

Memoirs of Louis XIV and His Court and of the Regency — Volume 12 eBook

Memoirs of Louis XIV and His Court and of the Regency — Volume 12 by Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon

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

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

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

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

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

Contents

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

Page 23.....	33
Page 24.....	35
Page 25.....	37
Page 26.....	38
Page 27.....	39
Page 28.....	40
Page 29.....	42
Page 30.....	43
Page 31.....	44
Page 32.....	46
Page 33.....	47
Page 34.....	49
Page 35.....	50
Page 36.....	51
Page 37.....	52
Page 38.....	53
Page 39.....	54
Page 40.....	55
Page 41.....	56
Page 42.....	58
Page 43.....	60
Page 44.....	61
Page 45.....	63
Page 46.....	64
Page 47.....	66
Page 48.....	67

Page 49.....	68
Page 50.....	70
Page 51.....	71
Page 52.....	72
Page 53.....	74
Page 54.....	75
Page 55.....	76
Page 56.....	77
Page 57.....	78
Page 58.....	79

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
CHAPTER LXXXVIII		1
CHAPTER LXXXIX		4
CHAPTER XC		6
CHAPTER XCI		13
CHAPTER XCII		20
CHAPTER XCIII		33
CHAPTER XCIV.		42
CHAPTER XCV		46
CHAPTER XCVI		52
ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARK:		58

Page 1

CHAPTER LXXXVIII

The Abbe Alberoni, having risen by the means I have described, and acquired power by following in the track of the Princesse des Ursins, governed Spain like a master. He had the most ambitious projects. One of his ideas was to drive all strangers, especially the French, out of the West Indies; and he hoped to make use of the Dutch to attain this end. But Holland was too much in the dependence of England.

At home Alberoni proposed many useful reforms, and endeavoured to diminish the expenses of the royal household. He thought, with reason, that a strong navy was the necessary basis of the power of Spain; and to create one he endeavoured to economise the public money. He flattered the King with the idea that next year he would arm forty vessels to protect the commerce of the Spanish Indies. He had the address to boast of his disinterestedness, in that whilst working at all manner of business he had never received any grace from the King, and lived only on fifty pistoles, which the Duke of Parma, his master, gave him every month; and therefore he made gently some complaints against the ingratitude of princes.

Alberoni had persuaded the Queen of Spain to keep her husband shut up, as had the Princesse des Ursins. This was a certain means of governing a prince whose temperament and whose conscience equally attached him to his spouse. He was soon completely governed once more—under lock and key, as it were, night and day. By this means the Queen was jailoress and prisoner at the same time. As she was constantly with the King nobody could come to her. Thus Alberoni kept them both shut up, with the key of their prison in his pocket.

One of the chief objects of his ambition was the Cardinal's hat. It would be too long to relate the schemes he set on foot to attain his end. He was opposed by a violent party at Rome; but at last his inflexible will and extreme cunning gained the day. The Pope, no longer able to resist the menaces of the King of Spain, and dreading the vengeance of the all-powerful minister, consented to grant the favour that minister had so pertinaciously demanded. Alberoni was made Cardinal on the 12th of July, 1717. Not a soul approved this promotion when it was announced at the consistory. Not a single cardinal uttered a word in praise of the new confrere, but many openly disapproved his nomination. Alberoni's good fortune did not stop here. At the death, some little time after, of the Bishop of Malaga, that rich see, worth thirty thousand ecus a year, was given to him. He received it as the mere introduction to the grandest and richest sees of Spain, when they should become vacant. The King of Spain gave him also twenty thousand ducats, to be levied upon property confiscated for political reasons. Shortly after, Cardinal Arias, Archbishop of Seville, having died, Alberoni was named to this rich archbishopric.

Page 2

In the middle of his grandeur and good luck he met with an adventure that must have strangely disconcerted him.

I have before explained how Madame des Ursins and the deceased Queen had kept the King of Spain screened from all eyes, inaccessible to all his Court, a very palace-hermit. Alberoni, as I have said, followed their example. He kept the King even more closely imprisoned than before, and allowed no one, except a few indispensable attendants, to approach him. These attendants were a small number of valets and doctors, two gentlemen of the chamber, one or two ladies, and the majordomo-major of the King. This last post was filled by the Duc d'Escalone, always called Marquis de Villena, in every way one of the greatest noblemen in Spain, and most respected and revered of all, and justly so, for his virtue, his appointment, and his services.

Now the King's doctors are entirely under the authority of the majordomo-major. He ought to be present at all their consultations; the King should take no remedy that he is not told of, or that he does not approve, or that he does not see taken; an account of all the medicines should be rendered to him. Just at this time the King was ill. Villena wished to discharge the duties attached to his post of majordomo-major. Alberoni caused it to be insinuated to him, that the King wished to be at liberty, and that he would be better liked if he kept at home; or had the discretion and civility not to enter the royal chamber, but to ask at the door for news. This was language the Marquis would not understand.

At the end of the grand cabinet of the mirrors was placed a bed, in which the King was laid, in front of the door; and as the room is vast and long, it is a good distance from the door (which leads to the interior) to the place where the bed was. Alberoni again caused the Marquis to be informed that his attentions were troublesome, but the Marquis did not fail to enter as before. At last, in concert with the Queen, the Cardinal resolved to refuse him admission. The Marquis, presenting himself one afternoon, a valet partly opened the door and said, with much confusion, that he was forbidden to let him enter.

"Insolent fellow," replied the Marquis, "stand aside," and he pushed the door against the valet and entered. In front of him was the Queen, seated at the King's pillow; the Cardinal standing by her side, and the privileged few, and not all of them, far away from the bed. The Marquis, who, though full of pride, was but weak upon his legs, leisurely advanced, supported upon his little stick. The Queen and the Cardinal saw him and looked at each other. The King was too ill to notice anything, and his curtains were closed except at the side where the Queen was. Seeing the Marquis approach, the Cardinal made signs, with impatience, to one of the valets to tell him to go away, and immediately after, observing that the Marquis, without replying, still advanced, he went to him, explained to him that the King wished to be alone, and begged him to leave.

Page 3

"That is not true," said the Marquis; "I have watched you; you have not approached the bed, and the King has said nothing to you."

The Cardinal insisting, and without success, took him by the arm to make him go. The Marquis said he was very insolent to wish to hinder him from seeing the King, and perform his duties. The Cardinal, stronger than his adversary, turned the Marquis round, hurried him towards the door, both talking the while, the Cardinal with measure, the Marquis in no way mincing his words. Tired of being hauled out in this manner, the Marquis struggled, called Alberoni a "little scoundrel," to whom he would teach manners; and in this heat and dust the Marquis, who was weak, fortunately fell into an armchair hard by. Angry at his fall, he raised his little stick and let it fall with all his force upon the ears and the shoulders of the Cardinal, calling him a little scoundrel—a little rascal—a little blackguard, deserving a horsewhipping.

The Cardinal, whom he held with one hand, escaped as well as he could, the Marquis continuing to abuse him, and shaking the stick at him. One of the valets came and assisted him to rise from his armchair, and gain the door; for after this accident his only thought was to leave the room.

The Queen looked on from her chair during all this scene, without stirring or saying a word; and the privileged few in the chamber did not dare to move. I learned all this from every one in Spain; and moreover I asked the Marquis de Villena himself to give me the full details; and he, who was all uprightness and truth, and who had conceived some little friendship for me, related with pleasure all I have written. The two gentlemen of the chamber present also did the same, laughing in their sleeves. One had refused to tell the Marquis to leave the room, and the other had accompanied him to the door. The most singular thing is, that the Cardinal, furious, but surprised beyond measure at the blows he had received, thought only of getting out of reach. The Marquis cried to him from a distance, that but for the respect he owed to the King, and to the state in which he was, he would give him a hundred kicks in the stomach, and haul him out by the ears. I was going to forget this. The King was so ill that he saw nothing.

A quarter of an hour after the Marquis had returned home, he received an order to retire to one of his estates at thirty leagues from Madrid. The rest of the day his house was filled with the most considerable people of Madrid, arriving as they learned the news, which made a furious sensation through the city. He departed the next day with his children. The Cardinal, nevertheless, remained so terrified, that, content with the exile of the Marquis, and with having got rid of him, he did not dare to pass any censure upon him for the blows he had received. Five or six months afterwards he sent him an order of recall, though the Marquis had not taken the slightest

Page 4

steps to obtain it. What is incredible is, that the adventure, the exile, the return, remained unknown to the King until the fall of the Cardinal! The Marquis would never consent to see him, or to hear him talked of, on any account, after returning, though the Cardinal was the absolute master. His pride was much humiliated by this worthy and just haughtiness; and he was all the more piqued because he left nothing undone in order to bring about a reconciliation, without any other success than that of obtaining fresh disdain, which much increased the public estimation in which this wise and virtuous nobleman was held.

CHAPTER LXXXIX

I must not omit to mention an incident which occurred during the early part of the year 1718, and which will give some idea of the character of M. le Duc d'Orleans, already pretty amply described by me.

One day (when Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans had gone to Montmartre, which she quitted soon after) I was walking alone with M. le Duc d'Orleans in the little garden of the Palais Royal, chatting upon various affairs, when he suddenly interrupted me, and turning towards me; said, "I am going to tell you something that will please you."

Thereupon he related to me that he was tired of the life he led, which was no longer in harmony with his age or his desires, and many similar things; that he was resolved to give up his gay parties, pass his evenings more soberly and decently, sometimes at home, often with Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans; that his health would gain thereby, and he should have more time for business; that in a little while I might rely upon it — there would be no more suppers of "roues and harlots" (these were his own terms), and that he was going to lead a prudent and reasonable life adapted to his age and state.

I admit that in my extreme surprise I was ravished, so great was the interest I took in him. I testified this to him with overflowing heart, thanking him for his confidence. I said to him that he knew I for a long time had not spoken to him of the indecency of his life, or of the time he lost, because I saw that in so doing I lost my own; that I had long since despaired of his conduct changing; that this had much grieved me; that he could not be ignorant from all that had passed between us at various times, how much I desired a change, and that he might judge of the surprise and joy his announcement gave me. He assured me more and more that his resolution was fixed, and thereupon I took leave of him, the hour for his soiree having arrived.

The next day I learned from people to whom the roues had just related it, that M. le Duc d'Orleans was no sooner at table than he burst out laughing, and applauded his cleverness, saying that he had just laid a trap for me into which I had fallen full length.

He recited to them our conversation, at which the joy and applause were marvellous. It is the only time he ever diverted himself at my expense (not to say at his own) in a matter in which the fib he told me, and which I was foolish enough to swallow, surprised by a sudden joy that took from me reflection, did honour to me, though but little to him. I would not gratify him by telling him I knew of his joke, or call to his mind what he had said to me; accordingly he never dared to speak of it.

Page 5

I never could unravel what fantasy had seized him to lead him to hoax me in this manner, since for many years I had never opened my mouth concerning the life he led, whilst he, on his side, had said not a word to me relating to it. Yet it is true that sometimes being alone with confidential valets, some complaints have escaped him (but never before others) that I ill-treated him, and spoke hastily to him, but all was said in two words, without bitterness, and without accusing me of treating him wrongfully. He spoke truly also; sometimes, when I was exasperated with stupidity or error in important matters which affected him or the State, or when he had agreed (having been persuaded and convinced by good reasons) to do or not to do some essential thing, and was completely turned from it by his feebleness, his easy-going nature (which he appreciated as well as I)—cruelly did I let out against him. But the trick he most frequently played me before others, one of which my warmth was always dupe, was suddenly to interrupt an important argument by a 'spropósito' of buffoonery. I could not stand it; sometimes being so angry that I wished to leave the room. I used to say to him that if he wished to joke I would joke as much as he liked, but to mix the most serious matters with tomfoolery was insupportable. He laughed heartily, and all the more because, as the thing often happened, I ought to have been on my guard; but never was, and was vexed both at the joke and at being surprised; then he returned to business. But princes must sometimes banter and amuse themselves with those whom they treat as friends. Nevertheless, in spite of his occasional banter, he entertained really sincere esteem and friendship for me.

By chance I learnt one day what he really thought of me. I will say it now, so as to leave at once all these trifles. M. le Duc d'Orleans returning one afternoon from the Regency Council at the Tuileries to the Palais Royal with M. le Duc de Chartres (his son) and the Bailli de Conflans (then first gentleman of his chamber) began to talk of me, passing an eulogium upon me I hardly dare to repeat. I know not what had occurred at the Council to occasion it. All that I can say is that he insisted upon his happiness in having a friend so faithful, so unchanging at all times, so useful to him as I was, and always had been; so sure, so true, so disinterested, so firm, such as he could meet with in no one else, and upon whom he could always count. This eulogy lasted from the Tuileries to the Palais Royal, the Regent saying to his son that he wished to teach him how to make my acquaintance, as a support and a source of happiness (all that I relate here is in his own words); such as he had always found in my friendship and counsel. The Bailli de Conflans, astonished at this abundant eloquence, repeated it to me two days after, and I admit that I never have forgotten it. And here I will say that whatever others might do, whatever I myself (from disgust and vexation at what I saw ill done) might do, the Regent always sought reconciliation with me with shame, confidence, confusion, and he has never found himself in any perplexity that he has not opened his heart to me, and consulted me, without however always following my advice, for he was frequently turned from it by others.

Page 6

He would never content himself with one mistress. He needed a variety in order to stimulate his taste. I had no more intercourse with them than with his rouses. He never spoke of them to me, nor I to him. I scarcely ever knew anything of their adventures. His rouses and valets were always eager to present fresh mistresses to him, from which he generally selected one. Amongst these was Madame de Sabran, who had married a man of high rank, but without wealth or merit, in order to be at liberty. There never was a woman so beautiful as she, or of a beauty more regular, more agreeable, more touching, or of a grander or nobler bearing, and yet without affectation. Her air and her manners were simple and natural, making you think she was ignorant of her beauty and of her figure (this last the finest in the world), and when it pleased her she was deceitfully modest. With much intellect she was insinuating, merry, overflowing, dissipated, not bad-hearted, charming, especially at table. In a word, she was all M. le Duc d'Orleans wanted, and soon became his mistress without prejudice to the rest.

As neither she nor her husband had a rap, they were ready for anything, and yet they did not make a large fortune. One of the chamberlains of the Regent, with an annual salary of six thousand livres, having received another appointment, Madame de Sabran thought six thousand livres a year too good to be lost, and asked for the post for her husband. She cared so little for him, by the way, that she called him her "mastiff." It was she, who, supping with M. le Duc d'Orleans and his rouses, wittily said, that princes and lackeys had been made of one material, separated by Providence at the creation from that out of which all other men had been made.

All the Regent's mistresses had one by one their turn. Fortunately they had little power, were not initiated into any state secrets, and received but little money.

The Regent amused himself with them, and treated them in other respects exactly as they deserved to be treated.

CHAPTER XC

It is time now that I should speak of matters of very great importance, which led to changes that filled my heart with excessive joy, such as it had never known before.

For a long time past the Parliament had made many encroachments upon the privileges belonging to the Dukes. Even under the late King it had begun these impudent enterprises, and no word was said against it; for nothing gave the King greater pleasure than to mix all ranks together in a caldron of confusion. He hated and feared the nobility, was jealous of their power, which in former reigns had often so successfully balanced that of the crown; he was glad therefore of any opportunity which presented itself that enabled him to see our order weakened and robbed of its dignity.

Page 7

The Parliament grew bolder as its encroachments one by one succeeded. It began to fancy itself armed with powers of the highest kind. It began to imagine that it possessed all the authority of the English Parliament, forgetting that that assembly is charged with the legislative administration of the country, that it has the right to make laws and repeat laws, and that the monarch can do but little, comparatively speaking, without the support and sanction of this representative chamber; whereas, our own Parliament is but a tribunal of justice, with no control or influence over the royal authority or state affairs.

But, as I have said, success gave it new impudence. Now that the King was dead, at whose name alone it trembled, this assembly thought that a fine opportunity had come to give its power the rein. It had to do with a Regent, notorious for his easy-going disposition, his indifference to form and rule, his dislike to all vigorous measures. It fancied that victory over such an opponent would be easy; that it could successfully overcome all the opposition he could put in action, and in due time make his authority secondary to its own. The Chief-President of the Parliament, I should observe, was the principal promoter of these sentiments. He was the bosom friend of M. and Madame du Maine, and by them was encouraged in his views. Incited by his encouragement, he seized an opportunity which presented itself now, to throw down the glove to M. le Duc d'Orleans, in the name of the Parliament, and to prepare for something like a struggle. The Parliament of Brittany had recently manifested a very turbulent spirit, and this was an additional encouragement to that of Paris.

