggle against the despair, which the prospect of her fall caused her. What carried her beyond all bounds, was that she could no longer disguise from herself, that she had an abject rival whom she had supported, who owed everything to her; whom she had so much liked that she had several times refused to dismiss her when pressed to do so by the King; a rival, too, so beneath her in beauty, and older by several years; to feel that it was this lady's-maid, not to say this servant, that the King most frequently went to see; that he sought only her; that he could not dissimulate his uneasiness if he did not find her; that he quitted all for her; in fine, that at all moments she (Madame de Montespan) needed the intervention of Madame de Maintenon, in order to attract the King to reconcile her with him, or to obtain the favours she asked for. It was then, in times so propitious to the enchantress, that the King became free by the death of the Queen.



## Page 39

He passed the first few days at Saint-Cloud, at Monsieur's, whence he went to Fontainebleau, where he spent all the autumn. It was there that his liking, stimulated by absence, made him find that absence insupportable. Upon his return it is pretended—for we must distinguish the certain from that which is not so—it is pretended, I say, that the King spoke more freely to Madame de Maintenon, and that she; venturing to put forth her strength, intrenched herself behind devotion and prudery; that the King did not cease, that she preached to him and made him afraid of the devil, and that she balanced his love against his conscience with so much art, that she succeeded in becoming what our eyes have seen her, but what posterity will never believe she was.

But what is very certain and very true, is, that some time after the return of the King from Fontainebleau, and in the midst of the winter that followed the death of the Queen (posterity will with difficulty believe it, although perfectly true and proved), Pere de la Chaise, confessor of the King, said mass at the dead of night in one of the King's cabinets at Versailles. Bontems, governor of Versailles, chief valet on duty, and the most confidential of the four, was present at this mass, at which the monarch and La Maintenon were married in presence of Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, as diocesan, of Louvois (both of whom drew from the King a promise that he would never declare this marriage), and of Montchevreuil. This last was a relative and friend of Villarceaux, to whom during the summer he lent his house at Montchevreuil, remaining there himself, however, with his wife; and in that house Villarceaux kept Madame Scarron, paying all the expenses because his relative was poor, and because he (Villarceaux) was ashamed to take her to his own home, to live in concubinage with her in the presence of his wife whose patience and virtue he respected.

The satiety of the honeymoon, usually so fatal, and especially the honeymoon of such marriages, only consolidated the favour of Madame de Maintenon. Soon after, she astonished everybody by the apartments given to her at Versailles, at the top of the grand staircase facing those of the King and on the same floor. From that moment the King always passed some hours with her every day of his life; wherever she might be she was always lodged near him, and on the same floor if possible.

What manner of person she was,—this incredible enchantress,—and how she governed all-powerfully for more than thirty years, it behoves me now to explain!

## CHAPTER LXXVI



## Page 40

Madame de Maintenon was a woman of much wit, which the good company, in which she had at first been merely suffered, but in which she soon shone, had much polished; and ornamented with knowledge of the world, and which gallantry had rendered of the most agreeable kind. The various positions she had held had rendered her flattering, insinuating, complaisant, always seeking to please. The need she had of intrigues, those she had seen of all kinds, and been mixed up in for herself and for others, had given her the taste, the ability, and the habit of them. Incomparable grace, an easy manner, and yet measured and respectful, which, in consequence of her long obscurity, had become natural to her, marvellously aided her talents; with language gentle, exact, well expressed, and naturally eloquent and brief. Her best time, for she was three or four years older than the King, had been the dainty phrase period;—the superfine gallantry days,—in a word, the time of the “ruelles,” as it was called; and it had so influenced her that she always retained evidences of it. She put on afterwards an air of importance, but this gradually gave place to one of devoutness that she wore admirably. She was not absolutely false by disposition, but necessity had made her so, and her natural flightiness made her appear twice as false as she was.

The distress and poverty in which she had so long lived had narrowed her mind, and abased her heart and her sentiments. Her feelings and her thoughts were so circumscribed, that she was in truth always less even than Madame Scarron, and in everything and everywhere she found herself such. Nothing was more repelling than this meanness, joined to a situation so radiant.

Her flightiness or inconstancy was of the most dangerous kind. With the exception of some of her old friends, to whom she had good reasons for remaining faithful, she favoured people one moment only to cast them off the next. You were admitted to an audience with her for instance, you pleased her in some manner, and forthwith she unbosomed herself to you as though you had known her from childhood. At the second audience you found her dry, laconic, cold. You racked your brains to discover the cause of this change. Mere loss of time!—Flightiness was the sole reason of it.

