

Memoirs of Louis XIV and His Court and of the Regency — Volume 13 eBook

Memoirs of Louis XIV and His Court and of the Regency — Volume 13 by Louis de Rouvroy, duc de Saint-Simon

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CHAPTER XCVII

To go back, now, to the remaining events of the year 1719.

The Marquise de Charlus, sister of Mezieres, and mother of the Marquis de Levi, who has since become a duke and a peer, died rich and old. She was the exact picture of an “old clothes” woman and was thus subject to many insults from those who did not know her, which she by no means relished. To relieve a little the seriousness of these memoirs, I will here relate an amusing adventure of which she was heroine.

She was very avaricious, and a great gambler. She would have passed the night up to her knees in water in order to play. Heavy gambling at lansquenet was carried on at Paris in the evening, at Madame la Princesse de Conti's. Madame de Charlus supped there one Friday, between the games, much company being present. She was no better clad than at other times, and wore a head-dress, in vogue at that day, called commode, not fastened, but put on or taken off like a wig or a night-cap. It was fashionable, then, to wear these headdresses very high.

Madame de Charlus was near the Archbishop of Rheims, Le Tellier. She took a boiled egg, that she cracked, and in reaching for some salt, set her head dress on fire, at a candle near, without perceiving it. The Archbishop, who saw her all in flames, seized the head-dress and flung it upon the ground. Madame de Charlus, in her surprise, and indignant at seeing her self thus uncovered, without knowing why, threw her egg in the Archbishop's face, and made him a fine mess.

Nothing but laughter was heard; and all the company were in convulsions of mirth at the grey, dirty, and hoary head of Madame de Charlus, and the Archbishop's omelette; above all, at the fury and abuse of Madame de Charlus, who thought she had been affronted, and who was a long time before she would understand the cause, irritated at finding herself thus treated before everybody. The head-dress was burnt, Madame la Princesse de Conti gave her another, but before it was on her head everybody had time to contemplate her charms, and she to grow in fury. Her husband died three months after her. M. de Levi expected to find treasures; there had been such; but they had taken wing and flown away.

About this time appeared some verses under the title of Philippiques, which were distributed with extraordinary promptitude and abundance. La Grange, formerly page of Madame la Princesse de Conti, was the author, and did not deny it. All that hell could vomit forth, true and false, was expressed in the most beautiful verses, most poetic in style, and with all the art and talent imaginable. M. le Duc d'Orleans knew it, and wished to see the poem, but he could not succeed in getting it, for no one dared to show it to him.

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He spoke of it several times to me, and at last demanded with such earnestness that I should bring it to him, that I could not refuse. I brought it to him accordingly, but read it to him I declared I never would. He took it, therefore, and read it in a low tone, standing in the window of his little cabinet, where we were. He judged it in reading much as it was, for he stopped from time to time to speak to me, and without appearing much moved. But all on a sudden I saw him change countenance, and turn towards me, tears in his eyes, and himself ready to drop.

“Ah,” said he, “this is too much, this horrible poem beats me completely.”

He was at the part where the scoundrel shows M. le Duc d’Orleans having the design to poison the King, and quite ready to execute his crime. It is the part where the author redoubles his energy, his poetry, his invocations, his terrible and startling beauties, his invectives, his hideous pictures, his touching portraits of the youth and innocence of the King, and of the hopes he has, adjuring the nation to save so dear a victim from the barbarity of a murderer; in a word, all that is most delicate, most tender, stringent, and blackest, most pompous, and most moving, is there.

I wished to profit by the dejected silence into which the reading of this poem had thrown M. le Duc d’Orleans, to take from him the execrable paper, but I could not succeed; he broke out into just complaints against such horrible wickedness, and into tenderness for the King; then finished his reading, that he interrupted more than once to speak to me. I never saw a man so penetrated, so deeply touched, so overwhelmed with injustice so enormous and sustained. As for me, I could not contain myself. To see him, the most prejudiced, if of good faith, would have been convinced he was innocent of the crime imputed to him, by the horror he displayed at it. I have said all, when I state that I recovered myself with difficulty, and that I had all the pains in the world to compose him a little.

This La Grange, who was of no personal value, yet a good poet—only that, and never anything else—had, by his poetry, insinuated himself into Sceaux, where he had become one of the great favourites of Madame du Maine. She and her husband knew his life, his habits, and his mercenary villainy. They knew, too, how to profit by it. He was arrested shortly afterwards, and sent to the Isle de Sainte Marguerite, which he obtained permission to leave before the end of the Regency. He had the audacity to show himself everywhere in Paris, and while he was appearing at the theatres and in all public places, people had the impudence to spread the report that M. le Duc d’Orleans had had him killed! M. le Duc d’Orleans and his enemies have been equally indefatigable; the latter in the blackest villainies, the Prince in the most unfruitful clemency, to call it by no more expressive name.

Before the Regent was called to the head of public affairs, I recommended him to banish Pere Tellier when he had the power to do so. He did not act upon my advice, or only partially; nevertheless, Tellier was disgraced, and after wandering hither and

thither, a very firebrand wherever he went, he was confined by his superiors in La Fleche.

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This tyrant of the Church, furious that he could no longer move, which had been his sole consolation during the end of his reign and his terrible domination, found himself at La Fleche, reduced to a position as insupportable as it was new to him.