At first the Parliament men scarcely knew what to lay hold of and bring forward, as an excuse for the battle. They wished of course to gain the applause of the people as protectors of their interests—likewise those who for their private ends try to trouble and embroil the State—but could not at first see their way clear. They sent for Trudaine, Prevot des Marchand, Councillor of State, to give an account to them of the state of the Hotel de Ville funds. He declared that they had never been so well paid, and that there was no cause of complaint against the government. Baffled upon this point, they fastened upon a edict, recently rendered, respecting the money of the realm. They deliberated thereon, deputed a commission to examine the matter, made a great fuss, and came to the conclusion that the edict would, if acted upon, be very prejudicial to the country.

Thus much done, the Parliament assembled anew on Friday morning, the 17th of June, 1718, and again in the afternoon. At the end they decided upon sending a deputation to the Regent, asking him to suspend the operation of the edict, introduce into it the changes suggested by their body, and then send it to them to be registered. The deputation was sent, and said all it had to say.

Page 8

On the morrow the Parliament again assembled, morning and afternoon, and sent a message to the Regent, saying, it would not separate until it had received his reply. That reply was very short and simple. The Regent sent word that he was tired of the meddling interference of the Parliament (this was not the first time, let me add, that he experienced it), that he had ordered all the troops in Paris, and round about, to hold themselves ready to march, and that the King must be obeyed. Such was in fact true. He had really ordered the soldiers to keep under arms and to be supplied with powder and shot.

The message did not intimidate the Parliament. The next day, Sunday, the Chief-President, accompanied by all the other presidents, and by several councillors, came to the Palais Royal. Although, as I have said, the leader of his company, and the right-hand man of M. and Madame du Maine, he wished for his own sake to keep on good terms with the Regent, and at the same time to preserve all authority over his brethren, so as to have them under his thumb. His discourse then to the Regent commenced with many praises and much flattery, in order to smooth the way for the three fine requests he wound up with. The first of these was that the edict should be sent to the Parliament to be examined, and to suffer such changes as the members should think fit to introduce, and then be registered; the second, that the King should pay attention to their remonstrances in an affair of this importance, which they believed prejudicial to the State; the third, that the works recently undertaken at the mint for recasting the specie should be suspended!

To these modest requests the Regent replied that the edict had been registered at the Cour des Monnaies, which is a superior court, and consequently sufficient for such registration; that there was only a single instance of an edict respecting the money of the realm having been sent before the Parliament, and then out of pure civility; that the matter had been well sifted, and all its inconveniences weighed; that it was to the advantage of the State to put in force this edict; that the works of the Mint could not be interfered with in any way; finally, that the King must be obeyed! It was quite true that the edict had been sent to the Parliament out of courtesy, but at the suggestion of the Regent's false and treacherous confidants, valets of the Parliament, such as the Marechals de Villeroy, and Huxelles, and Besons, Canillac, Effiat, and Noailles.

Notwithstanding the decisive answer they had received, the Parliament met the very next day, and passed a decree against the edict. The council of the regency, at its sitting on the afternoon of the same day, abrogated this decree. Thus, since war was in a measure declared between the Regent's authority and that of the Parliament, the orders emanating from the one were disputed by the other, and vice versa. A nice game of shuttlecock this, which it was scarce likely could last long!

Page 9

The Regent was determined to be obeyed. He prohibited, therefore, the printing and posting up of the decree of the Parliament. Soldiers of the guards, too, were placed in the markets to hinder the refusal of the new money which had been issued. The fact is, by the edict which had been passed, the Louis worth thirty livres was taken at thirty-six livres, and the crown piece, worth a hundred sous, at six livres instead of five. By this edict also government notes were made legal tender until the new money should be ready. The finances were thus relieved, and the King gained largely from the recasting of the coin. But private people lost by this increase, which much exceeded the intrinsic value of the metal used, and which caused everything to rise in price. Thus the Parliament had a fine opportunity for trumpeting forth its solicitude for the public interest, and did not fail to avail itself of it.

During the night a councillor of the Parliament was surprised on horseback in the streets tearing down and disfiguring the decree of the Regency Council, which abrogated that of the Parliament. He was taken to prison.

On Monday, the 27th of June, the Chief-President, at the head of all the other presidents, and of forty councillors, went to the Tuileries, and in the presence of the Regent read the wire-drawn remonstrance of the Parliament upon this famous edict. The Keeper of the Seals said that in a few days the King would reply. Accordingly on Saturday, the 2nd of July, the same deputation came again to the Tuileries to hear the reply. The Regent and all the Princes of the blood were there, the bastards also. Argenson, who from lieutenant of police had been made keeper of the seals, and who in his former capacity had often been ill-used—nay, even attacked by the Parliament—took good care to show his superiority over that assembly. He answered that deputation in the name of the King, and concluded by saying that the edict would in no way be altered, but would receive complete application. The parliamentary gentlemen did not expect so firm a reply, and withdrew, much mortified.

They were not, however, vanquished. They reassembled on the 11th and 12th of August, and spat forth all their venom in another decree specially aimed at the authority of the Regent. By this decree the administration of the finances was henceforth entirely to be at the mercy of the Parliament. Law, the Scotchman, who, under the favour of M. le Duc d'Orleans, had been allowed some influence over the State money matters, was to possess that influence no longer; in fact, all power on the part of the Regent over the finances was to be taken from him.

After this the Parliament had to take but one step in order to become the guardian of the King and the master of the realm (as in fact it madly claimed to be), the Regent more at its mercy than the King, and perhaps as exposed as King Charles I. of England. Our parliamentary gentlemen began as humbly as those of England, and though, as I have said, their assembly was but a simple court of justice, limited in its jurisdiction like the other courts of the realm, to judge disputes between private people, yet by dint of

hammering upon the word parliament they believed themselves not less important than their English brethren, who form the legislative assembly, and represent all the nation.

Page 10

M. and Madame du Maine had done not a little to bring about these fancies, and they continued in secret to do more. Madame du Maine, it may be recollected, had said that she would throw the whole country into combustion, in order not to lose her husband's prerogative. She was as good as her word. Encouraged doubtless by the support they received from this precious pair, the Parliament continued on its mad career of impudent presumption, pride, and arrogance. It assembled on the 22nd of August, and ordered inquiry to be made of the Regent as to what had become of all the state notes that had been passed at the Chamber of justice; those which had been given for the lotteries that were held every month; those which had been given for the Mississippi or Western Company; finally, those which had been taken to the Mint since the change in the specie.

These questions were communicated to the Regent by the King's officers. In reply he turned his back upon them, and went away into his cabinet, leaving these people slightly bewildered. Immediately after this occurrence it was rumoured that a Bed of justice would soon be held. The Regent had not then thought of summoning such an important assembly, and his weakness and vacillation were such that no one thought he would dare to do so.

The memoirs of Cardinal de Retz, of Joly, of Madame Motteville, had turned all heads. These books had become so fashionable, that in no class was the man or woman who did not have them continually in hand. Ambition, the desire for novelty, the skill of those who circulated these books, made the majority of people hope to cut a figure or make a fortune, and persuaded them there was as little lack of personages as in the last minority. People looked upon Law as the Mazarin of the day— (they were both foreign) —upon M. and Madame du Maine, as the chiefs of the Fronde; the weakness of M. le Duc d'Orleans was compared to that of the Queen-mother, and so on.

To say the truth, all tended towards whatever was extreme—moderation seemed forgotten—and it was high time the Regent aroused himself from a supineness which rendered him contemptible, and which emboldened his enemies and those of the State to brave all and undertake all. This lethargy, too, disheartened his servants, and made all healthy activity on their part impossible. It had at last led him to the very verge of the precipice, and the realm he governed to within an inch of the greatest confusion. He had need, indeed, to be up and doing!

The Regent, without having the horrible vice or the favourites of Henry III., had even more than that monarch become notorious for his daily debauches, his indecency, and his impiety. Like Henry III., too, he was betrayed by his most intimate councillors and domestics. This treachery pleased him (as it had pleased that King) because it induced him to keep idle, now from fear, now from interest, now from disdain, and now from policy. This torpor was agreeable to him because it was in conformity with his humour and his tastes, and because he regarded those who counselled it as good, wise, and enlightened people, not blinded by their private interests, but seeing clearly things as

they were; while he was importuned with opinions and explanations which would have disclosed the true state of affairs and suggested remedies.

Page 11

He looked upon such people as offered these opinions and explanations as impetuous counsellors, who hurried everything and suggested everything, who wished to discount the future in order to satisfy their ambition, their aversion, their different passions. He kept on his guard against them; he applauded himself for not being their dupe. Now, he laughed at them; often he allowed them to believe he appreciated their reasoning, that he was going to act and rouse from his lethargy. He amused them thus, gained time, and diverted himself afterwards with the others. Sometimes he replied coldly to them, and when they pressed him too much he allowed his suspicions to peep out.

Long since I had perceived M. le Duc d'Orleans' mode of action. At the first movements of the Parliament, of the bastards, and of those who had usurped the name of nobility, I had warned him. I had done so again as soon as I saw the cadence and the harmony of the designs in progress. I had pointed out to him their inevitable sequel; how easy it was to hinder them at the commencement; how difficult after, especially for a person of his character and disposition. But I was not the man for such work as this. I was the oldest, the most attached, the freest spoken of all his servitors; I had given him the best proofs of this in the most critical times of his life, and in the midst of his universal abandonment; the counsels I had offered him in these sad days he had always found for his good; he was accustomed to repose in me the most complete confidence; but, whatever opinion he might have of me, and of my truth and probity, he was on his guard against what he called my warmth, and against the love I had for my dignity, so attacked by the usurpations of the bastards, the designs of the Parliament, and the modern fancies of a sham nobility. As soon as I perceived his suspicions I told him so, and I added that, content with having done my duty as citizen and as his servitor, I would say no more on the subject. I kept my word. For more than a year I had not of myself opened my mouth thereon. If he was sometimes spoken to before me, and I could not keep quite silent without being suspected of sulking or pique, I carelessly said something indefinite, with as little meaning in it as possible, and calculated to make us drop the subject.

Judge of my surprise, therefore, when as I was working as usual one afternoon with the Regent, he interrupted me to speak with bitterness of the Parliament. I replied with my accustomed coldness and pretended negligence, and continued my business. He stopped me, and said that he saw very well that I would not reply to him concerning the Parliament. I admitted it was true, and added that he must long since have perceived this. Pressed and pressed beyond measure, I coldly remarked that he could not but remember what I had said to him of the Parliament both before and after his accession to the regency, that other counsels

Page 12

had prevailed over mine, and that finding my opinions were misinterpreted by him, I had resolved to hold my tongue, and had done so. As the subject was now reopened I reminded him of a prophecy I had uttered long before, that he had missed the opportunity of governing the Parliament when he might have done so with a frown, and that step by step he would allow himself to be conducted by his easy-going disposition, until he found himself on the very verge of the abyss; that if he wished to recover his position he must begin at once to retrace his steps, or lose his footing for ever!

Such strong words (from my mouth they had been rare of late), pronounced with a slow, firm coldness, as though I were indifferent to the course he might adopt, made him feel how little capable I believed him of vigorous and sustained action, and what trifling trouble I took to make him adopt my views. Dubois, Argenson, and Law had also spoken to him, urging him to take strong measures against the Parliament; the effect of my speech was therefore marvellous.

It was indeed high time to do something, as I have before remarked. The Parliament, we found, after passing its last decree, had named a commission to inquire into the financial edict; this commission was working in the utmost secrecy; a number of witnesses had already been examined, and preparations were quietly making to arrest Law some fine morning, and hang him three hours after within the enclosure of the Palais de justice.

Immediately this fact became known, the Duc de la Force and Fagon (Councillor of State) went to the Regent—'twas on the 19th of August, 1718—and spoke to him with such effect, that he ordered them to assemble with Law that very day at my house in order to see what was to be done. They came, in fact, and this was the first intimation I had that the Regent had begun to feel the gravity of his position, and that he was ready to do something. In this conference at my house the firmness of Law, hitherto so great, was shaken so that tears escaped him. Arguments did not satisfy us at first, because the question could only be decided by force, and we could not rely upon that of the Regent. The safe-conduct with which Law was supplied would not have stopped the Parliament an instant. On every side we were embarrassed. Law, more dead than alive, knew not what to say; much less what to do. His safety appeared to us the most pressing matter to ensure. If he had been taken it would have been all over with him before the ordinary machinery of negotiation (delayed as it was likely to be by the weakness of the Regent) could have been set in motion; certainly, before there would have been leisure to think of better, or to send a regiment of guards to force open the Palais de justice; a critical remedy at all times, and grievous to the last degree, even when it succeeds; frightful, if instead of Law, only his suspended corpse had been found!

Page 13

I advised Law, therefore, to retire to the Palais Royal, and occupy the chamber of Nancre, his friend, then away in Spain. Law breathed again at this suggestion (approved by de la Force and Fagon), and put it in execution the moment he left my house. He might have been kept in safety at the Bank, but I thought the Palais Royal would be better: that his retirement there would create more effect, and induce the Regent to hold firm to his purpose, besides allowing his Royal Highness to see the financier whenever he pleased.

CHAPTER XCI

This done I proposed, and the others approved my proposition, that a Bed of Justice should be held as the only means left by which the abrogation of the parliamentary decrees could be registered. But while our arguments were moving, I stopped them all short by a reflection which came into my mind. I represented to my guests that the Duc du Maine was in secret the principal leader of the Parliament, and was closely allied with Marechal de Villeroy; that both would oppose might and main the assembling of a Bed of justice, so contrary to their views, to their schemes, to their projects; that to hinder it they, as guardians of the young King, would plead on his behalf, the heat, which was in fact extreme, the fear of the crowd, of the fatigue, of the bad air; that they would assume a pathetic tone in speaking of the King's health, calculated to embarrass the Regent; that if he persisted they would protest against everything which might happen to His Majesty; declare, perhaps, that in order not to share the blame, they would not accompany him; that the King, prepared by them, would grow frightened, perhaps, and would not go to the Parliament without them; that then all would be lost, and the powerlessness of the Regent, so clearly manifested, might rapidly lead to the most disastrous results.

These remarks stopped short our arguments, but I had not started objections without being prepared with a remedy for them. I said, "Let the Bed of justice be held at the Tuileries; let it be kept a profound secret until the very morning it is to take place; and let those who are to attend it be told so only a few hours before they are to assemble. By these means no time will be allowed for anybody to object to the proceeding, to plead the health of the King, the heat of the weather, or to interfere with the arrangement of the troops which it will be necessary to make."

We stopped at this: Law went away, and I dictated to Fagon the full details of my scheme, by which secrecy was to be ensured and all obstacles provided against. We finished about nine o'clock in the evening, and I counselled Fagon to carry what he had written to the Abbe Dubois, who had just returned from England with new credit over the mind of his master.

Page 14

The next day I repaired to the Palais Royal about four o'clock. A moment after La Vrilliere came and relieved me of the company of Grancey and Broglio, two rouses, whom I had found in the grand cabinet, in the cool, familiarly, without wigs. When M. le Duc d'Orleans was free he led me into the cabinet, behind the grand salon, by the Rue de Richelieu, and on entering said he was at the crisis of his regency, and that everything was needed in order to sustain him on this occasion. He added that he was resolved to strike a heavy blow at the Parliament; that he much approved my proposition respecting the Bed of justice at the Tuileries, and that it would be held exactly as I had suggested.

I was delighted at his animation, and at the firmness he appeared to possess, and after having well discussed with him all the inconveniences of my plan, and their remedy, we came at last to a very important matter, the mechanical means, so to speak, by which that plan was to be put in force. There was one thing to be provided for, which may appear an exceedingly insignificant matter, but which in truth was of no light importance. When a Bed of justice is held, seats one above another must be provided for those who take part in it. No room in the Tuileries possessed such seats and how erect them without noise, without exciting remarks, without causing inquiries and suspicions, which must inevitably lead to the discovery and perhaps thereby to the failure of our project? I had not forgotten this difficulty, however, and I said to the Regent I would go in secret to Fontanieu, who controlled the crown furniture, explain all to him, and arrange matters with him so that these seats should be erected at the very last moment, in time for our purpose, but too late to supply information that could be made use of by our enemies. I hurried off accordingly, as soon as I could get away, in search of Fontanieu.

I had already had some relations with him, for he had married his daughter to the son of the sister of my brother-in-law, M. de Lauzun. I had done him some little service, and had therefore every reason to expect he would serve me on this occasion. Judge of my annoyance when upon reaching his house I learned that he had gone almost to the other end of the town, to the Marais, to conduct a suit at law, in which Monsieur and Madame de Lauzun were concerned, respecting an estate at Rondon they claimed!