Devoutness was her strong point; by that she governed and held her place. She found a King who believed himself an apostle, because he had all his life persecuted Jansenism, or what was presented to him as such. This indicated to her with what grain she could sow the field most profitably.

The profound ignorance in which the King had been educated and kept all his life, rendered him from the first an easy prey to the Jesuits. He became even more so with years, when he grew devout, for he was devout with the grossest ignorance. Religion became his weak point. In this state it was easy to persuade him that a decisive and tremendous blow struck against the Protestants would give his name more grandeur than any of his ancestors had acquired, besides strengthening his power and increasing his authority. Madame de Maintenon was one of those who did most to make him believe this.

## Page 41

The revocation of the edict of Nantes, without the slightest pretext or necessity, and the various proscriptions that followed it, were the fruits of a frightful plot, in which the new spouse was one of the chief conspirators, and which depopulated a quarter of the realm, ruined its commerce, weakened it in every direction, gave it up for a long time to the public and avowed pillage of the dragoons, authorised torments and punishments by which so many innocent people of both sexes were killed by thousands; ruined a numerous class; tore in pieces a world of families; armed relatives against relatives, so as to seize their property and leave them to die of hunger; banished our manufactures to foreign lands, made those lands flourish and overflow at the expense of France, and enabled them to build new cities; gave to the world the spectacle of a prodigious population proscribed, stripped, fugitive, wandering, without crime, and seeking shelter far from its country; sent to the galleys, nobles, rich old men, people much esteemed for their piety, learning, and virtue, people well off, weak, delicate, and solely on account of religion; in fact, to heap up the measure of horror, filled all the realm with perjury and sacrilege, in the midst of the echoed cries of these unfortunate victims of error, while so many others sacrificed their conscience to their wealth and their repose, and purchased both by simulated abjuration, from which without pause they were dragged to adore what they did not believe in, and to receive the divine body of the Saint of Saints whilst remaining persuaded that they were only eating bread which they ought to abhor! Such was the general abomination born of flattery and cruelty. From torture to abjuration, and from that to the communion, there was often only twenty-four hours' distance; and executioners were the conductors of the converts and their witnesses. Those who in the end appeared to have been reconciled, more at leisure did not fail by their flight, or their behaviour, to contradict their pretended conversion.

[Illustration: The Edict Of Nantes—Painted by Jules Girardet—front2]

The King received from all sides news and details of these persecutions and of these conversions. It was by thousands that those who had abjured and taken the communion were counted; ten thousand in one place; six thousand in another—all at once and instantly. The King congratulated himself on his power and his piety. He believed himself to have renewed the days of the preaching of the Apostles, and attributed to himself all the honour. The bishops wrote panegyrics of him, the Jesuits made the pulpit resound with his praises. All France was filled with horror and confusion; and yet there never was so much triumph and joy—never such profusion of laudations! The monarch doubted not of the sincerity of this crowd of conversions; the converters took good care to persuade him of it and to beatify him beforehand. He swallowed their

## Page 42

poison in long draughts. He had never yet believed himself so great in the eyes of man, or so advanced in the eyes of God, in the reparation of his sins and of the scandals of his life. He heard nothing but eulogies, while the good and true Catholics and the true bishops, groaned in spirit to see the orthodox act towards error and heretics as heretical tyrants and heathens had acted against the truth, the confessors, and the martyrs. They could not, above all, endure this immensity of perjury and sacrilege. They bitterly lamented the durable and irremediable odium that detestable measure cast upon the true religion, whilst our neighbours, exulting to see us thus weaken and destroy ourselves, profited by our madness, and built designs upon the hatred we should draw upon ourselves from all the Protestant powers.

But to these spearing truths, the King was inaccessible. Even the conduct of Rome in this matter, could not open his eyes. That Court which formerly had not been ashamed to extol the Saint-Bartholomew, to thank God for it by public processions, to employ the greatest masters to paint this execrable action in the Vatican; Rome, I say, would not give the slightest approbation to this onslaught on the Huguenots.