The porter seeing me so vexed at being obliged to journey so far in search of Fontanieu, said, that if I would go and speak to Madame Fontanieu, he would see if his master was not still in the neighbourhood, at a place he intended to visit before going to the Marais. I acted upon this suggestion and went to Madame Fontanieu, whom I found alone. I was forced to talk to her of the suit of Monsieur and Madame de Lauzun, which I pretended was the business I came upon, and cruelly did I rack my brains to say enough to keep up the conversation. When Fontanieu

Page 15

arrived, for he was soon found, fortunately, I was thrown into another embarrassment, for I had all the pains in the world to get away from Madame Fontanieu, who, aided by her husband, begged me not to take the trouble to descend but to discuss the subject where I was as she was as well informed upon the case as he, I thought once or twice I should never escape her. At last, however, I led away Fontanieu, by dint of compliments to his wife, in which I expressed my unwillingness to weary her with this affair.

When Fontanieu and I were alone down in his cabinet, I remained some moments talking to him upon the same subject, to allow the valets who had opened the doors for us time to retire. Then, to his great astonishment, I went outside to see if there were no listeners, and carefully closed the doors. After this I said to Fontanieu that I had not come concerning the affair of Madame de Lauzun, but upon another very different, which demanded all his industry, a secrecy proof against every trial, and which M. le Duc d'Orleans had charged me to communicate to him; but that before explaining myself he must know whether his Royal Highness could certainly count upon him.

It is strange what an impression the wildest absurdities leave if they are spread abroad with art. The first thing Fontanieu did was to tremble violently all over and become whiter than his shirt. With difficulty he stammered out a few words to the effect that he would do for M. le Duc d'Orleans as much as his duty would permit him to do. I smiled, looking fixedly at him, and this smile warned him apparently that he owed me an excuse for not being quite at ease upon any affair that passed through my hands; he directly made me one, at all events, and with the confusion of a man who sees that his first view has dazzled the second, and who, full of this first view, does not show anything, yet lets all be seen.

I reassured him as well as I could, and said that I had answered for him to M. le Duc d'Orleans, and afterwards that a Bed of justice was wanted, for the construction of which we had need of him.

Scarcely had I explained this, than the poor fellow began to take breath, as though escaping from stifling oppression, or a painful operation for the stone, and asked me if that was what I wanted?

He promised everything, so glad was he to be let off thus cheaply, and in truth he kept to his word, both as to the secret and the work. He had never seen a Bed of justice, and had not the slightest notion what it was like. I sat down on his bureau, and drew out the design of one. I dictated to him the explanations in the margin, because I did not wish them to be in my handwriting. I talked more than an hour with him; I disarranged his furniture, the better to show to him the order of the assembly, and explained to him what was to be done, so that all might be carried to the Tuileries and erected in a very,

few moments. When I found I had made everything sufficiently clear, and he had understood me, I returned to the Palais Royal as though recollecting something, being already in the streets, to deceive my people.

Page 16

A servant awaited me at the top of the staircase, and the concierge of the Palais Royal at the door of M. le Duc d'Orleans' room, with orders to beg me to write. It was the sacred hour of the rouses and the supper, at which all idea of business was banished. I wrote, therefore, to the Regent in his winter cabinet what I had just done, not without some little indignation that he could not give up his pleasure for an affair of this importance. I was obliged to beg the concierge not to give my note to M. le Duc d'Orleans unless he were in a state to read it and to burn it afterwards.

Our preparations for the Bed of justice continued to be actively but silently made during the next few days. In the course of the numberless discussions which arose upon the subject, it was agreed, after much opposition on my part, to strike a blow, not only at the Parliament, but at M. du Maine, who had fomented its discontent. M. le Duc, who had been admitted to our councils, and who was heart and soul against the bastards, proposed that at the Bed of justice the education of the young King should be taken out of the control of M. du Maine and placed in his hands. He proposed also that the title of Prince of the Blood should be taken from him, with all the privileges it conferred, and that he should be reduced to the rank of a simple Duke and Peer, taking his place among the rest according to the date of his erection; thus, at a bound, going down to the bottom of the peerage!

Should these memoirs ever see the light, every one who reads them will be able to judge how such a proposition as this harmonised with my personal wishes. I had seen the bastards grow in rank and importance with an indignation and disgust I could scarcely contain. I had seen favour after favour heaped upon them by the late King, until he crowned all by elevating them to the rank of Princes of the Blood in defiance of all law, of all precedent, of all decency, if I must say the word. What I felt at this accumulation of honours I have more than once expressed; what I did to oppose such monstrous innovations has also been said. No man could be more against M. du Maine than I, and yet I opposed this proposition of M. le Duc because I thought one blow was enough at a time, and that it might be dangerous to attempt the two at once. M. du Maine had supporters, nay; he was at the head of a sort of party; strip him of the important post he held, and what might not his rake, his disappointment, and his wounded ambition lead him to attempt? Civil war, perhaps, would be the result of his disgrace.

Page 17

Again and again I urged these views, not only upon M. le Duc d'Orleans, but upon M. le Duc. Nay, with this latter I had two long stolen interviews in the Tuileries Gardens, where we spoke without constraint, and exhausted all our arguments. But M. le Duc was not to be shaken, and as I could do no more than I had done to move him, I was obliged at last to give in. It was resolved, however, that disgrace should fall upon M. du Maine alone; that his brother, the Comte de Toulouse, an account of the devotion to the State he had ever exhibited, and his excellent conduct since the death of the late King, should, when stripped of his title like the other, receive it back again the moment after, in acknowledgment of the services he had rendered to the Regent as Councillor of State, and as an expression of personal good feeling towards him, which his excellent qualities so justly merited.

I returned home from my last interview with M. le Duc, and went to mass at the Jacobins, to which I entered from my garden. It was not without a distracted mind. But I prayed to God sincerely and earnestly to guide my steps, so that I might labour for His glory and the good of the State without private ends. My prayer was heard, and in the sequel I had nothing to reproach myself with. I followed the straight road without turning to the right or to the left.

Fontanieu was waiting for me in my house as I returned home from mass, and I was obliged to listen to his questions and to reply to them, as though I had nothing on my mind. I arranged my chamber like a Bed of Justice, I made him understand several things; connected with the ceremonial that he had not understood before, and that it was essential he should in no way omit. Thus everything went on satisfactorily, and I began to count the hours, by day as well as by night, until the great day was to arrive on which the arrogant pride of the Parliament was to receive a check, and the false plumage which adorned the bastards was to be plucked from them.

In the midst of the sweet joy that I felt, no bitterness entered. I was satisfied with the part I had played in this affair, satisfied that I had acted sincerely, honestly, that I had not allowed my own private motives to sway me; that in the interests of the State, as opposed to my own interests, I had done all in my power to save the Duc du Maine. And yet I did not dare to give myself up to the rosy thoughts suggested by the great event, now so rapidly approaching. I toyed with them instead of allowing myself to embrace them. I shrunk from them as it were like a cold lover who fears the too ardent caresses of his mistress. I could not believe that the supreme happiness I had so long pined for was at last so near. Might not M. le Duc d'Orleans falter at the last moment? Might not all our preparations, so carefully conducted, so cleverly planned, weigh upon his feebleness until they fell to the ground? It was not improbable. He was often firm in promises. How often was he firm in carrying them out? All these questions, all these restless doubts— natural as it appears to me under the circumstances—winged their way through my mind, and kept me excited and feverish as though life and death were hanging on one thread.

Page 18

In the midst of my reflections, a messenger from M. le Duc d'Orleans, Millain by name, arrived at my house. It was on the afternoon of Thursday, the 25th of August, 1718. His message was simple. M. le Duc d'Orleans was in the same mood as ever, and I was to join him at the Palais Royal, according to previous agreement, at eight o'clock in the evening. The Bed of justice was to be held on the morrow.

Never was kiss given to a beautiful mistress sweeter than that which I imprinted upon the fat old face of this charming messenger! A close embrace, eagerly repeated, was my first reply, followed afterwards by an overflow of feeling for M. le Duc, and for Millain even, who had worthily served in this great undertaking.

The rest of the day I passed at home with the Abbe Dubois, Fagon, and the Duc de la Force, one after the other finishing up our work. We provided against everything: If the Parliament refused to come to the Tuileries, its interdiction was determined on: if any of the members attempted to leave Paris they were to be arrested; troops were to be assembled in order to carry out the Regent's orders; we left no accident without its remedy.

The Abbe Dubois arranged a little code of signals, such as crossing the legs, shaking a handkerchief, or other simple gestures, to be given the first thing in the morning to the officers of the body-guards chosen to be in attendance in the room where the Bed of Justice was to be held. They were to fix their eyes upon the Regent, and when he made any of the above signals, immediately to act upon it according to their written instructions. The Abbe Dubois also drew out a sort of programme for M. le Duc d'Orleans, of the different orders he was to give during the night, fixing the hour for each, so that they might not arrive a minute too soon or a minute too late, and secrecy thus be maintained to the very latest moment.

Towards eight o'clock in the evening I went to the Palais Royal. I was horror-struck to find M. le Duc d'Orleans in bed with fever, as he said; I felt his pulse. Fever, he had, sure enough; perhaps from excitement caused by the business in hand. I said to him it was only fatigue of body and mind, of which he would be quit in twenty-four hours; he, on his side, protested that whatever it might be, he would hold the Bed of justice on the morrow. M. le Duc, who had just entered, was at his pillow; the chamber lighted by a single wax candle. We sat down, M. le Duc and I, and passed in review the orders given and to give, not without much apprehension on account of this fever, come so strangely out of season to the healthiest man in the world, and who had never had it before.

Page 19

I exhorted the Regent to take as much repose as he could, so that he might be fully able to execute the great work of the morrow, the safety of the Regency itself being at stake. After this I felt his pulse again, not without fear. I assured him, however, his illness would be nothing; without, it is true, being too sure of it myself. I took my leave about ten o'clock, and went out of the room with Millain. When I found myself alone with him in the cabinet, through which we passed, I embraced him with an extreme pleasure. We had entered by the backstairs; we descended by the same, so as not to be observed. It was dark, so that on both occasions we were obliged to grope our way. Upon arriving at the bottom I could not refrain from again embracing Millain, so great was my pleasure, and we separated each to his home.

The arrangements respecting the troops and for summoning the Parliament, *etc.*, were all carried out to the letter during the night and early morning. At the hours agreed upon M. le Duc d'Orleans gave the various orders. About four o'clock in the morning the Duc du Maine, as colonel-general of the Swiss guards, was aroused. He had not been in bed above an hour, having just returned from a fete given at the arsenal by Madame du Maine. He was doubtless much astonished, but contained himself, hid his fear, and sent at once to instruct his companies of Swiss guards of the orders they were to execute. I don't think he slept very well after this, uncertain as he must have been what was going to happen. But I never knew what he or Madame du Maine did after being thus rudely disturbed.

Towards five o'clock in the morning drums began to be heard throughout the town, and soon soldiers were seen in movement. At six o'clock a message was sent to the Parliament requesting it to attend at the Tuileries. The reply was that the request should be obeyed. The members thereupon debated whether they should go to the Tuileries in coaches or on foot. The last mode was adopted as being the most ordinary, and in the hope of stirring the people and arriving at the Tuileries with a yelling crowd. What happened will be related in its place.

At the same time, horsemen went to all the Peers and officers of the Crown, and to all the chevaliers of the order, the governors and lieutenant-governors of the provinces (who were to accompany the King), informing them of the Bed of Justice. The Comte de Toulouse had been to supper at the house of M. de Nevers, near Saint-Denis, and did not return until late into the night. The French and Swiss guards were under arms in various quarters; the watch, the light horse, and the two companies of musketeers all ready in their barracks; the usual guard at the Tuileries.

If I had slept but little during the last eight days, I slept still less that night, so near to the most considerable events. I rose before six o'clock, and shortly after received my summons to the Bed of justice, on the back of which was a note that I was not to be awakened, a piece of politeness due to the knowledge of the bearer, who was aware that this summons would teach me nothing I did not know. All the others had been awakened, surprised thereby to an extent that may be imagined.

Page 20

Towards eight o'clock in the morning a messenger from M. le Duc d'Orleans came to remind me of the Regency Council at eight o'clock, and to attend it in my mantle. I dressed myself in black, because I had only that suit with a mantle, and another, a magnificent one in cloth of gold, which I did not wish to wear lest it should cause the remark to be made, though much out of season, that I wished to insult the Parliament and M. du Maine. I took two gentlemen with me in my coach, and I went in order to witness all that was to take place. I was at the same time full of fear, hope, joy, reflection, and mistrust of M. le Duc d'Orleans' weakness, and all that might result from it. I was also firmly resolved to do my best, whatever might happen, but without appearing to know anything, and without eagerness, and I resolved to show presence of mind, attention, circumspection, modesty, and much moderation.

Upon leaving my house I went to Valincourt, who lived behind the hotel of the Comte de Toulouse. He was a very honourable man, of much intellect, moving among the best company, secretary-general of the navy, devoted to the Comte de Toulouse ever since his early youth, and possessing all his confidence. I did not wish to leave the Comte de Toulouse in any personal fear, or expose him to be led away by his brother. I sent therefore for Valincourt, whom I knew intimately, to come and speak to me. He came half-dressed, terrified at the rumours flying over the town, and eagerly asked me what they all meant. I drew him close to me and said, "Listen attentively to me, and lose not a word. Go immediately to M. le Comte de Toulouse, tell him he may trust in my word, tell him to be discreet, and that things are about to happen to others which may displease him, but that not a hair of his head shall be touched. I hope he will not have a moment's uneasiness. Go! and lose not an instant."

Valincourt held me in a tight embrace. "Ah, Monsieur," said he, "we foresaw that at last there would be a storm. It is well merited, but not by M. le Comte, who will be eternally obliged to you." And, he went immediately with my message to the Comte de Toulouse, who never forgot that I saved him from the fall of his brother.

CHAPTER XCII

Arrived at the grand court of the Tuileries about eight o'clock without having remarked anything extraordinary on the way. The coaches of the Duc de Noailles, of Marechal de Villars, of Marechal d'Huxelles, and of some others were already there. I ascended without finding many people about, and directed the two doors of the Salle des Gardes, which were closed, to be opened. The Bed of justice was prepared in the grand antechamber, where the King was accustomed to eat. I stopped a short time to see if everything was in proper order, and felicitated Fontanieu in a low voice. He said to me in the same manner that he had arrived at

Page 21

the Tuileries with his workmen and materials at six o'clock in the morning; that everything was so well constructed and put up that the King had not heard a sound; that his chief valet de chambre, having left the room for some commission about seven o'clock in the morning, had been much astonished upon seeing this apparatus; that the Marechal de Villeroy had only heard of it through him, and that the seats had been erected with such little noise that nobody had heard anything. After having well examined everything with my eyes I advanced to the throne, then being finished; wishing to enter the second ante-chamber, some servants came to me, saying that I could not go in, all being locked up. I asked where I was to await the assembling of the Council, and was admitted to a room upstairs, where I found a good number of people already congregated.

After chatting some time with the Keeper of the Seals, the arrival of M. le Duc d'Orleans was announced. We finished what we had to say, and went downstairs separately, not wishing to be seen together.

The Council was held in a room which ever since the very hot weather the King had slept in. The hangings of his bed, and of the Marechal de Villeroy's were drawn back. The Council table was placed at the foot of one of the beds. Upon entering the adjoining chamber I found many people whom the first rumours of such an unexpected occurrence had no doubt led there, and among the rest some of the Council. M. le Duc d'Orleans was in the midst of a crowd at the end of the room, and, as I afterwards learned, had just seen the Duc du Maine without speaking to him, or being spoken to.

After a passing glance upon this crowd I entered the Council chamber. I found scattered there the majority of those who composed the Council with serious and troubled looks, which increased my seriousness. Scarcely anybody spoke; and each, standing or seated here and there, kept himself in his place. The better to examine all, I joined nobody. A moment after M. le Duc d'Orleans entered with a gay, easy, untroubled air, and looked smilingly upon the company. I considered this of good augury. Immediately afterwards I asked him his news. He replied aloud that he was tolerably well; then approaching my ear, added that, except when aroused to give his orders, he had slept very well, and that he was determined to hold firm. This infinitely pleased me, for it seemed to me by his manner that he was in earnest, and I briefly exhorted him to remain so.

Came, afterwards, M. le Duc, who pretty soon approached me, and asked if I augured well from the Regent, and if he would remain firm. M. le Duc had an air of exceeding gaiety, which was perceptible to those behind the scenes. The Duc de Noailles devoured everything with his eyes, which sparkled with anger because he had not been initiated into the secret of this great day.

Page 22

In due time M. du Maine appeared in his mantle, entering by the King's little door. Never before had he made so many or such profound reverences as he did now—though he was not usually very stingy of them— then standing alone, resting upon his stick near the Council table, he looked around at everybody. Then and there, being in front of him, with the table between us, I made him the most smiling bow I had ever given him, and did it with extreme volupty. He repaid me in the same coin, and continued to fix his eyes upon everybody in turn; his face agitated, and nearly always speaking to himself.

A few minutes after M. le Duc came to me, begging me to exhort M. le Duc d'Orleans to firmness: then the Keeper of the Seals came forth for the same purpose. M. le Duc d'Orleans himself approached me to say something a moment afterwards, and he had no sooner quitted my side than M. le Duc, impatient and troubled, came to know in what frame of mind was the Regent. I told him good in a monosyllable, and sent him away.

I know not if these movements, upon which all eyes were fixed, began to frighten the Duc du Maine, but no sooner had M. le Duc joined the Regent, after quitting me, than the Duc du Maine went to speak to the Marechal de Villeroy and to D'Effiat, both seated at the end of the room towards the King's little door, their backs to the wall. They did not rise for the Duc du Maine, who remained standing opposite, and quite near them, all three holding long discourses, like people who deliberate with embarrassment and surprise, as it appeared to me by the faces of the two I saw, and which I tried not to lose sight of.

During this time M. le Duc d'Orleans and M. le Duc spoke to each other near the window and the ordinary entrance door; the Keeper of the Seals, who was near, joined them. At this moment M. le Duc turned round a little, which gave me the opportunity to make signs to him of the other conference, which he immediately saw. I was alone, near the Council table, very attentive to everything, and the others scattered about began to become more so. A little while after the Duc du Maine placed himself where he had been previously: the two he quitted remained as before. M. du Maine was thus again in front of me, the table between us: I observed that he had a bewildered look, and that he spoke to himself more than ever.

The Comte de Toulouse arrived as the Regent had just quitted the two persons with whom he had been talking. The Comte de Toulouse was in his mantle, and saluted the company with a grave and meditative manner, neither accosting nor accosted: M. le Duc d'Orleans found himself in front of him and turned towards me, although at some distance, as though to testify his trouble. I bent my head a little while looking fixedly at him, as though to say, "Well, what then?"

A short time afterwards the Comte de Toulouse had a conversation with his brother, both speaking with agitation and without appearing to agree very well. Then the Count approached M. le Duc d'Orleans, who was talking again to M. le Duc, and they spoke at

some length to each other. As their faces were towards the wall, nothing but their backs could be seen, no emotion and scarcely a gesture was visible.

Page 23

The Duc du Maine had remained where he had spoken to his brother. He seemed half dead, looked askance upon the company with wandering eyes, and the troubled agitated manner of a criminal, or a man condemned to death. Shortly afterwards he became pale as a corpse, and appeared to me to have been taken ill.

He crawled to the end of the table, during which the Comte de Toulouse came and said a word to the Regent, and began to walk out of the room.

All these movements took place in a trice. The Regent, who was near the King's armchair, said aloud, "Now, gentlemen, let us take our places." Each approached to do so, and as I looked behind mine I saw the two brothers at the door as though about to leave the room. I leaped, so to speak, between the King's armchair and M. le Duc d'Orleans, and whispered in the Regent's ear so as not to be heard by the Prince de Conti:

"Monsieur, look at them. They are going."

"I know it," he replied tranquilly.

"Yes," I exclaimed with animation, "but do you know what they will do when they are outside."

"Nothing at all," said he: "the Comte de Toulouse has asked me for permission to go out with his brother; he has assured me that they will be discreet."

"And if they are not?" I asked.

"They will be. But if they are not, they will be well looked after."

"But if they commit some absurdity, or leave Paris?"

"They will be arrested. Orders have been given, and I will answer for their execution."

Therefore, more tranquil, I sat down in my place. Scarcely had I got there than the Regent called me back, and said that since they had left the room, he should like to tell the Council what was going to be done with respect to them. I replied that the only objection to this, their presence, being now removed—I thought it would be wrong not to do so. He asked M. le Duc in a whisper, across the table, afterwards called to the Keeper of the Seals; both agreed, and then we really seated ourselves.

These movements had augmented the trouble and curiosity of every one. The eyes of all, occupied with the Regent, had been removed from the door, so that the absence of the bastards was by no means generally remarked. As soon as it was perceived, everybody looked inquiringly around, and remained standing in expectation. I sat down in the seat of the Comte de Toulouse. The Duc de Guiche, who sat on the other side of



me, left a seat between us, and still waited for the bastards. He told me to approach nearer to him, saying I had mistaken my place. I replied not a word, looking on at the company, which was a sight to see. At the second or third summons, I replied that he, on the contrary, must approach me.

“And M. le Comte de Toulouse?” replied he.

“Approach,” said I, and seeing him motionless with astonishment, looking towards the Duc du Maine’s seat, which had been taken by the Keeper of the Seals, I pulled him by his coat (I was seated), saying to him, “Come here and sit down.”

Page 24

I pulled him so hard that he seated himself near me without understanding aught.

"But what is the meaning of all this?" he demanded; "where are these gentlemen?"

"I don't know," replied I, impatiently; "but they are not here."

At the same time, the Duc de Noailles, who sat next to the Duc de Guiche, and who, enraged at counting for nothing in preparations for such a great day, had apparently divined that I was in the plot, vanquished by his curiosity, stretched over the table in front of the Duc de Guiche, and said to me:

"In the name of Heaven, M. le Duc, do me the favour to say what all this means?"

I was at daggers-drawn with him, as I have explained, and had no mercy for him. I turned, therefore, towards him with a cold and disdainful air, and, after having heard him out, and looked at him, I turned away again. That was all my reply. The Duc de Guiche pressed me to say something, even if it was only that I knew all. I denied it, and yet each seated himself slowly, because intent only upon looking around, and divining what all this could mean, and because it was a long time before any one could comprehend that we must proceed to business without the bastards, although nobody opened his mouth.

When everybody was in his place M. le Duc d'Orleans after having for a moment looked all around, every eye fixed upon him, said that he had assembled this Regency Council to hear read the resolutions adopted at the last; that he had come to the conclusion that there was no other means of obtaining the registration of the finance edict recently passed than that of holding a Bed of justice; that the heat rendering it unadvisable to jeopardise the King's health in the midst of the crowd of the Palais de justice, he had thought it best to follow the example of the late King, who had sometimes sent for the Parliament to the Tuileries; that, as it had become necessary to hold this Bed of justice, he had thought it right to profit by the occasion, and register the 'lettres de provision' of the Keeper of the Seals at the commencement of the sitting; and he ordered the Keeper of the Seals to read them.

During this reading, which had no other importance than to seize an occasion of forcing the Parliament to recognize the Keeper of the Seals, whose person and whose commission they hated, I occupied myself in examining the faces.

I saw M. le Duc d'Orleans with an air of authority and of attention, so new that I was struck with it. M. le Duc, gay and brilliant, appeared quite at his ease, and confident. The Prince de Conti, astonished, absent, meditative, seemed to see nothing and to take part in nothing. The Keeper of the Seals, grave and pensive, appeared to have too many things in his head; nevertheless, with bag, wax, and seals near him, he looked

very decided and very firm. The Duc de la Force hung his head, but examined on the sly the faces of us all. Marechal Villeroy and Marechal

Page 25

de Villars spoke to each other now and then; both had irritated eyes and long faces. Nobody was more composed than the Marechal de Tallard; but he could not hide an internal agitation which often peeped out. The Marechal d'Estrees had a stupefied air, as though he saw nothing but a mist before him. The Marechal de Besons, enveloped more than ordinarily in his big wig, appeared deeply meditative, his look cast down and angry. Pelletier, very buoyant, simple, curious, looking at everything. Torcy, three times more starched than usual, seemed to look at everything by stealth. Effiat, meddlesome, piqued, outraged, ready to boil over, fuming at everybody, his look haggard, as it passed precipitously, and by fits and starts, from side to side. Those on my side I could not well examine; I saw them only by moments as they changed their postures or I mine; and then not well or for long. I have already spoken of the astonishment of the Duc de Guiche, and of the vexation and curiosity of the Duc de Noailles. D'Antin, usually of such easy carriage, appeared to me as though in fetters, and quite scared. The Marechal d'Huxelles tried to put a good face on the matter, but could not hide the despair which pierced him. Old Troyes, all abroad, showed nothing but surprise and embarrassment, and did not appear to know where he was.

From the first moment of this reading and the departure of the bastards, everybody saw that something was in preparation against them. What that something was to be, kept every mind in suspense. A Bed of justice, too, prepared in secret, ready as soon as announced, indicated a strong resolution taken against the Parliament, and indicated also so much firmness and measure in a Prince, usually supposed to be entirely incapable of any, that every one was at sea. All, according as they were allied to the Parliament or to the bastards, seemed to wait in fear what was to be proposed. Many others appeared deeply wounded because the Regent had not admitted them behind the scenes, and because they were compelled to share the common surprise. Never were faces so universally elongated; never was embarrassment more general or more marked. In these first moments of trouble I fancy few people lent an ear to the letters the Keeper of the Seals was reading. When they were finished, M. le Duc d'Orleans said he did not think it was worth while to take the votes one by one, either upon the contents of these letters or their registration; but that all would be in favour of commencing the Bed of justice at once.

After a short but marked pause, the Regent developed, in few words, the reasons which had induced the Council at its last sitting, to abrogate the decree of the Parliament. He added, that judging by the conduct of that assembly, it would have been to jeopardise anew the King's authority, to send for registration this act of abrogation to the Parliament, which would assuredly have given in public a proof of formal disobedience,

Page 26

in refusing to register; that there being no other remedy than a Bed of justice, he had thought it best to assemble one, but in secret, so as not to give time or opportunity to the ill-disposed to prepare for disobedience; that he believed, with the Keeper of the Seals, the frequency and the manner of the parliamentary remonstrances were such that the Parliament must be made to keep within the limits of its duty, which, long since, it seemed to have lost sight of; that the Keeper of the Seals would now read to the Council the act of abrogation, and the rules that were to be observed in future. Then, looking at the Keeper of the Seals, "Monsieur," said he, "you will explain this better than I. Have the goodness to do so before reading the decree."

The Keeper of the Seals then spoke, and paraphrased what his Royal Highness had said more briefly; he explained in what manner the Parliament had the right to remonstrate, showed the distinction between its power and that of the Crown; the incompetence of the tribunals in all matters of state and finance; and the necessity of repressing the remonstrances of Parliament by passing a code (that was the term used), which was to serve as their inviolable guide. All this explained without lengthiness, with grace and clearness, he began to read the decree, as it has since been printed and circulated everywhere, some trifling alteration excepted.

The reading finished, the Regent, contrary to his custom, showed his opinion by the praises he gave to this document: and then, assuming the Regent's tone and air he had never before put on, and which completed the astonishment of the company, he added, "To-day, gentlemen, I shall deviate from the usual rule in taking your votes, and I think it will be well to do so during all this Council."

Then after a slight glance upon both sides of the table, during which you might have heard a worm crawl, he turned towards M. le Duc and asked him his opinion. M. le Duc declared for the decree, alleging several short but strong reasons. The Prince de Conti spoke in the same sense. I spoke after, for the Keeper of the Seals had done so directly his reading was finished. My opinion was given in more general terms so as not to fall too heavily upon the Parliament, or to show that I arrogated to myself the right to support his Royal Highness in the same manner as a prince of the blood. The Duc de la Force was longer. All spoke, but the majority said but little, and some allowed their vexation to be seen, but did not dare to oppose, feeling that it would be of no use. Dejection was painted upon their faces; it was evident this affair, of the Parliament was not what they expected or wished. Tallard was the only one whose face did not betray him; but the suffocated monosyllable of the Marechal d'Huxelles tore off the rest of the mask. The Duc de Noailles could scarcely contain himself, and spoke more than he wished, with anguish worthy of Fresnes. M. le Duc d'Orleans spoke last, and with unusual force; then made a pause, piercing all the company with his eyes.

Page 27

At this moment the Marechal de Villeroy, full of his own thoughts, muttered between his teeth, "But will the Parliament come?" This was gently taken up. M. le Duc d'Orleans replied that he did not doubt it; and immediately afterwards, that it would be as well to know when they set out. The Keeper of the Seals said he should be informed. M. le Duc d'Orleans replied that the door-keepers must be told. Thereupon up jumps M. de Troyes.

I was seized with such a sudden fear lest he should go and chatter at the door with some one that I jumped up also, and got the start of him. As I returned, D'Antin, who had turned round to lay wait for me, begged me for mercy's sake to tell him what all this meant. I sped on saying that I knew nothing. "Tell that to others! Ho, ho!" replied he. When he had resumed his seat, M. le Duc d'Orleans said something, I don't know what, M. de Troyes still standing, I also. In passing La Vrilliere, I asked him to go to the door every time anything was wanted, for fear of the babbling of M. de Troyes; adding, that distant as I was from the door, going there looked too peculiar. La Vrilliere did as I begged him all the rest of the sitting.

As I was returning to my place, D'Antin, still in ambush, begged me in the name of heaven, his hands joined, to tell him something. I kept firm, however, saying, "You will see." The Duc de Guiche pressed me as resolutely, even saying, it was evident I was in the plot. I remained deaf.

These little movements over, M. le Duc d'Orleans, rising a little in his seat, said to the company, in a tone more firm, and more like that of a master than before, that there was another matter now to attend to, much more important than the one just heard. This prelude increased the general astonishment, and rendered everybody motionless. After a moment of silence the Regent said, that the peers had had for some time good grounds of complaint against certain persons, who by unaccustomed favour, had been allowed to assume rank and dignity to which their birth did not entitle them; that it was time this irregularity should be stopped short, and that with this view, an instrument had been drawn up, which the Keeper of the Seals would read to them.

A profound silence followed this discourse, so unexpected, and which began to explain the absence of the bastards. Upon many visages a sombre hue was painted. As for me I had enough to do to compose my, own visage, upon which all eyes successively passed; I had put upon it an extra coat of gravity and of modesty; I steered my eyes with care, and only looked horizontally at most, not an inch higher. As soon as the Regent opened his mouth on this business, M. le Duc cast upon me a triumphant look which almost routed my seriousness, and which warned me to increase it, and no longer expose myself to meet his glance. Contained in this manner, attentive in devouring the aspect of all, alive to everything and to myself, motionless,

Page 28

glued to my chair, all my body fixed, penetrated with the most acute and most sensible pleasure that joy could impart, with the most charming anxiety, with an enjoyment, so perseveringly and so immoderately hoped for, I sweated with agony at the captivity of my transport, and this agony was of a voluptuousness such as I had never felt before, such as I have never felt since. How inferior are the pleasures of the senses to those of the mind! and how true it is that the balance-weight of misfortunes, is the good fortune that finishes them!

A moment after the Regent had ceased speaking, he told the Keeper of the Seals to read the declaration. During the reading, which was more than music to my ears, my attention was again fixed on the company. I saw by the alteration of the faces what an immense effect this document, which embodied the resolutions I have already explained, produced upon some of our friends. The whole of the reading was listened to with the utmost attention, and the utmost emotion.

When it was finished, M. le Duc d'Orleans said he was very sorry for this necessity, but that justice must be done to the peers as well as to the princes of the blood: then turning to the Keeper of the Seals asked him for his opinion.

This latter spoke briefly and well; but was like a dog running over hot ashes. He declared for the declaration. His Royal Highness then called upon M. le Duc for his opinion. It was short, but nervous, and polite to the peers. M. le Prince de Conti the same. Then the Regent asked me my opinion. I made, contrary to my custom, a profound inclination, but without rising, and said, that having the honour to find myself the eldest of the peers of the Council, I offered to his Royal Highness my very humble thanks and those of all the peers of France, for the justice so ardently desired, and touching so closely our dignity and our persons, that he had resolved to render us; that I begged him to be persuaded of our gratitude, and to count upon our utmost attachment to his person for an act of equity so longed for, and so complete; that in this sincere expression of our sentiments consisted all our opinion, because, being pleaders, we could not be judges also. I terminated these few words with a profound inclination, without rising, imitated by the Duc de la Force at the same moment; all the rest of the Council briefly gave their opinions, approving what the majority of them evidently did not approve at all.

I had tried to modulate my voice, so that it should be just heard and no more, preferring to be indistinct rather than speak too loudly; and confined all my person to express as much as possible, gravity, modesty, and simple gratitude. M. le Duc maliciously made signs to me in smiling, that I had spoken well. But I kept my seriousness, and turned round to examine all the rest.

It would be impossible to describe the aspect of the company. Nothing was seen but people, oppressed with surprise that overwhelmed them, meditative, agitated, some irritated, some but ill at ease, like La Force and Guiche, who freely admitted so to me.

Page 29

The opinions taken almost as soon as demanded, M. le Duc d'Orleans said, "Gentlemen, it is finished, then justice is done, and the rights of Messieurs the Peers are in safety. I have now an act of grace to propose to you, and I do so with all the more confidence, because I have taken care to consult the parties interested, who support me; and because, I have drawn up the document in a manner to wound no one. What I am going to explain to you, regards the Comte de Toulouse alone.