The magnificent establishment of Saint-Cyr, followed closely upon the revocation of the edict of Nantes. Madame de Montespan had founded at Paris an establishment for the instruction of young girls in all sorts of fine and ornamental work. Emulation gave Madame de Maintenon higher and vaster views which, whilst gratifying the poor nobility, would cause her to be regarded as protectress in whom all the nobility would feel interested. She hoped to smooth the way for a declaration of her marriage, by rendering herself illustrious by a monument with which she could amuse both the King and herself, and which might serve her as a retreat if she had the misfortune to lose him, as in fact it happened.

This declaration of her marriage was always her most ardent desire. She wished above all things to be proclaimed Queen; and never lost sight of the idea. Once she was near indeed upon seeing it gratified. The King had actually given her his word, that she should be declared; and the ceremony was forthwith about to take place. But it was postponed, and for ever, by the representations of Louvois to the King. To this interference that minister owed his fall, and under circumstances so surprising and so strange, that I cannot do better, I think, than introduce an account of them here, by way of episode. They are all the more interesting because they show what an unlimited power Madame de Maintenon exercised by subterranean means, and with what patient perseverance she undermined her enemies when once she had resolved to destroy them.

Louvois had gained the confidence of the King to such an extent, that he was, as I have said, one of the two witnesses of the frightful marriage of his Majesty with Madame de Maintenon. He had the courage to show he was worthy of this confidence, by

representing to the King the ignominy of declaring that marriage, and drew from him his word, that never in his life would he do so.



## Page 43

Several years afterwards, Louvois, who took care to be well informed of all that passed in the palace, found out that Madame de Maintenon had been again scheming in order to be declared Queen; that the King had had the weakness to promise she should be, and that the declaration was about to be made. He put some papers in his hand, and at once went straight to the King, who was in a very private room. Seeing Louvois at an unexpected hour, he asked him what brought him there. "Something pressing and important," replied Louvois, with a sad manner that astonished the King, and induced him to command the valets present to quit the room. They went away in fact, but left the door open, so that they could hear all, and see all, too, by the glass. This was the great danger of the cabinets.

The valets being gone, Louvois did not dissimulate from the King his mission. The monarch was often false, but incapable of rising above his own falsehood. Surprised at being discovered, he tried to shuffle out of the matter, and pressed by his minister, began to move so as to gain the other cabinet where the valets were, and thus deliver himself from this hobble. But Louvois, who perceived what he was about, threw himself on his knees and stopped him, drew from his side a little sword he wore, presented the handle to the King, and prayed him to kill him on the spot, if he would persist in declaring his marriage, in breaking his word, and covering himself in the eyes of Europe with infamy. The King stamped, fumed, told Louvois to let him go. But Louvois squeezed him tighter by the legs for fear he should escape; represented to him the shame of what he had decided on doing; in a word, succeeded so well, that he drew for the second time from the King, a promise that the marriage should never be declared.

Madame de Maintenon meanwhile expected every moment to be proclaimed Queen. At the end of some days disturbed by the silence of the King, she ventured to touch upon the subject. The embarrassment she caused the King much troubled her. He softened the affair as much as he could, but finished by begging her to think no more of being declared, and never to speak of it to him again! After the first shock that the loss of her hopes caused her, she sought to find out to whom she was beholden for it. She soon learned the truth; and it is not surprising that she swore to obtain Louvois's disgrace, and never ceased to work at it until successful. She waited her opportunity, and undermined her enemy at leisure, availing herself of every occasion to make him odious to the King.

Time passed. At length it happened that Louvois, not content with the terrible executions in the Palatinate, which he had counselled, wished to burn Treves. He proposed it to the King. A dispute arose between them, but the King would not or could not be persuaded. It may be imagined that Madame de Maintenon did not do much to convince him.

## Page 44

Some days afterwards Louvois, who had the fault of obstinacy, came as usual to work with the King in Madame de Maintenon's rooms. At the end of the sitting he said, that he felt convinced that it was scrupulousness alone which had hindered the King from consenting to so necessary an act as the burning, of Treves, and that he had, therefore, taken the responsibility on himself by sending a courier with orders to set fire to the place at once.

The King was immediately, and contrary to his nature, so transported with anger that he seized the tongs, and was about to make a run at Louvois, when Madame de Maintenon placed herself between them, crying, "Oh, Sire, what are you going to do?" and took the tongs from his hands.

Louvois, meanwhile, gained the door. The King cried after him to recall him, and said, with flashing eyes: "Despatch a courier instantly with a counter order, and let him arrive in time; for, know this: if a single house is burned your head shall answer for it." Louvois, more dead than alive, hastened away at once.