"Nobody is ignorant how he has disapproved all that has been done in favour of him and his brother, and that he has sustained it since the regency only out of respect for the wishes of the late King. Everybody knows also his virtue, his merit, his application, his probity, his disinterestedness. Nevertheless, I could not avoid including him in the declaration you have just heard. Justice furnishes no exception in his favour, and the rights of the Peers must be assured. Now that they are no longer attacked, I have thought fitly to render to merit what from equity I have taken from birth; and to make an exception of M. le Comte de Toulouse, which (while confirming the rule), will leave him in full possession of all the honours he enjoys to the exclusion of every other. Those honours are not to pass to his children, should he marry and have any, or their restitution be considered as a precedent to be made use of at any future time.

"I have the pleasure to announce that the Princes of the Blood consent to this, and that such of the Peers to whom I have been able to explain myself, share my sentiments. I doubt not that the esteem he has acquired here will render this proposition agreeable to you." And then turning to the Keeper of the Seals, "Monsieur, will you read the declaration?"

It was read at once.

I had, during the discourse of his Royal Highness, thrown all my attention into an examination of the impression it made upon the assembly. The astonishment it caused was general; it was such, that to judge of those addressed, it seemed that they understood nothing; and they did not recover themselves during all the reading. I inwardly rejoiced at success so pleasingly demonstrated and did not receive too well the Duc de Guiche, who testified to me his disapprobation. Villeroy confounded, Villars raging, Effiat rolling his eyes, Estrees beside himself with surprise, were the most marked. Tallard, with his head stretched forward, sucked in, so to speak, all the Regent's words as they were proffered, and those of the declaration, as the Keeper of the Seals read them. Noailles, inwardly distracted, could not hide his distraction; Huxelles, entirely occupied in smoothing himself, forgot to frown. I divided my attention between the declaration and these persons.

Page 30

The document read, M. le Duc d'Orleans praised it in two words, and called upon the Keeper of the Seals to give his opinion. He did so briefly, in favour of the Comte de Toulouse. M. le Duc the same; M. le Prince de Conti the same. After him, I testified to his Royal Highness my joy at seeing him conciliate the justice and the safety of the peers with the unheard-of favour he had just rendered to the virtue of M. le Comte de Toulouse, who merited it by his moderation, his truthfulness, his attachment to the State; thus the more he had recognised the injustice of his elevation to the rank to which he was raised, the more he had rendered himself worthy of it, and the more it was advantageous to the peers to yield to merit, (when this exception was confined solely to his person, with formal and legal precautions, so abundantly supplied by the declaration) and voluntarily contribute thus to an elevation without example, (so much the more flattering because its only foundation was virtue), so as to incite that virtue more and more to the service and utility of the state; that I declared therefore with joy for the declaration, and did not fear to add the very humble thanks of the peers, since I had the honour to be the oldest present.

As I closed my mouth I cast my eyes in front of some, and plainly saw that my applause did not please, and, perhaps, my thanks still less. The others gave their opinion with heavy heart, as it were, to so terrible a blow, some few muttered I know not what between their teeth, but the thunderbolt upon the Duc du Maine's cabal was more and more felt, and as reflection succeeded to the first feeling of surprise, so a bitter and sharp grief manifested itself upon their faces in so marked a manner, that it was easy to see it had become high time to strike.

All opinions having been expressed, M. le Duc cast a brilliant leer at me, and prepared to speak; but the Keeper of the Seals, who, from his side of the table did not see this movement, wishing also to say something, M. le Duc d'Orleans intimated to him that M. le Duc had the start of him. Raising himself majestically from his seat, the Regent then said: "Gentlemen, M. le Duc has a proposition to make to you. I have found it just and reasonable; I doubt not, you will find it so too." Then turning towards M. le Duc, he added, "Monsieur, will you explain it?"

The movement these few words made among the company is inexpressible. 'Twas as though I saw before me people deprived of all power, and surprised by a new assembly rising up from the midst of them in an asylum they had breathlessly reached.

Page 31

"Monsieur," said M. le Duc, addressing himself to the Regent, as usual; "since you have rendered justice to the Dukes, I think I am justified in asking for it myself. The deceased King gave the education of his Majesty to M. le Duc du Maine. I was a minor then, and according to the idea of the deceased King, M. du Maine was prince of the blood, capable of succeeding to the crown. Now I am of age, and not only M. du Maine is no longer prince of the blood, but he is reduced to the rank of his peerage. M. le Marechal de Villeroy is now his senior, and precedes him everywhere; M. le Marechal can therefore no longer remain governor of the King, under the superintendence of M. du Maine. I ask you, then, for M. du Maine's post, that I think my age, my rank, my attachment to the King and the State, qualify me for. I hope," he added, turning towards his left, "that I shall profit by the lessons of M. le Marechal de Villeroy, acquit myself of my duties with distinction, and merit his friendship."

At this discourse the Marechal de Villeroy almost slipped off his chair. As soon, at least, as he heard the Words, "Superintendence of the King's education," he rested his forehead upon his stick, and remained several moments in that posture. He appeared even to understand nothing of the rest of the speech. Villars and D'Effiat bent their backs like people who had received the last blow. I could see nobody on my own side except the Duc de Guiche, who approved through all his prodigious astonishment. Estrees became master of himself the first, shook himself, brightened up, and looked at the company like a man who returns from the other world.

As soon as M. le Duc had finished, M. le Duc d'Orleans reviewed all the company with his eyes, and then said, that the request of M. le Duc was just; that he did not think it could be refused; that M. le Marechal de Villeroy could not be allowed to remain under a person whom he preceded in rank; that the superintendence of the King's education could not be more worthily filled than by M. le Duc; and that he was persuaded all would be of one voice in this matter. Immediately afterwards, he asked M. le Prince de Conti to give his opinion, who did so in two words; then he asked the Keeper of the Seals, whose reply was equally brief; then he asked me.

I simply said, looking at M. le Duc, that I was for the change with all my heart. The rest, M. de la Force excepted (who said a single word), voted without speaking, simply bowing; the Marshals and D'Effiat scarcely moved their eyes, and those of Villars glistened with fury.

The opinions taken, the Regent turning towards M. le Duc, said, "Monsieur, I think you would like to read what you intend to say to the King at the Bed of Justice."

Therefore M. le Duc read it as it has been printed. Some moments of sad and profound silence succeeded this reading, during which the Marechal de Villeroy, pale and agitated, muttered to himself. At last, like a man who has made up his mind, he turned with bended head, expiring eyes, and feeble voice, towards the Regent, and said, "I will

simply say these two words; here are all the dispositions of the late king overturned, I cannot see it without grief. M. du Maine is very unfortunate.”

Page 32

"Monsieur," replied the Regent, in a loud and animated tone, "M. du Maine is my brother-in-law, but I prefer an open enemy to a hidden one."

At this great declaration several lowered their heads. The Marechal de Villeroy nearly swooned; sighs began to make themselves heard near me, as though by stealth; everybody felt by this that the scabbard was thrown away.

The Keeper of the Seals, to make a diversion; proposed to read the speech he had prepared to serve as preface to the decree to be read at the Bed of justice, abrogating the Parliament decrees; as he was finishing it, some one entered to say he was asked for at the door.

He went out, returning immediately afterwards, not to his place, but to M. le Duc d'Orleans, whom he took into a window, meditative silence reigning around. The Regent having returned back to his place, said to the company, he had received information that the Chief-President of the Parliament, notwithstanding the reply previously made, had proposed that the Parliament should not go to the Tuileries, asking, "What it was to do in a place where it would not be free?" that he had proposed to send a message to the King, stating that "his Parliament would hear his wishes in their ordinary place of meeting, whenever it should please him to come or to send." The Regent added that these propositions had made considerable sensation, and that the Parliament were at that moment debating upon them. The Council appeared much astounded at this news, but M. le Duc d'Orleans said, in a very composed manner, that he did not expect a refusal; he ordered the Keeper of the Seals, nevertheless, to propose such measures as it would be best to take, supposing the motion of the Chief-President should be carried.

The Keeper of the Seals declared that he could not believe the Parliament would be guilty of this disobedience, contrary to all law and usage. He showed at some length that nothing was so pernicious as to expose the King's authority to a formal opposition, and decided in favour of the immediate interdiction of the Parliament if it fell into this fault. M. le Duc d'Orleans added that there was no other course open, and took the opinion of M. le Duc, which was strongly in his favour. M. le Prince de Conti the same, mine also, that of M. de la Force and of M. de Guiche still more so. The Marechal de Villeroy, in a broken voice, seeking big words, which would not come in time to him, deplored this extremity, and did all he could to avoid giving a precise opinion. Forced at last by the Regent to explain himself, he did not dare to oppose, but added that he assented with regret, and wished to explain the grievous results of the proposed measure. But the Regent, interrupting him, said he need not take the trouble: everything had been foreseen; that it would be much more grievous to be disobeyed by the Parliament than to force it into obedience; and immediately after asked the Duc de Noailles his

Page 33

opinion, who replied that it would be very sad to act thus, but that he was for it. Villars wished to paraphrase, but contained himself, and said he hoped the Parliament would obey. Pressed by the Regent, he proposed to wait for fresh news before deciding; but, pressed more closely, he declared for the interdiction, with an air of warmth and vexation, extremely marked. Nobody after this dared to hesitate, and the majority voted by an inclination of the head.

A short time afterwards it was announced to M. le Duc d'Orleans that the Parliament had set out on foot, and had begun to defile through the palace. This news much cooled the blood of the company, M. le Duc d'Orleans more than that of any one else.

After this the Regent, in a cheerful manner, called upon the Presidents of the Councils to bring forward any business they might have on hand, but not one had any. The Marechal de Villars said, however, that he had a matter to produce, and he produced it accordingly, but with a clearness which, under the circumstances, was extraordinary. I fancy, however, that very few knew what he was talking about. We were all too much occupied with more interesting matters, and each voted without speaking. Bad luck to those who had had business to bring forward this day; they who conducted it would have known but little what they said: they who listened, still less.

The Council finished thus, from lack of matter, and a movement was made to adjourn it as usual. I stepped in front of M. le Prince de Conti to M. le Duc d'Orleans, who understood me, and who begged the company to keep their seats. La Vrilliere went out by order for news, but there was nothing fresh.

CHAPTER XCIII

It was now a little after ten. We remained a good half-hour in our places, talking a little with each other, but on the whole rather silent. At the end some grew fidgety and anxious, rose and went to the windows. M. le Duc d'Orleans restrained them as well as he could; but at length Desgranges entered to say that the Chief-President had already arrived, in his coach, and that the Parliament was near. So soon as he had retired, the Council rose by groups, and could no longer be kept seated. M. le Duc d'Orleans himself at last rose, and all he could do was to prohibit everybody from leaving the room under any pretext, and this prohibition he repeated two or three times.

Scarcely had we risen when M. le Duc came to me, rejoiced at the success that had hitherto been had, and much relieved by the absence of the bastards. Soon after I quitted him the Duc d'Orleans came to me, overpowered with the same sentiment. I said what I thought of the consternation of every one; and painted the expression of M. d'Effiat, at which he was not surprised. He was more so about Besons. I asked if he

was not afraid the bastards would come to the Bed of justice; but he was certain they would not. I was resolved, however, to prepare his mind against that contingency.

Page 34

I walked about, slowly and incessantly without fixing myself on any one, in order that nothing should escape me, principally attending to the doors. I took advantage of the opportunity to say a word here and a word there, to pass continually near those who were suspected, to skim and interrupt all conversations. D'Antin was often joined by the Duc de Noailles, who had resumed his habit of the morning, and continually followed me with his eyes. He had an air of consternation, was agitated and embarrassed in countenance—he commonly so free and easy! D'Antin took me aside to see whether he could not, considering his position, be excused from attending the Bed of Justice. He received permission from the Regent on certain conditions.

I went then to break in upon the colloquy of D'Effiat and his friends, and taking them by surprise, caused D'Effiat to say that he had just heard strange resolutions, that he did not know who had advised them, that he prayed that M. d'Orleans would find them advantageous. I replied, agreeing with him. The Marechal de Villeroy sighed, muttered, and shook his wig, Villars spoke more at length, and blamed sharply what had been done. I assented to everything, being there not to persuade but to watch.

Nevertheless we grew weary of the slowness of the Parliament, and often sent out for news. Several of the Council tried to leave the room, perhaps to blab, but the Regent would allow no one but La Vrilliere to go out, and seeing that the desire to leave increased, stood at the door himself. I suggested to him that Madame d'Orleans would be in a great state of uneasiness, and suggested that he should write to her; but he could not be persuaded to do it, though he promised.

At last the Parliament arrived, and behold us! like children, all at the windows. The members came in red robes, two by two, by the grand door of the court, which they passed in order to reach the Hall of the Ambassadors, where the Chief-President, who had come in his carriage with the president Haligre, awaited them.

The Parliament being in its place, the peers having arrived, and the presidents having put on their furs behind the screens arranged for that purpose in an adjoining room, a messenger came to inform us that all was ready. The question had been agitated, whether the King should dine meanwhile, and I had it carried in the negative, fearing lest coming immediately after to the Bed of justice, and having eaten before his usual hour, he might be ill, which would have been a grievous inconvenience. As soon as it was announced to the Regent that we could set out, his Royal Highness sent word to the Parliament, to prepare the deputation to receive the King; and then said aloud to the company, that it was time to go in search of his Majesty.

Page 35

At these words I felt a storm of joy sweep over me, at the thought of the grand spectacle that was going to pass in my presence, which warned me to be doubly on my guard. I tried to furnish myself with the strongest dose of seriousness, gravity, and modesty. I followed M. le Duc d'Orleans, who entered the King's room by the little door, and who found the King in his cabinet. On the way the Duc d'Albret made me some very marked compliments, with evident desire to discover something. I put him off with politeness, complaints of the crowd, of the annoyance of my dress, and gained thus the King's cabinet.

The King was dressed as usual. When the Duc d'Orleans had been a few moments with him, he asked him if he would be pleased to go: and the way was instantly' cleared, a procession formed, and the King moved towards the Hall of the Swiss Guard.

I now hastened to the chamber, where the Bed of justice was to be held. The passage to it was tolerably free. The officers of the body-guard made place for me and for the Duc de la Force, and Marechal de Villars, who followed me, one by one. I stopped a moment in the passage at the entrance to the room, seized with joy upon seeing this grand spectacle, and at the thought of the grand movement that was drawing nigh, I needed a pause in order to recover myself sufficiently to see distinctly what I looked at, and to put on a new coat of seriousness and of modesty. I fully expected I should be well examined by a company which had been carefully taught not to like me, and by the curious spectators waiting to see what was to be hatched out of so profound a secret, in such an important assembly, summoned so hastily. Moreover, nobody was ignorant that I knew all, at least from the Council of the Regency I had just left.

I did not deceive myself. As soon as I appeared, all eyes were fixed upon me. I slowly advanced towards the chief greffier, and introducing myself between the two seats, I traversed the length of the room, in front of the King's people, who saluted me with a smiling air, and I ascended over three rows of high seats, where all the peers were in their places, and who rose as I approached the steps. I respectfully saluted them from the third row.

Seated in my elevated place, and with nothing before me, I was able to glance over the whole assembly. I did so at once, piercing everybody with my eyes. One thing alone restrained me; it was that I did not dare to fix my eyes upon certain objects. I feared the fire and brilliant significance of my looks at that moment so appreciated by everybody: and the more I saw I attracted attention, the more anxious was I to wean curiosity by my discreetness. I cast, nevertheless, a glittering glance upon the Chief-President and his friends, for the examination of whom I was admirably placed. I carried my looks over all the Parliament, and saw there an astonishment, a silence, a consternation, such as I had not expected,

Page 36

and which was of good augury to me. The Chief-President, insolently crest-fallen, the other presidents disconcerted, and attentive to all, furnished me the most agreeable spectacle. The simply curious (among which I rank those who had no vote) appeared to me not less surprised (but without the bewilderment of the others), calmly surprised; in a word, everybody showed much expectation and desire to divine what had passed at the Council.

I had but little leisure for this examination, for the King immediately arrived. The hubbub which followed his entrance, and which lasted until his Majesty and all who accompanied him were in their places, was another singularity. Everybody sought to penetrate the Regent, the Keeper of the Seals, and the principal personages. The departure of the bastards from the cabinet of the Council had redoubled attention, but everybody did not know of that departure; now everybody perceived their absence. The consternation of the Marechals—of their senior—(the governor of the King) was evident. It augmented the dejection of the Chief-President, who not seeing his master the Duc du Maine, cast a terrible glance upon M. de Sully and me, who exactly occupied the places of the two brothers. In an instant all the eyes of the assembly were cast, at the same time, upon us; and I remarked that the meditateness and expectation increased in every face. That of the Regent had an air of gentle but resolute majesty completely new to it, his eyes attentive, his deportment grave, but easy. M. le Duc, sage, measured, but encircled by I know not what brilliancy, which adorned all his person and which was evidently kept down. M. le Prince de Conti appeared dull, pensive, his mind far away perhaps. I was not able during the sitting to see them except now and then, and under pretext of looking at the King, who was serious, majestic, and at the same time as pretty as can be imagined; grave, with grace in all his bearing, his air attentive, and not at all wearied, playing his part very well and without embarrassment.