Of course, he had sent off no courier. He said he had, believing that by this trick the King, though he might be angry, would be led to give way. He had reckoned wrongly, however, as we have seen.

From this time forward Louvois became day by day more distasteful to the King. In the winter of 1690, he proposed that, in order to save expense, the ladies should not accompany the King to the siege of *Mons*. Madame de Maintenon, we may be sure, did not grow more kindly disposed towards him after this. But as it is always the last drop of water that makes the glass overflow, so a trifle that happened at this siege, completed the disgrace of Louvois.

The King, who plumed himself upon knowing better than anybody the minutest military details, walking one day about the camp, found an ordinary cavalry guard ill-posted, and placed it differently. Later the same day he again visited by chance the spot, and found the guard replaced as at first. He was surprised and shocked. He asked the captain who had done this, and was told it was Louvois.

"But," replied the King, "did you not tell him 'twas I who had placed you?"

"Yes, Sire," replied the captain. The King piqued, turned towards his suite, and said: "That's Louvois's trade, is it not? He thinks himself a great captain, and that he knows everything," and forthwith he replaced the guard as he had put it in the morning. It was, indeed, foolishness and insolence on the part of Louvois, and the King had spoken truly of him. The King was so wounded that he could not pardon him. After Louvois's death, he related this incident to Pomponne, still annoyed at it, as I knew by means of the Abbe de Pomponne.



After the return from Mons the dislike of the King for Louvois augmented to such an extent, that this minister, who was so presumptuous, and who thought himself so necessary, began to tremble. The Marechale de Rochefort having gone with her daughter, Madame de Blansac, to dine with him at Meudon, he took them out for a ride in a little 'calache', which he himself drove. They heard him repeatedly say to himself, musing profoundly, "Will he? Will he be made to? No—and yet—no, he will not dare."

## Page 45

During this monologue Louvois was so absorbed that he was within an ace of driving them all into the water, and would have done so, had they not seized the reins, and cried out that he was going to drown them. At their cries and movement, Louvois awoke as from a deep sleep, drew up, and turned, saying that, indeed, he was musing, and not thinking of the vehicle.

I was at Versailles at that time, and happened to call upon Louvois about some business of my father's.

The same day I met him after dinner as he was going to work with the King. About four o'clock in the afternoon I learned that he had been taken rather unwell at Madame de Maintenon's, that the King had forced him to go home, that he had done so on foot, that some trifling remedy was administered to him there, and that during the operation of it he died!

The surprise of all the Court may be imagined. Although I was little more than fifteen years of age, I wished to see the countenance of the King after the occurrence of an event of this kind. I went and waited for him, and followed him during all his promenade. He appeared to me with his accustomed majesty, but had a nimble manner, as though he felt more free than usual. I remarked that, instead of going to see his fountains, and diversifying his walk as usual, he did nothing but walk up and down by the balustrade of the orangery, whence he could see, in returning towards the chateau, the lodging in which Louvois had just died, and towards which he unceasingly looked.

The name of Louvois was never afterwards pronounced; not a word was said upon this death so surprising, and so sudden, until the arrival of an officer, sent by the King of England from Saint-Germain, who came to the King upon this terrace, and paid him a compliment of condolence upon the loss he had received.

"Monsieur," replied the King, in a tone and with a manner more than easy, "give my compliments and my thanks to the King and Queen of England, and say to them in my name, that my affairs and theirs will go on none the worse for what has happened."

The officer made a bow and retired, astonishment painted upon his face, and expressed in all his bearing. I anxiously observed all this, and also remarked, that all the principal people around the King looked at each other, but said no word. The fact was, as I afterwards learned, that Louvois, when he died, was so deeply in disgrace, that the very next day he was to have been arrested and sent to the Bastille! The King told Chamillart so, and Chamillart related it to me. This explains, I fancy, the joy of the King at the death of his minister; for it saved him from executing the plan he had resolved on.



## Page 46

The suddenness of the disease and death of Louvois caused much talk, especially when, on the opening of the body, it was discovered that he had been poisoned. A servant was arrested on the charge; but before the trial took place he was liberated, at the express command of the King, and the whole affair was hushed up. Five or six months afterwards Seron, private physician of Louvois, barricaded himself in his apartment at Versailles, and uttered dreadful cries. People came but he refused to open; and as the door could not be forced, he went on shrieking all day, without succour, spiritual or temporal, saying at last that he had got what he deserved for what he had done to his master; that he was a wretch unworthy of help; and so he died despairing, in eight or ten hours, without having spoken of any ones or uttered a single name!

### CHAPTER LXXVII

It must not be imagined that in order to maintain her position Madame de Maintenon had need of no address. Her reign, on the contrary, was only one continual intrigue; and that of the King a perpetual dupery.

Her mornings, which she commenced very early, were occupied with obscure audiences for charitable or spiritual affairs. Pretty often, at eight o'clock in the morning, or earlier, she went to some minister; the ministers of war, above all those of finance, were those with whom she had most business.

Ordinarily as soon as she rose, she went to Saint-Cyr, dined in her apartment there alone, or with some favourite of the house, gave as few audiences as possible, ruled over the arrangements of the establishment, meddled with the affairs of convents, read and replied to letters, directed the affairs of the house, received information and letters from her spies, and returned to Versailles just as the King was ready to enter her rooms. When older and more infirm, she would lie down in bed on arriving between seven and eight o'clock in the morning at Saint-Cyr, or take some remedy.

Towards nine o'clock in the evening two waiting-women came to undress her. Immediately afterwards, her maitre d'hotel, or a valet de chambre brought her her supper—soup, or something light. As soon as she had finished her meal, her women put her to bed, and all this in the presence of the King and his minister, who did not cease working or speak lower. This done, ten o'clock had arrived; the curtains of Madame de Maintenon were drawn, and the King went to supper, after saying good night to her.

When with the King in her own room, they each occupied an armchair, with a table between them, at either side of the fireplace, hers towards the bed, the King's with the back to the wall, where was the door of the ante-chamber; two stools were before the table, one for the minister who came to work, the other for his papers.



## Page 47

During the work Madame de Maintenon read or worked at tapestry. She heard all that passed between the King and his minister, for they spoke out loud. Rarely did she say anything, or, if so, it was of no moment. The King often asked her opinion; then she replied with great discretion. Never did she appear to lay stress on anything, still less to interest herself for anybody, but she had an understanding with the minister, who did not dare to oppose her in private, still less to trip in her presence. When some favour or some post was to be granted, the matter was arranged between them beforehand; and this it was that sometimes delayed her, without the King or anybody knowing the cause.

She would send word to the minister that she wished to speak to him. He did not dare to bring anything forward until he had received her orders; until the revolving mechanism of each day had given them the leisure to confer together. That done, the minister proposed and showed a list. If by chance the King stopped at the name Madame de Maintenon wished, the minister stopped too, and went no further. If the King stopped at some other, the minister proposed that he should look at those which were also fitting, allowed the King leisure to make his observations, and profited by them, to exclude the people who were not wanted. Rarely did he propose expressly the name to which he wished to come, but always suggested several that he tried to balance against each other, so as to embarrass the King in his choice. Then the King asked his opinion, and the minister, after touching upon other names, fixed upon the one he had selected.

The King nearly always hesitated, and asked Madame de Maintenon what she thought. She smiled, shammed incapacity, said a word upon some other name, then returned, if she had not fixed herself there at first, to that which the minister had proposed; so that three-fourths of the favours and opportunities which passed through the hands of the ministers in her rooms—and three-fourths even of the remaining fourth—were disposed of by her. Sometimes when she had nobody for whom she cared, it was the minister, with her consent and her help, who decided, without the King having the least suspicion. He thought he disposed of everything by himself; whilst, in fact, he disposed only of the smallest part, and always then by chance, except on the rare occasions when he specially wished to favour some one.

As for state matters, if Madame de Maintenon wished to make them succeed, fail, or turn in some particular fashion (which happened much less often than where favours and appointments were in the wind), the same intelligence and the same intrigue were carried on between herself and the minister. By these particulars it will be seen that this clever woman did nearly all she wished, but not when or how she wished.

There was another scheme if the King stood out; it was to avoid decision by confusing and spinning out the matter in hand, or by substituting another as though arising, opportunely out of it, and by which it was turned aside, or by proposing that some explanations should be obtained. The first ideas of the King were thus weakened, and the charge was afterwards returned to, with the same address, oftentimes with success.



## Page 48

It is this which made the ministers so necessary to Madame de Maintenon, and her so necessary to them: She rendered them, in fact, continual services by means of the King, in return for the services they rendered her. The mutual concerns, therefore, between her and them were infinite; the King, all the while, not having the slightest suspicion of what was going on!