When all was ready, Argenson, the Keeper of the Seals, remained some minutes at his desk motionless, looking down, and the fire which sprang from his eyes seemed to burn every breast. An extreme silence eloquently announced the fear, the attention, the trouble, and the curiosity of all the expectants. The Parliament, which under the deceased King had often summoned this same Argenson, and as lieutenant of police had often given him its orders, he standing uncovered at the bar of the house; the Parliament, which since the regency had displayed its ill-will towards him so far as to excite public remark, and which still detained prisoners and papers to vex him; this Chief President so superior to him, so haughty, so proud of his Duc du Maine; this Lamoignon, who had boasted he would have him hanged at his Chamber of justice, where he had so completely dishonoured himself: this Parliament

Page 37

and all saw him clad in the ornaments of the chief office of the robe, presiding over them, effacing them, and entering upon his functions to teach them their duty, to read them a public lesson the first time he found himself at their head! These vain presidents were seen turning their looks from a man who imposed so strongly upon their pride, and who annihilated their arrogance in the place even whence they drew it, and rendered them stupid by regards they could not sustain.

After the Keeper of the Seals (according to the manner of the preachers) had accustomed himself to this august audience, he uncovered himself, rose, mounted to the King, knelt before the steps of the throne, by the side of the middle of the steps, where the grand chamberlain was lying upon cushions, and took the King's orders, descended, placed himself in his chair and covered himself. Let us say it once for all, he performed the same ceremony at the commencement of each business, and likewise before and after taking the opinion upon each; at the bar of justice neither he nor the chamberlain ever speaks otherwise to the King; and every time he went to the King on this occasion the Regent rose and approached him to hear and suggest the orders. Having returned back into his place, he opened, after some moments of silence, this great scene by a discourse. The report of the Bed of justice, made by the Parliament and printed, which is in the hands of everybody, renders it unnecessary for me to give the discourse of the Keeper of the Seals, that of the Chief-President, those of the King's people, and the different papers that were read and registered. I will simply content myself with some observations. This first discourse, the reading of the letters of the Keeper of the Seals, and the speech of the Advocate-General Blancmesnil which followed, the opinions taken, the order given, sometimes reiterated to keep the two double doors open, did not surprise anybody; served only as the preface to all the rest; to sharpen curiosity more and more as the moment approached in which it was to be satisfied.

This first act finished, the second was announced by the discourse of the Keeper of the Seals, the force of which penetrated all the Parliament. General consternation spread itself over their faces. Scarcely one of the members dared to speak to his neighbour. I remarked that the Abbe Pucelle, who, although only counsellor-clerk, was upon the forms in front of me, stood, so that he might hear better every time the Keeper of the Seals spoke. Bitter grief, obviously full of vexation, obscured the visage of the Chief-President. Shame and confusion were painted there.

Page 38

After the vote, and when the Keeper of the Seals had pronounced, I saw the principal members of the Parliament in commotion. The Chief-President was about to speak. He did so by uttering the remonstrance of the Parliament, full of the most subtle and impudent malice against the Regent, and of insolence against the King. The villain trembled, nevertheless, in pronouncing it. His voice broken, his eyes constrained, his flurry and confusion, contradicted the venomous words he uttered; libations he could not abstain from offering to himself and his company. This was the moment when I relished, with delight utterly impossible to express, the sight of these haughty lawyers (who had dared to refuse us the salutation), prostrated upon their knees, and rendering, at our feet, homage to the throne, whilst we sat covered upon elevated seats, at the side of that same throne. These situations and these postures, so widely disproportioned, plead of themselves with all the force of evidence, the cause of those who are really and truly 'laterales regis' against this 'vas electum' of the third estate. My eyes fixed, glued, upon these haughty bourgeois, with their uncovered heads humiliated to the level of our feet, traversed the chief members kneeling or standing, and the ample folds of those fur robes of rabbit-skin that would imitate ermine, which waved at each long and redoubled genuflexion; genuflexions which only finished by command of the King.

The remonstrance being finished, the Keeper of the Seals mentioned to the King their wishes, asking further opinions; took his place again; cast his eyes on the Chief-President, and said: The King wishes to be obeyed, and obeyed immediately.

This grand speech was a thunder-bolt which overturned councillors and presidents in the most marked manner. All of them lowered their heads, and the majority kept them lowered for a long time. The rest of the spectators, except the marshals of France, appeared little affected by this desolation.

But this—an ordinary triumph—was nothing to that which was to follow. After an interval of some few minutes, the Keeper of the Seals went up again to the King, returned to his place, and remained there in silence some little time. Then everybody clearly saw that the Parliamentary affair being finished, something else must be in the wind. Some thought that a dispute which the Dukes had had with the Parliament, concerning one of its usurpations, was now to be settled in our favour. Others who had noticed the absence of the bastards, guessed it was something that affected them; but nobody divined what, much less its extent.

Page 39

At last the Keeper of the Seals opened his mouth, and in his first sentence announced the fall of one brother and the preservation of the other. The effect of this upon every one was inexpressible. However occupied I might be in containing mine, I lost nothing. Astonishment prevailed over every other sentiment. Many appeared glad, either from hatred to the Duc du Maine, or from affection for the Comte de Toulouse; several were in consternation. The Chief-President lost all countenance; his visage, so self-sufficient and so audacious, was seized with a convulsive movement; the excess alone of his rage kept him from swooning. It was even worse at the reading of the declaration. Each word was legislative and decreed a fresh fall. The attention was general; every one was motionless, so as not to lose a word; all eyes were fixed upon the 'greffier' who was reading. A third of this reading over, the Chief-President, gnashing the few teeth left in his head, rested his forehead upon his stick that he held in both hands, and in this singular and marked position finished listening to the declaration, so overwhelming for him, so resurrectionary for us.

Yet, as for me, I was dying with joy. I was so oppressed that I feared I should swoon; my heart dilated to excess, and no longer found room to beat. The violence I did myself, in order to let nothing escape me, was infinite; and, nevertheless, this torment was delicious. I compared the years and the time of servitude; the grievous days, when dragged at the tail of the Parliamentary car as a victim, I had served as a triumph for the bastards; the various steps by which they had mounted to the summit above our heads; I compared them, I say, to this court of justice and of rule, to this frightful fall which, at the same time, raised us by the force of the shock. I thanked myself that it was through me this had been brought about. I had triumphed, I was revenged; I swam in my vengeance; I enjoyed the full accomplishment of desires the most vehement and the most continuous of all my life. I was tempted to fling away all thought and care. Nevertheless, I did not fail to listen to this vivifying reading (every note of which sounded upon my heart as the bow upon an instrument), or to examine, at the same time, the impressions it made upon every one.

At the first word the Keeper of the Seals said of this affair, the eyes of the two bishop-peers met mine. Never did I see surprise equal to theirs, or so marked a transport of joy. I had not been able to speak to them on account of the distance of our places; and they could not resist the movement which suddenly seized them. I swallowed through my eyes a delicious draught of their joy, and turned away my glance from theirs, lest I should succumb beneath this increase of delight. I no longer dared to look at them.

The reading finished, the other declaration in favour of the Comte de Toulouse was immediately commenced by the 'greffier', according to the command of the Keeper of the Seals, who had given them to him both together. It seemed to complete the confusion of the Chief-President and the friends of the Duc du Maine, by the contrast between the treatment of the two brothers.

Page 40

After the Advocate-General had spoken, the Keeper of the Seals mounted to the King, with the opinions of the Princes of the Blood; then came to the Duc de Sully and me. Fortunately I had more memory than he had, or wished to have; therefore it was exactly my affair. I presented to him my hat with a bunch of feathers in the front, in an express manner very marked, saying to him loudly enough: "No, Monsieur, we cannot be judges; we are parties to the cause, and we have only to thank the King for the justice he renders us."

He smiled and made an excuse. I pushed him away before the Duc de Sully had time to open his mouth; and looking round I saw with pleasure that my refusal had been marked by everybody. The Keeper of the Seals retired as he came, and without taking the opinions of the peers, or of the bishop-peers, went to the marshals of France; thence descended to the Chief-President and to the 'presidents a mortier', and so to the rest of the lower seats; after which, having been to the King and returned to his place, he pronounced the decree of registration, and thus put the finishing touch to my joy.

Immediately after M. le Duc rose, and having made his reverences to the King forgot to sit down and cover himself to speak, according to the uninterrupted right and usage of the peers of France; therefore not one of us rose. He made, then, slowly and uncovered, the speech which has been printed at the end of the preceding ones, and read it not very intelligibly because his organ was not favourable. As soon as he had finished, M. le Duc d'Orleans rose, and committed the same fault. He said, also standing and uncovered, that the request of M. le Duc appeared to him just; and after some praises added, that M. le Duc du Maine was now reduced to the rank given to him by his peerage, M. le Marechal de Villeroy, his senior, could no longer remain under him, which was a new and very strong reason in addition to those M. le Duc had alleged. This request had carried to the highest point the astonishment of the assembly and the despair of the Chief-President, and the handful of people who appeared by their embarrassment to be interested in the Duc du Maine. The Marechal de Villeroy, without knitting his brow, had a disturbed look, and the eyes of the chief accuser oftener were inundated with tears. I was not able to distinguish well his cousin and intimate friend the Marechal d'Huxelles, who screened himself beneath the vast brim of his hat, thrust over his eyes, and who did not stir. The Chief-President, stunned by this last thunder-bolt, elongated his face so surprisingly, that I thought for a moment his chin had fallen upon his knees.

However, the Keeper of the Seals having called upon the King's people to speak, they replied that they had not heard the proposition of M. le Duc, therefore his paper was passed to them from hand to hand, during which the Keeper of the Seals repeated very kindly what the Regent had added upon the seniority of the Marechal de Villeroy over the Duc du Maine. Blancmesnil merely threw his eyes upon the paper of M. le Duc, and spoke, after which the Keeper of the Seals put it to the vote. I gave mine loud enough, and said, "As for this affair I vote with all my heart for giving the superintendence of the King's education to M. le Duc."

Page 41

The votes being taken, the Keeper, of the Seals called the chief 'greffier', ordered him to bring his paper and his little bureau near his, so as to do all at once; and in presence of the King register everything that had been read and resolved, and signed also. This was done without any difficulty, according to forms, under the eyes of the Keeper of the Seals, who never raised them: but as there were five or six documents to register they took up a long time.

I had well observed the King when his education was in question, and I remarked in him no sort of alteration, change, or constraint. This was the last act of the drama: he was quite lively now the registrations commenced. However, as there were no more speeches to occupy him, he laughed with those near, amused himself with everything, even remarking that the Duc de Louvigny had on a velvet coat, and laughed at the heat he must feel, and all this with grace. This indifference for M. du Maine struck everybody, and publicly contradicted what his partisans tried to publish, *viz.*, that his eyes had been red, but that neither at the Bed of justice, nor since, he had dared to show his trouble. The truth is he had his eyes dry and serene the whole time, and pronounced the name of the Duc du Maine only once since, which was after dinner the same day, when he asked where he had gone, with a very indifferent air, without saying a word more, then or since, or naming his children, who took little trouble to see him; and when they went it was in order to have even in his presence their little court apart, and to divert themselves among themselves. As for the Duc du Maine, either from policy or because he thought it not yet time, he only, saw the King in the morning, sometimes in his bed, and not at all during the rest of the day, except when obliged by his functions.

During the registration I gently passed my eyes over the whole assembly., and though I constantly constrained them, I could not resist the temptation to indemnify myself upon the Chief-President; I perseveringly overwhelmed him, therefore, a hundred different times during the sitting, with my hard-hitting regards. Insult, contempt, disdain, triumph, were darted at him from my eyes,—and pierced him to the very marrow often he lowered his eyes when he caught my gaze once or twice he raised his upon me, and I took pleasure in annoying him by sly but malicious smiles which completed his vexation. I bathed myself in his rage, and amused myself by making him feel it. I sometimes played with him by pointing him out to my two neighbours when he could perceive this movement; in a word, I pressed upon him without mercy, as heavily as I could.

At last the registration finished, the King descended the throne, and was followed by the Regent, the two Princes of the Blood, and the necessary gentlemen of the suite. At the same time the Marshals of France descended, and while the King traversed the room, accompanied by the deputation which had received him, they passed between the seats of the councillors opposite us, to follow him to the door by which his Majesty departed; and at the same time the two bishop-peers, passing before the throne, came to put

themselves at our head, and squeezed my hands and my head (in passing before me) with warm gratification.

Page 42

We followed them two by two according to seniority, and went straight forward to the door. The Parliament began to move directly afterwards. Place was made for us to the steps. The crowd, the people, the display contrasted our conversation and our joy. I was sorry for it.

I immediately gained my coach, which I found near, and which took me skilfully out of the court, so that I met with no check, and in a quarter of an hour after leaving the sitting, I was at home.

I had need of a little rest, for pleasure even is fatigue, and happiness, pure and untroubled as it may be, wearies the spirit. I entered my house, then, at about two o'clock in the afternoon, intending to repose myself, and in order to do so in security, I closed my door to everybody.

Alas! I had not been many minutes at home when I was called away to perform one of the most painful and annoying commissions it was ever my ill fortune to be charged with.

CHAPTER XCIV.

A little while before leaving the Cabinet of the Council for the Bed of Justice, M. le Duc d'Orleans had begged me to go to the Palais Royal with the Keeper of the Seals immediately after the ceremony had ended. As I saw that nothing had been undertaken, I thought myself free of this conference, and was glad to avoid a new proof that I had been in a secret which had excited envy. I went, therefore, straight home, arriving between two and three. I found at the foot of the steps the Duc d'Humieres, Louville, and all my family, even my mother, whom curiosity had drawn from her chamber, which she had not left since the commencement of the winter. We remained below in my apartment, where, while changing my coat and my shirt, I replied to their eager questions; when, lo! M. de Biron, who had forced my door which I had closed against everybody, in order to obtain a little repose, was announced.

Biron put his head in at my door, and begged to be allowed to say a word to me. I passed, half-dressed, into my chamber with him. He said that M. le Duc d'Orleans had expected me at the Palais Royal immediately after the Bed of justice, and was surprised I had not appeared. He added that there was no great harm done; and that the Regent wished to see me now, in order that I might execute a commission for him. I asked Biron what it was? He replied that it was to go to Saint-Clerc to announce what had taken place to Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans!

This was a thunder-bolt for me. I disputed with Biron, who exhorted me to lose no time, but to go at once to the Palais Royal, where I was expected with impatience. I returned into my cabinet with him, so changed in aspect that Madame de Saint-Simon was



alarmed. I explained what was the matter, and after Biron had chatted a moment, and again pressed me to set out at once, he went away to eat his dinner. Ours was served. I waited a little time in order to recover myself, determined not to vex M. le Duc d'Orleans by dawdling, took some soup and an egg, and went off to the Palais Royal.

Page 43

It was in vain that, using all the eloquence I could command and all the liberty I dared employ, I protested against being employed for this duty. I represented to the Regent what an ill-chosen messenger I should be to carry to Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans news of the disgrace of her brother the Duc du Maine; I, who had always been such an open and declared enemy to the bastards! I represented to him that people would say I went on purpose to triumph over her at what had been done, and that she herself would look upon my presence as a kind of insult. In vain! in vain! were my arguments, my entreaties, my instances. M. le Duc d'Orleans had determined that I should go on this errand, and go I must.

As I left his house to execute my luckless commission, I found one of Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans' pages, booted and spurred, who had just arrived from Saint-Cloud. I begged him to return at once, at a gallop, and say, on arriving, to the Duchesse Sforze (one of Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans' ladies) that I should be there soon with a message from M. le Duc d'Orleans, and to ask her to meet me as I descended from my coach. My object was to charge her with the message I had to deliver, and not to see Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans at all. But my poor prudence was confounded by that of the page, who had not less than I. He took good care not to be the bearer of such ill news as he had just learned at the Palais Royal, and which was now everywhere public. He contented himself with saying that I was coming, sent by M. le Duc d'Orleans, spoke not a word to the Duchesse Sforze, and disappeared at once. This is what I afterwards learned, and what I saw clearly enough on arriving at Saint-Cloud.

I went there at a gentle trot, in order to give time to the page to arrive before me, and to the Duchesse Sforze to receive me. During the journey I applauded myself for my address, but feared lest I should be obliged to see Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans after Madame Sforze. I could not imagine that Saint-Cloud was in ignorance of what had occurred, and, nevertheless, I was in an agony that cannot be expressed, and this increased as I approached the end of my journey. If it is disagreeable to announce unpleasant news to the indifferent, how much more is it to announce them to the deeply interested!