The power of Madame de Maintenon was, as may be imagined, immense. She had everybody in her hands, from the highest and most favoured minister to the meanest subject of the realm. Many people have been ruined by her, without having been able to discover the author of their ruin, search as they might. All attempts to find a remedy were equally unsuccessful.

Yet the King was constantly on his guard, not only against Madame de Maintenon, but against his ministers also. Many a time it happened that when sufficient care had not been taken, and he perceived that a minister or a general wished to favour a relative or protegee of Madame de Maintenon, he firmly opposed the appointment on that account alone, and the remarks he uttered thereupon made Madame de Maintenon very timid and very measured when she wished openly to ask a favour.

Le Tellier, long before he was made Chancellor, well knew the mood of the King. One of his friends asked him for some place that he much desired. Le Tellier replied that he would do what he could. The friend did not like this reply, and frankly said that it was not such as he expected from a man with such authority. "You do not know the ground," replied Le Tellier; "of twenty matters that we bring before the King, we are sure he will pass nineteen according to our wishes; we are equally certain that the twentieth will be decided against them. But which of the twenty will be decided contrary to our desire we never know, although it may be the one we have most at heart. The King reserves to himself this caprice, to make us feel that he is the master, and that he governs; and if, by chance, something is presented upon which he is obstinate, and which is sufficiently important for us to be obstinate about also, either on account of the thing itself, or for the desire we have that it should succeed as we wish, we very often get a dressing; but, in truth, the dressing over, and the affair fallen through, the King, content with having showed that we can do nothing, and pained by having vexed us, becomes afterwards supple and flexible, so that then is the time at which we can do all we wish."

This is, in truth, how the King conducted himself with his ministers, always completely governed by them, even by the youngest and most mediocre, even by the least accredited and the least respected—yet always on his guard against being governed, and always persuaded that he succeeded fully in avoiding it.

He adopted the same conduct towards Madame de Maintenon, whom at times he scolded terribly, and applauded himself for so doing. Sometimes she threw herself on her knees before him, and for several days was really upon thorns. When she had appointed Fagon physician of the King in place of Daquin, whom she dismissed, she



had a doctor upon whom she could certainly rely, and she played the sick woman accordingly, after those scenes with the King, and in this manner turned them to her own advantage.



## Page 49

It was not that this artifice had any power in constraining the King, or that a real illness would have had any. He was a man solely personal, and who counted others only as they stood in relation to himself. His hard-heartedness, therefore, was extreme. At the time when he was most inclined towards his mistresses, whatever indisposition they might labour under, even the most opposed to travelling and to appearing in full court dress, could not save them from either. When enceinte, or ill, or just risen from child birth, they must needs be squeezed into full dress, go to Flanders or further, dance; sit up, attend fetes, eat, be merry and good company; go from place to place; appear neither to fear, nor to be inconvenienced by heat, cold, wind, or dust; and all this precisely to the hour and day, without a minute's grace.

His daughters he treated in the same manner. It has been seen, in its place, that he had no more consideration for Madame la Duchesse de Berry, nor even for Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne—whatever Fagon, Madame de Maintenon, and others might do or say. Yet he loved Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne as tenderly as he was capable of loving anybody: but both she and Madame la Duchesse de Berry had miscarriages, which relieved him, he said, though they then had no children.

When he travelled, his coach was always full of women; his mistresses, afterwards his bastards, his daughters-in-law, sometimes Madame, and other ladies when there was room. In the coach, during his journeys, there were always all sorts of things to eat, as meat, pastry, fruit. A quarter of a league was not passed over before the King asked if somebody would not eat. He never ate anything between meals himself, not even fruit; but he amused himself by seeing others do so, aye, and to bursting. You were obliged to be hungry, merry, and to eat with appetite, otherwise he was displeased, and even showed it. And yet after this, if you supped with him at table the same day, you were compelled to eat with as good a countenance as though you had tasted nothing since the previous night. He was as inconsiderate in other and more delicate matters; and ladies, in his long drives and stations, had often occasion to curse him. The Duchesse de Chevreuse once rode all the way from Versailles to Fontainebleau in such extremity, that several times she was well-nigh losing consciousness.

The King, who was fond of air, liked all the windows to be lowered; he would have been much displeased had any lady drawn a curtain for protection against sun, wind, or cold. No inconvenience or incommmodity was allowed to be even perceived; and the King always went very quickly, most frequently with relays. To faint was a fault past hope of pardon.