Penetrated with this dolorous sentiment I arrived in the grand court of Saint-Cloud, and saw everybody at the windows, running from all parts. I alighted, and asked the first comer to lead me to the Duchesse Sforze, the position of whose apartments I am unacquainted with. I was told that Madame Sforze was in the chapel with Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans. Then I asked for the Marechale de Rochefort, and after a time she arrived, hobbling along with her stick. I disputed with her, wishing to see Madame Sforze, who was not to be found. I was anxious at all events to go to her room and wait, but the inexorable Marechale pulled me by the arm, asking what news I brought. Worn out at last, I said, "News? news that you are acquainted with."

Page 44

"How, acquainted with?" she asked. "We know nothing, except that a Bed of justice has been held, and we are expiring to know why, and what has passed there."

My astonishment at this ignorance was extreme, and I made her swear and repeat four times over that nothing was known at Saint-Cloud. I told her thereupon what had happened, and she, in her turn, astonished, almost fell backwards! But where was Madame Sforze? she came not, and do what I must, say what I might, I was forced to carry, my message to Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans. I was sorely loth to do so, but was dragged by the hand almost as a sheep is led to the slaughter.

I stood before Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans after having passed through an apartment filled with her people, fear painted upon all their faces. I saluted her; but, oh! how differently from my usual manner! She did not perceive this at first, and begged me, with a cheerful natural air, to approach her; but seeing my trouble, she exclaimed, "Good Heavens, Monsieur, what a face you wear! What news bring you?"

Seeing that I remained silent and motionless, she became more moved, and repeated her questions. I advanced a few steps towards her, and at her third appeal, I said: "Madame, you know nothing then?"

"No, Monsieur; I simply know that there has been a Bed of justice: what has passed there I am quite ignorant of."

"Ah, Madame," I replied, half turning away; "I am more unhappy, then, than I thought to be."

"What is the matter?" exclaimed she; "what has happened?" (rising and sitting bolt upright on the sofa she was stretched upon.) "Come near and sit down!"

I approached; stated that I was in despair. She, more and more moved, said to me, "But speak; better to learn bad news from one's friend than from others."

This remark pierced me to the heart, and made me sensible of the grief I was going to inflict upon her. I summoned up courage, and I told her all.

The tears of Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans flowed abundantly at my recital. She did not answer a word, uttered no cry, but wept bitterly. She pointed to a seat and I sat down upon it, my eyes during several instants fixed upon the floor. Afterwards I said that M. le Duc d'Orleans, who had rather forced upon me this commission, than charged me with it, had expressly commanded me to tell her that he had very strong proofs in his hands against M. du Maine; that he had kept them back a long time, but could no longer do so now. She gently replied to me that her brother was very unfortunate and shortly afterwards asked if I knew what his crime was. I said that M. le Duc d'Orleans had not

told me; and that I had not dared to question him upon a subject of this nature, seeing that he was not inclined to talk of it.

More tears shortly afterwards filled her eyes. Her brother must be very criminal, she said, to be so treated.

Page 45

I remained some time upon my seat, not daring to raise my eyes, in the most painful state possible, and not knowing whether to remain or go away. At last I acquainted her with my difficulty; said I fancied she would like to be alone some little time before giving me her orders, but that respect kept me equally in suspense as to whether I should go or stay. After a short silence, she said she should like to see her women. I rose, sent them to her, and said to them, if her Royal Highness asked for me, I should be with the Duchesse Sforze, or the Marechale Rochefort; but I could find neither of these two ladies, so I went up to Madame.

She rose as soon as I appeared, and said to me, with eagerness, "Well, Monsieur, what news?" At the same time her ladies retired, and I was left alone with her.

I commenced by an excuse for not coming to see her first, as was my duty, on the ground that M. le Duc d'Orleans had assured me she would not object to my commencing with Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans. She did not object, in fact, but asked me for my news with much eagerness. I told her what had happened. Joy spread over her face. She replied with a mighty, "At last!" which she repeated, saying, her son long since ought to have struck this blow, but that he was too good. I mentioned to her that she was standing, but for politeness she remained so. After some further talk she begged me to state all the details of this celebrated morning.

I again recalled to her mind that she was standing, and represented that what she desired to learn would take a long time to relate; but her ardor to know it was extreme. I began then my story, commencing with the very morning. At the end of a quarter of an hour, Madame seated herself, but with the greatest politeness. I was nearly an hour with her, continually telling and sometimes replying to her questions. She was delighted at the humiliation of the Parliament, and of the bastards, and that her son had at last displayed some firmness.

At this point the Marechale de Rochefort entered, and summoned me back to Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans. I found that princess extended upon the sofa where I had left her, an inkstand upon her knees and a pen in her hand. She had commenced a reply to M. le Duc d'Orleans, but had not been able to finish it. Looking at me with an air of gentleness and of friendship, she observed, "Tears escape me; I have begged you to descend in order to render me a service; my hand is unsteady, I pray you finish my writing for me;" and she handed to me the inkstand and her letter. I took them, and she dictated to me the rest of the epistle, that I at once added to what she had written.

Page 46

I was infinitely amazed at the conciseness and appropriateness of the expressions she readily found, in the midst of her violent emotion, her sobs, and her tears. She finished by saying that she was going to Montmartre to mourn the misfortunes of her brother, and pray God for his prosperity. I shall regret all my life I did not transcribe this letter. All its expressions were so worthy, so fitting, so measured, everything being according to truth and duty; and the letter, in fact, being so perfectly well written, that although I remember it roughly, I dare not give it, for fear of spoiling it. What a pity that a mind capable of such self-possession, at such a moment, should have become valueless from its leaning towards illegitimacy.

After this I had another interview with Madame, and a long talk with my sure and trusty friend Madame Sforze. Then I set out for Paris, went straight to the Palais Royal, and found M. le Duc d'Orleans with Madame la Duchesse de Berry. He was delighted when he heard what Madame had said respecting him; but he was not particularly pleased when he found that Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans (who after telling me she would go to Montmartre, had changed her mind), was coming to the Palais Royal.

I learned afterwards that she came about half an hour after I left. At first she was all humility and sorrow, hoping to soften the Regent by this conduct. Then she passed to tears, sobs, cries, reproaches, expecting to make him by these means undo what he had done, and reinstate M. du Maine in the position he had lost. But all her efforts proving vain, she adopted another course: her sorrow turned to rage,—her tears to looks of anger. Still in vain. She could gain nothing; vex and annoy M. le Duc d'Orleans as she might by her conduct. At last, finding there was no remedy to be had, she was obliged to endure her sorrow as best she might.

As for me, I was erased entirely from her books. She looked upon me as the chief cause of what had occurred, and would not see me. I remained ever afterwards at variance with her. I had nothing to reproach myself with, however, so that her enmity did not very deeply penetrate me.

CHAPTER XCV

It was scarcely to be expected, perhaps, that M. du Maine would remain altogether quiet under the disgrace which had been heaped upon him by the proceedings at the Bed of Justice. Soon indeed we found that he had been secretly working out the most perfidious and horrible schemes for a long time before that assembly; and that after his fall, he gave himself up with redoubled energy to his devilish devices.

Towards the end of this memorable year, 1718, it was discovered that Alberoni, by means of Cellamare, Spanish Ambassador at our Court, was preparing a plot against the Regent. The scheme was nothing less than to throw all the realm into revolt against the government of M. le Duc d'Orleans; to put the King of Spain at the head of the

affairs of France, with a council and ministers named by him, and a lieutenant, who would in fact have been regent; this self-same lieutenant to be no other than the Duc du Maine!

Page 47

This precious plot was, fortunately, discovered before it had come to maturity. Had such not happened, the consequences might have been very serious, although they could scarcely have been fatal. The conspirators counted upon the Parliaments of Paris and of Brittany, upon all the old Court accustomed to the yoke of the bastards, and to that of Madame de Maintenon; and they flung about promises with an unsparing hand to all who supported them. After all, it must be admitted, however, that the measures they took and the men they secured, were strangely unequal to the circumstances of the case, when the details became known; in fact, there was a general murmur of surprise among the public, at the contemptible nature of the whole affair.

But let me relate the circumstances accompanying the discovery of M. du Maine's pitiable treachery.

Cellamare, as I have said, was Spanish Ambassador at our Court. He had been one of the chief movers in the plot. He had excited, as much as lay in his power, discontent against the Regent's government; he had done his best to embroil France with Spain; he had worked heart and soul with M. du Maine, to carry out the common end they had in view. So much preparation had been made; so much of the treason train laid, that at last it became necessary to send to Alberoni a full and clear account of all that had been done, so as to paint exactly the position of affairs, and determine the measures that remained to be taken. But how to send such an account as this? To trust it to the ordinary channels of communication would have been to run a great risk of exposure and detection. To send it by private hand would have been suspicious, if the hand were known, and dangerous if it were not: Cellamare had long since provided for this difficulty.

He had caused a young ecclesiastic to be sent from Spain, who came to Paris as though for his pleasure. There he was introduced to young Monteleon, son of a former ambassador at our Court, who had been much liked. The young ecclesiastic was called the Abbe Portocarrero, a name regarded with favour in France. Monteleon came from the Hague, and was going to Madrid. Portocarrero came from Madrid, and was going back there. What more natural than that the two young men should travel in company? What less natural than that the two young men, meeting each other by pure accident in Paris, should be charged by the ambassador with any packet of consequence, he having his own couriers, and the use, for the return journey, of those sent to him from Spain? In fact, it may be believed that these young people themselves were perfectly ignorant of what they were charged with, and simply believed that, as they were going to Spain, the ambassador merely seized the occasion to entrust them with some packet of no special importance.

Page 48

They set out, then, at the commencement of December, furnished with passports from the King—for Alberoni had openly caused almost a rupture between the two Courts—with a Spanish banker, who had been established in England, where he had become bankrupt for a large amount, so that the English government had obtained permission from the Regent to arrest him, if they could, anywhere in France. It will sometimes be perceived that I am ill-instructed in this affair; but I can only tell what I know: and as for the rest, I give my conjectures. In fact, the Abbe Dubois kept everybody so much in the dark, that even M. le Duc d'Orleans was not informed of all.

Whether the arrival of the Abbe Portocarrero in Paris, and his short stay there, seemed suspicious to the Abbe Dubois and his emissaries, or whether he had corrupted some of the principal people of the Spanish Ambassador and this Court, and learned that these young men were charged with a packet of importance; whether there was no other mystery than the bad company of the bankrupt banker, and that the anxiety of Dubois to oblige his friends the English, induced him to arrest the three travellers and seize their papers, lest the banker should have confided his to the young men, I know not: but however it may have been, it is certain that the Abbe Dubois arrested the three travellers at Poitiers, and carried off their papers, a courier bringing these papers to him immediately afterwards.

Great things sometimes spring from chance. The courier from Poitiers entered the house of the Abbe Dubois just as the Regent entered the opera. Dubois glanced over the papers, and went and related the news of this capture to M. le Duc Orleans, as he left his box. This prince, who was accustomed to shut himself up with his roudes at that hour, did so with a carelessness to which everything yielded, under pretext that Dubois had not had sufficient time to examine all the papers. The first few hours of the morning he was not himself. His head, still confused by the fumes of the wine and by the undigested supper of the previous night, was not in a state to understand anything, and the secretaries of state have often told me that was the time they could make him sign anything. This was the moment taken by Dubois to acquaint the Regent with as much or as little of the contents of the papers as he thought fit. The upshot of their interview was, that the Abbe was allowed by the Duc d'Orleans to have the control of this matter entirely in his own hands.

The day after the arrival of the courier from Poitiers, Cellamare, informed of what had occurred, but who flattered himself that the presence of the banker had caused the arrest of the young men, and the seizure of their papers, hid his fears under a very tranquil bearing, and went, at one o'clock in the day, to M. le Blanc, to ask for a packet of letters he had entrusted to Portocarrero and Monteleon on their return to Spain. Le Blanc (who had had his lesson

Page 49

prepared beforehand by the Abbe Dubois) replied that the packet had been seen; that it contained important things, and that, far from being restored to him, he himself must go back to his hotel under escort, to meet there M. l'Abbe Dubois. The ambassador, who felt that such a compliment would not be attempted without means having been prepared to put it in execution, made no difficulty, and did not lose for a moment his address or his tranquillity.

During the three hours, at least, passed in his house, in the examination of all his bureaux and his boxes, and his papers, Cellamare, like a man who fears nothing, and who is sure of his game, treated M. le Blanc very civilly; as for the Abbe Dubois, with whom he felt he had no measure to keep (all the plot being discovered), he affected to treat him with the utmost disdain. Thus Le Blanc, taking hold of a little casket, Cellamare cried, "M. le Blanc, M. le Blanc, leave that alone; that is not for you; that is for the Abbe Dubois" (who was then present). Then looking at him, he added, "He has been a pander all his life, and there are nothing but women's letters there."

[Illustration: Search Of The Spanish Ambassador—Painted by Maurice Leloir—front3]

The Abbe Dubois burst out laughing, not daring to grow angry.

When all was examined, the King's seal, and that of the ambassador, were put upon all the bureaux and the caskets which contained papers. The Abbe Dubois and Le Blanc went off together to give an account of their proceedings to the Regent, leaving a company of musketeers to guard the ambassador and his household.

I heard of the capture effected at Poitiers, at home, the morning after it occurred, without knowing anything of those arrested. As I was at table, a servant came to me from M. le Duc d'Orleans, summoning me to a council of the regency, at four o'clock that day. As it was not the usual day for the council, I asked what was the matter. The messenger was surprised at my ignorance and informed me that the Spanish ambassador was arrested. As soon as I had eaten a morsel, I quitted my company, and hastened to the Palais Royal, where I learnt from M. le Duc d'Orleans all that I have just related. Our conversation took up time, and, when it was over, I went away to the Tuileries. I found there astonishment painted upon several faces; little groups of two, three, and four people together; and the majority struck by the importance of the arrest, and little disposed to approve it.

M. le Duc d'Orleans arrived shortly after. He had, better than any man I have ever known, the gift of speech, and without needing any preparation he said exactly what he wanted to say, neither more nor less; his expressions were just and precise, a natural grace accompanied them with an air of proper dignity, always mixed with an air of

politeness. He opened the council with a discourse upon the people and the papers seized at Poitiers, the latter proving

Page 50

that a very dangerous conspiracy against the state was on the eve of bursting, and of which the Ambassador of Spain was the principal promoter. His Royal Highness alleged the pressing reasons which had induced him to secure the person of this ambassador, to examine his papers, and to place them under guard. He showed that the protection afforded by the law of nations did not extend to conspiracies, that ambassadors rendered themselves unworthy of that protection when they took part in them, still more when they excited people against the state where they dwelt. He cited several examples of ambassadors arrested for less. He explained the orders he had given so as to inform all the foreign ministers in Paris of what had occurred, and had ordered Dubois to render an account to the council of what he had done at the ambassador's, and offered to read the letters from Cellamare to Cardinal Alberoni, found among the papers brought from Poitiers.

The Abbe Dubois stammered out a short and ill-arranged recital of what he had done at the ambassador's house, and dwelt upon the importance of the discovery and upon that of the conspiracy as far as already known. The two letters he read left me no doubt that Cellamare was at the head of this affair, and that Alberoni had entered into it as far as he. We were much scandalised with the expressions in these letters against M. le Duc d'Orleans, who was in no way spared.

This prince spoke again, to say he did not suspect the King or Queen of Spain to be mixed up in this affair, but that he attributed it all to the passion of Alberoni, and that of his ambassador to please him, and that he would ask for justice from their Catholic Majesties. He showed the importance of neglecting no means in order to clear up an affair so capital to the repose and tranquillity of the kingdom, and finished by saying, that until he knew more he would name nobody who was mixed up in the matter. All this speech was much applauded, and I believe there were some among the company who felt greatly relieved when they heard the Regent say he would name nobody nor would he allow suspicions to be circulated until all was unravelled.

Nevertheless the next day, Saturday, the 10th of December, more than one arrest was made. Others took place a few days afterwards.

On Tuesday, the 13th of December, all the foreign ministers went to the Palais Royal, according to custom; not one made any complaint of what had happened. A copy of the two letters read at the council was given to them. In the afternoon, Cellamare was placed in a coach with a captain of cavalry and a captain of dragoons, chosen to conduct him: to Blois, until Saint-Aignan, our ambassador in Spain, should arrive in France.

Page 51

The position of our ambassador, Saint-Aignan, at Madrid, was, as may be imagined, by no means agreeable. The two courts were just upon the point of an open rupture, thanks to the hatred Alberoni had made it a principle to keep up in Spain against M. le Duc d'Orleans, by crying down his actions, his government, his personal conduct, his most innocent acts, and by rendering suspicious even his favourable proceedings with regard to Spain. Alberoni for a long time had ceased to keep on even decent terms with Saint-Aignan, scandalising thus even the most unfavourably disposed towards France. Saint-Aignan only maintained his position by the sagacity of his conduct, and he was delighted when he received orders to return to France. He asked for his parting audience, and meanwhile bade adieu to all his friends and to all the Court. Alberoni, who every moment expected decisive news from Cellamare respecting the conspiracy, wished to remain master of our ambassador, so as, in case of accident, to have a useful hostage in his hands as security for his own ambassador. He put off therefore this parting audience under various pretexts. At last, Saint-Aignan, pressed by his reiterated orders (orders all the more positive because suspicion had already begun to foresee a disturbance ever alarming), spoke firmly to the Cardinal, and declared that if this audience were not at once accorded to him, he would do without it! Therefore the Cardinal, in anger, replied with a menace, that he knew well enough how to hinder, him, from acting thus.

Saint-Aignan wisely contained himself; but seeing to what sort of a man he was exposed, and judging rightly why he was detained at Madrid, took his measures so secretly and so well, that he set out the same night, with his most necessary equipage, gained ground and arrived at the foot of the Pyrenees without being overtaken and arrested; two occurrences which he expected at every moment, knowing that Alberoni was a man who would stick at nothing.

Saint-Aignan, already so far advanced, did not deem it advisable to expose himself any longer, bothered as he would be among the mountains by his carriages. He and the Duchess, his wife, followed by a waiting-woman and three valets, with a very trusty guide, mounted upon mules and rode straight for Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port without stopping a moment more on the road than was necessary. He sent on his equipages to Pampeluna at a gentle pace, and placed in his carriage an intelligent valet de chambre and a waiting-woman, with orders to pass themselves off as the ambassador and ambassadress of France, and in case they were arrested to cry out a good deal. The arrest did not fail to happen. The people despatched by Alberoni soon came up with the carriage. The pretended ambassador and ambassadress played their parts very well, and they who had arrested them did not doubt for a moment they had made a fine capture, sending news of it to Madrid, and keeping the prisoners in Pampeluna, to which the party returned.

Page 52

This device saved M. and Madame de Saint-Aignan, and gave them means to reach Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port; as soon as they arrived there they sent for assistance and carriages to Bayonne, which they gained in safety, and reposed after their fatigue. The Duc de Saint-Aignan sent word of all this to M. le Duc d'Orleans by a courier, and, at this arrival in Bayonne, despatched a message to the Governor of Pampeluna, begging him to send on his equipages. Alberoni's people were very much ashamed of having been duped, but Alberoni when he heard of it flew into a furious rage, and cruelly punished the mistake. The equipages were sent on to Bayonne.

CHAPTER XCVI

To return now to what took place at Paris.

On Sunday, the 25th of December, Christmas Day, M. le Duc d'Orleans sent for me to come and see him at the Palais Royal, about four o'clock in the afternoon. I went accordingly, and after despatching some business with him, other people being present, I followed him into his little winter cabinet at the end of the little gallery, M. le Duc being present.

After a moment of silence, the Regent told me to see if no one was outside in the gallery, and if the door at the end was closed. I went out, found the door shut, and no one near.

This being ascertained, M. le Duc d'Orleans said that we should not be surprised to learn that M. and Madame du Maine had been mixed up all along with this affair of the Spanish Ambassador Cellamare; that he had written proofs of this, and that the project was exactly that which I have already described. He added, that he had strictly forbidden the Keeper of the Seals, the Abbe Dubois, and Le Blanc, who alone knew of this project, to give the slightest sign of their knowledge, recommended to me the same secrecy, and the same precaution; and finished by saying that he wished, above all things, to consult M. le Duc and me upon the course he ought to adopt.

M. le Duc at once went to the point and said M. and Madame du Maine must at once be arrested and put where they could cause no apprehension. I supported this opinion, and showed the perilous annoyances that might arise if this step were not instantly taken; as much for the purpose of striking terror into the conspirators, as for disconcerting their schemes. I added that there was not a moment to lose, and that it was better to incur uncertain danger than to wait for that which was certain.

Our advice was accepted by M. le Duc d'Orleans, after some little debate. But now the question arose, where are the prisoners to be put? The Bastille and Vincennes both seemed to me too near to Paris. Several places were named without one appearing to suit. At last M. le Duc d'Orleans mentioned Dourlens. I stopped him short at the

name, and recommended it warmly. I knew the governor, Charost, and his son to be men of probity, faithful, virtuous, and much attached to the state. Upon this it was agreed to send M. du Maine to Dourlens.

Page 53

Then we had to fix upon a place for his wife, and this was more difficult; there were her sex, her fiery temper, her courage; her daring,—all to be considered; whereas, her husband, we knew, so dangerous as a hidden enemy, was contemptible without his mask, and would fall into the lowest state of dejection in prison, trembling all over with fear of the scaffold, and attempting nothing; his wife, on the contrary, being capable of attempting anything:

Various places discussed, M. le Duc d'Orleans smiled, and proposed the chateau of Dijon! Now, the joke of this suggestion was, that Dijon belonged to M. le Duc, and that he was nephew of Madame du Maine, whom the Regent proposed to lock up there! M. le Duc smiled also, and said it was a little too bad to make him the gaoler of his aunt! But all things considered, it was found that a better choice than Dijon could not be made, so M. le Duc gave way. I fancy he had held out more for form's sake than for any other reason. These points settled, we separated, to meet another time, in order to make the final arrangements for the arrest.

We met accordingly, the Monday and Tuesday following, and deliberated with the same secrecy as before. On Wednesday we assembled again to put the final touch to our work. Our conference was long, and the result of it was, that M. and Madame du Maine were to be arrested on the morrow; all the necessary arrangements were made, and, as we thought, with the utmost secrecy. Nevertheless, the orders given to the regiment of the guards, and to the musketeers somehow or other transpired during the evening, and gave people reason to believe that something considerable was in contemplation. On leaving the conference, I arranged with Le Blanc that, when the blow was struck, he should inform me by simply sending a servant to inquire after my health.

The morrow, about ten o'clock in the morning, having noiselessly and without show placed the body-guard around Sceaux, La Billardiere, lieutenant of the regiment, entered there, and arrested the Duc du Maine as he was leaving his chapel after hearing mass, and very respectfully begged him not to re-enter the house, but to mount immediately into a coach which he had brought. M. du Maine, who had expected this arrest, and who had had time to put his papers in order, made not the slightest resistance. He replied that he had anticipated this compliment for some days, and at once moved into the coach. La Billardiere placed himself by his side, and in front was an exempt of the bodyguards, and Favancourt, brigadier in the first company of musketeers, destined to guard him in his prison.

As these two latter persons did not appear before the Duc du Maine until the moment he entered the coach, he appeared surprised and moved to see Favancourt.

Page 54

He would not have been at the exempt, but the sight of the other depressed him. He asked La Billardiere what this meant. Billardiere could not dissimulate that Favancourt had orders to accompany him, and to remain with him in the place to which they were going. Favancourt himself took this moment to pay his compliments as best he might to the Duc du Maine, to which the Duke replied but little, and that in a civil and apprehensive manner. These proceedings conducted them to the end of the avenue of Sceaux, where the bodyguards appeared. The sight of them made the Duc du Maine change colour.

Silence was but little interrupted in the coach. Now and then M. du Maine would say that he was very innocent of the accusation which had been formed against him; that he was much attached to the King, and not less so to M. le Duc d'Orleans, who could not but recognise it; and that it was very unfortunate his Royal Highness should put faith in his enemies (he never named anybody). All this was said in a broken manner, and amid many sighs; from time to time signs of the cross; low mumblings as of prayers; and plunges at each church or each cross they passed. He took his meals in the coach, ate very little, was alone at night, but with good precautions taken. He did not know until the morrow that he was going to Dourlens. He showed no emotion thereupon. All these details I learnt from Favancourt, whom I knew very well, and who was in the Musketeers when I served in that corps.

At the moment of the arrest of M. du Maine, Ancenis, captain of the body-guard, arrested the Duchesse du Maine in her house in the Rue St. Honore. A lieutenant, and an exempt of the foot body-guards, with other troops, took possession of the house at the same time, and guarded the doors. The compliment of the Duc d'Ancenis was sharply received. Madame du Maine wished to take away some caskets. Ancenis objected. She demanded, at the least, her jewels; altercations very strong on one side, very modest on the other: but she was obliged to yield. She raged at the violence done to a person of her rank, without saying anything too disobliging to M. d'Ancenis, and without naming anybody. She delayed her departure as long as she could, despite the instances of d'Ancenis, who at last presented his hand to her, and politely, but firmly, said she must go. She found at her door two six-horse coaches, the sight of which much shocked her. She was obliged, however, to mount. Ancenis placed himself by her side, the lieutenant and the exempt of the guard in front, two chambermaids whom she had chosen were in the other coach, with her apparel, which had been examined. The ramparts were followed, the principal streets avoided; there was no stir, and at this she could not restrain her surprise and vexation, or check a tear, declaiming by fits and starts against the violence done her. She complained of the rough coach, the indignity it cast upon her, and from time to time asked where

Page 55

she was being led to. She was simply told that she would sleep at Essonne, nothing more. Her three guardians maintained profound silence. At night all possible precautions were taken. When she set out the next day, the Duc d'Ancenis took leave of her, and left her to the lieutenant and to the exempt of the body-guards, with troops to conduct her. She asked where they were leading her to: he simply replied, "To Fontainebleau." The disquietude of Madame du Maine augmented as she left Paris farther behind, but when she found herself in Burgundy, and knew at last she was to go to Dijon, she stormed at a fine rate.

It was worse when she was forced to enter the castle, and found herself the prisoner of M. le Duc. Fury suffocated her. She raged against her nephew, and the horrible place chosen for her. Nevertheless, after her first transports, she returned to herself, and began to comprehend that she was in no place and no condition to play the fury. Her extreme rage she kept to herself, affected nothing but indifference for all, and disdainful security. The King's lieutenant of the castle, absolutely devoted to M. le Duc, kept her fast, and closely watched her and her chambermaids. The Prince de Dombes and the Comte d'Eu (her sons) were at the same time exiled to Eu, where a gentleman in ordinary always was near them; Mademoiselle du Maine was sent to Maubuisson.

Several other people were successively arrested and placed either in the Bastille or Vincennes. The commotion caused by the arrest and imprisonment of M. and Madame du Maine was great; many faces, already elongated by the Bed of justice, were still further pulled out by these events. The Chief-President, D'Effiat, the Marechal de Villeroy, the Marechal de Villars, the Marechal d'Huxelles, and other devoted friends of M. du Maine, were completely terrified; they did not dare to say a word; they kept out of the way; did not leave their houses except from necessity; fear was painted upon their faces. All their pride was put aside; they became polite, caressing, would have eaten out of your hand; and by this sudden change and their visible embarrassment betrayed themselves.

As for the Comte de Toulouse he remained as upright and loyal as ever. The very day of the double arrest he came to M. le Duc d'Orleans and said that he regarded the King, the Regent, and the State as one and the same thing; that he should never be wanting in his duty or in his fidelity towards them; that he was very sorry at what had happened to his brother, but that he was in no way answerable for him. The Regent stated this to me the same day, and appeared, with reason, to be charmed with such straightforward honesty.

Page 56

This arrest of M. and Madame du Maine had another effect. For some time past, a large quantity of illicit salt had been sold throughout the country. The people by whom this trade was conducted, 'faux sauniers', as they were called, travelled over the provinces in bands well armed and well organized. So powerful had they become that troops were necessary in order to capture them. There were more than five thousand faux sauniers, who openly carried on their traffic in Champagne and Picardy. They had become political instruments in the hands of others, being secretly encouraged and commanded by those who wished to sow trouble in the land. It could not be hidden that these 'faux sauniers' were redoubtable by their valour and their arrangements; that the people were favourable to them, buying as they did from them salt at a low price, and irritated as they were against the gabelle and other imposts; that these 'faux sauniers' spread over all the realm, and often marching in large bands, which beat all opposed to them, were dangerous people, who incited the population by their examples to opposition against the government.

I had proposed on one occasion the abolition of the salt tax to the Regent, as a remedy for these evils; but my suggestion shared the fate of many others. It was favourably listened to, and nothing more. And meanwhile the 'faux sauniers' had gone on increasing. I had no difficulty in discovering by whom they were encouraged, and the event showed I was right. Directly after the arrest of M. and Madame du Maine, the 'faux sauniers' laid down their arms, asked, and obtained pardon. This prompt submission showed dearly enough by whom they had been employed, and for what reason. I had uselessly told M. le Duc d'Orleans so long before, who admitted that I was right, but did nothing. It was his usual plan.

Let me finish at once with all I shall have to say respecting M. and Madame du Maine.

They remained in their prisons during the whole of the year 1719, supplied with all the comforts and attentions befitting their state, and much less rigorously watched than at first, thanks to the easy disposition of M. le Duc d'Orleans, whose firmness yielded even more rapidly than beauty to the effects of time. The consequence of his indulgence towards the two conspirators was, that at about the commencement of the following year, 1720, they began to play a very ridiculous comedy, of which not a soul was the dupe; not even the public, nor the principal actors, nor the Regent.

The Duc and Duchesse du Maine, thanks to the perfidy of the Abbe Dubois, had had time to hide away all their papers, and to arrange together the different parts they should play. Madame du Maine, supported by her sex and birth, muffled herself up in her dignity, when replying to the questions addressed to her, of which just as many, and no more, were read to the replying counsel as pleased the Abbe Dubois; and strongly accusing Cellamare and others; protected as much as possible her friends, her husband above all, by charging herself with all; by declaring that what she had done M. du Maine had no knowledge of; and that its object went no farther than to obtain from the Regent such reforms in his administration as were wanted.

Page 57

The Duc du Maine, shorn of his rank and of his title of prince of the blood, trembled for his life. His crimes against the state, against the blood royal, against the person of the Regent, so long, so artfully, and so cruelly offended, troubled him all the more because he felt they deserved severe punishment. He soon, therefore, conceived the idea of screening himself beneath his wife's petticoats. His replies, and all his observations were to the same tune; perfect ignorance of everything. Therefore when the Duchess had made her confessions, and they were communicated to him, he cried out against his wife,—her madness, her felony,—his misfortune in having a wife capable of conspiring, and daring enough to implicate him in everything without having spoken to him; making him thus a criminal without being so the least in the world; and keeping him so ignorant of her doings, that it was out of his power to stop them, to chide her, or inform M. le Duc d'Orleans if things had been pushed so far that he ought to have done so!

From that time the Duc du Maine would no longer hear talk of a woman who, without his knowledge, had cast him and his children into this abyss; and when at their release from prison, they were permitted to write and send messages to each other, he would receive nothing from her, or give any signs of life. Madame du Maine, on her side, pretended to be afflicted at this treatment; admitting, nevertheless, that she had acted wrongfully towards her husband in implicating him without his knowledge in her schemes. They were at this point when they were allowed to come near Paris. M. du Maine went to live at Clagny, a chateau near Versailles, built for Madame de Montespan. Madame du Maine went to Sceaux. They came separately to see M. le Duc d'Orleans at Paris, without sleeping there; both played their parts, and as the Abbe Dubois judged the time had come to take credit to himself in their eyes for finishing their disgrace, he easily persuaded M. le Duc d'Orleans to, appear convinced of the innocence of M. du Maine.

During their stay in the two country-houses above named, where they saw but little company, Madame du Maine made many attempts at reconciliation with her husband, which he repelled. This farce lasted from the month of January (when they arrived at Sceaux and at Clagny) to the end of July. Then they thought the game had lasted long enough to be put an end to. They had found themselves quit of all danger so cheaply, and counted so much upon the Abbe Dubois, that they were already thinking of returning to their former considerations; and to work at this usefully, they must be in a position to see each other, and commence by establishing themselves in Paris, where they would of necessity live together.

The sham rupture had been carried to this extent, that the two sons of the Duc du Maine returned from Eu to Clagny a few days after him, did not for a long time go and see Madame du Maine, and subsequently saw her but rarely, and without sleeping under her roof.

Page 58

At last a resolution being taken to put an end to the comedy, this is how it was terminated by another.

Madame la Princesse made an appointment with the Duc du Maine, at Vaugirard on the last of July, and in the house of Landais, treasurer of the artillery. She arrived there a little after him with the Duchesse du Maine, whom she left in her carriage. She said to M. du Maine she had brought a lady with her who much desired to see him. The thing was not difficult to understand; the piece had been well studied. The Duchesse du Maine was sent for. The apparent reconciliation took place. The three were a long time together. To play out the comedy, M. and Madame du Maine still kept apart, but saw and approached each other by degrees, until at last the former returned to Sceaux, and lived with his wife as before.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARK:

He was often firm in promises