## Page 50

Madame de Maintenon, who feared the air and many other inconveniences, could gain no privilege over the others. All she obtained, under pretence of modesty and other reasons, was permission to journey apart; but whatever condition she might be in, she was obliged to follow the King, and be ready to receive him in her rooms by the time he was ready to enter them. She made many journeys to Marly in a state such as would have saved a servant from movement. She made one to Fontainebleau when it seemed not unlikely that she would die on the road! In whatever condition she might be, the King went to her at his ordinary hour and did what he had projected; though several times she was in bed, profusely sweating away a fever. The King, who as I have said, was fond of air, and feared warm rooms, was astonished upon arriving to find everything close shut, and ordered the windows to be opened; would not spare them an inch; and up to ten o'clock, when he went to supper, kept them open, utterly regardless of the cool night air, although he knew well what a state she was in. If there was to be music, fever or headache availed not; a hundred wax candles flashed all the same in her eyes. The King, in fact, always followed his own inclination, without ever asking whether she was inconvenienced.

The tranquillity and pious resignation of the King during the last days of his illness, was a matter of some surprise to many people, as, indeed, it deserved to be. By way of explanation, the doctors said that the malady he died of, while it deadens and destroys all bodily pain, calms and annihilates all heart pangs and agitation of the mind.

They who were in the sick-chamber, during the last days of his illness, gave another reason.

The Jesuits constantly admit the laity, even married, into their company. This fact is certain. There is no doubt that Des Noyers, Secretary of State under Louis XIII., was of this number, or that many others have been so too. These licentiates make the same vow as the Jesuits, as far as their condition admits: that is, unrestricted obedience to the General, and to the superiors of the company. They are obliged to supply the place of the vows of poverty and chastity, by promising to give all the service and all the protection in their power to the Company, above all, to be entirely submissive to the superiors and to their confessor. They are obliged to perform, with exactitude, such light exercises of piety as their confessor may think adapted to the circumstances of their lives, and that he simplifies as much as he likes. It answers the purpose of the Company to ensure to itself those hidden auxiliaries whom it lets off cheaply. But nothing must pass through their minds, nothing must come to their knowledge that they do not reveal to their confessor; and that which is not a secret of the conscience, to the superiors, if the confessor thinks fit. In everything, too, they must obey without comment, the superior and the confessors.



## Page 51

It has been pretended that Pere Tellier had inspired the King, long before his death, with the desire to be admitted, on this footing, into the Company; that he had vaunted to him the privileges and plenary indulgences attached to it; that he had persuaded him that whatever crimes had been committed, and whatever difficulty there might be in making amends for them, this secret profession washed out all, and infallibly assured salvation, provided that the vows were faithfully kept; that the General of the Company was admitted into the secret with the consent of the King; that the King pronounced the vows before Pere Tellier; that in the last days of his life they were heard, the one fortifying, the other resposing upon these promises; that, at last, the King received from Pere Tellier the final benediction of the Company, as one of its members; that Pere Tellier made the King offer up prayers, partly heard, of a kind to leave no doubt of the matter; and that he had given him the robe, or the almost imperceptible sign, as it were, a sort of scapulary, which was found upon him. To conclude, the majority of those who approached the King in his last moments attributed his penitence to the artifices and persuasions of the Jesuits, who, for temporal interests, deceive sinners even up to the edge of the tomb, and conduct them to it in profound peace by a path strewn with flowers.

However it is but fair to say, that Marechal, who was very trustful, assured me he had never perceived anything which justified this idea, and that he was persuaded there was not the least truth in it; and I think, that although he was not always in the chamber or near the bed, and although Pere Tellier might mistrust and try to deceive him, still if the King had been made a Jesuit as stated, Marechal must have had sore knowledge or some suspicion of the circumstance.

### ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Depopulated a quarter of the realm  
He liked nobody to be in any way superior to him  
He was born bored; he was so accustomed to live out of himself  
He was scarcely taught how to read or write  
It is a sign that I have touched the sore point  
Pope not been ashamed to extol the Saint-Bartholomew  
Revocation of the edict of Nantes  
Seeing him eat olives with a fork!  
Touched, but like a man who does not wish to seem so  
Unreasonable love of admiration, was his ruin  
Who counted others only as they stood in relation to himself