The Jesuits, spies of each other, and jealous and envious of those who have the superior authority, are marvellously ungrateful towards those who, having occupied high posts, or served the company with much labour and success, become useless to it, by their age or their infirmities. They regard them with disdain, and instead of bestowing upon them the attention merited by their age, their services, and their merit, leave them in the dreariest solitude, and begrudge them even their food!

I have with my own eyes seen three examples of this in these Jesuits, men of much piety and honour, who had filled positions of confidence and of talent, and with whom I was very intimate. The first had been rector of their establishment at Paris, was distinguished by excellent works of piety, and was for several years assistant of the general at Rome, at the death of whom he returned to Paris; because the rule is, that the new general has new assistants. Upon his return to the Paris establishment he was put into a garret, at the very top of the house, amid solitude, contempt, and want.

The direction of the royal conscience had been the principal occupation of the two others, one of whom had even been proposed as confessor to Madame la Dauphine. One was long ill of a malady he died of. He was not properly nourished, and I sent him his dinner every day, for more than five months, because I had seen his pittance. I sent him even remedies, for he could not refrain from admitting to me that he suffered from the treatment he was subjected to.

The third, very old and very infirm, had not a better fate. At last, being no longer able to hold out, he asked to be allowed to pay a visit to my Versailles house (after having explained himself to me), under pretext of fresh air. He remained there several months, and died at the noviciate in Paris. Such is the fate of all the Jesuits, without excepting the most famous, putting aside a few who having shone at the Court and in the world by their sermons and their merit, and having made many friends—as Peres Bortaloue, La Rue, Gaillard—have been guaranteed from the general disgrace, because, often visited by the principal persons of the Court and the town, policy did not permit them to be treated like the rest, for fear of making so many considerable people notice what they would not have suffered without disturbance and scandal.

It was, then, in this abandonment and this contempt that Pere Tellier remained at La Fleche, although he had from the Regent four thousand livres pension. He had ill-treated everybody. When he was confessor of the King, not one of his brethren approached him without trembling, although most of them were the “big-wigs” of the company. Even the general of the company was forced to bend beneath the despotism he exercised upon all. There was not a Jesuit who did not disapprove the violence of his conduct, or who did not fear it would injure the society. All hated him, as a minister

is hated who is coarse, harsh, inaccessible, egotistical, and who takes pleasure in showing his power and his disdain.

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His exile, and the conduct that drew it upon him, were fresh motives for hatred against him, unveiling, as they did, a number of secret intrigues he had been concerned in, and which he had great interest in hiding. All these things together did not render agreeable to Tellier his forced retirement at La Fleche. He found there sharp superiors and equals, instead of the general terror his presence had formerly caused among the Jesuits. All now showed nothing but contempt for him, and took pleasure in making him sensible of it. This King of the Church, in part of the State, and in private of his society, became a common Jesuit like the rest, and under superiors; it may be imagined what a hell this was to a man so impetuous and so accustomed to a domination without reply, and without bounds, and abused in every fashion. Thus he did not endure it long. Nothing more was heard of him, and he died after having been only six months at La Fleche.

There was another death, which I may as well mention here, as it occurred about the same time.

On Saturday evening, the 15th of April, 1719, the celebrated and fatal Madame de Maintenon died at Saint-Cyr. What a stir this event would have made in Europe, had it happened a few years earlier. It was scarcely mentioned in Paris!

I have already said so much respecting this woman, so unfortunately famous, that I will say but little more now. Her life at Saint-Cyr was divided between her spiritual duties, the letters she received, from her religious correspondents, and the answers she gave to them. She took the communion twice a-week, ordinarily between seven and eight o'clock in the morning; not, as Dangeau says in his Memoires, at midnight or every day. She was very rich, having four thousand livres pension per month from the Regent, besides other emoluments. She had, too, her estate at Maintenon, and some other property. With all this wealth, too, she had not a farthing of expense at Saint-Cyr. Everything was provided for herself and servants and their horses, even wood, coals, and candles. She had nothing to buy, except dress for herself and for her people. She kept a steward, a valet, people for the horses and the kitchen, a coach, seven or eight horses, one or two others for the saddle, besides having the young ladies of Saint-Cyr, chambermaids, and Mademoiselle d'Aumale to wait upon her.

The fall of the Duc du Maine at the Bed of justice struck the first blow at her. It is not too much to presume that she was well informed of the measures and the designs of this darling, and that this hope had sustained her; but when she saw him arrested she succumbed; continuous fever seized her, and she died at eighty-three years of age, in the full possession of all her intellect.

Regret for her loss, which was not even universal in Saint-Cyr, scarcely passed the walls of that community. Aubigny, Archbishop of Rouen, her pretended cousin, was the only man I ever heard of, who was fool enough to die of grief on account of it. But he was so afflicted by this loss, that he fell ill, and soon followed her.

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CHAPTER XCVII.

Madame la Duchesse de Berry was living as usual, amid the loftiest pride, and the vilest servitude; amid penitence the most austere at the Carmelite convent of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and suppers the most profaned by vile company, filthiness, and impiety; amid the most shameless debauchery, and the most horrible fear of the devil and death; when lo! she fell ill at the Luxembourg.

I must disguise nothing more, especially as what I am relating belongs to history; and never in these memoirs have I introduced details upon gallantry except such as were necessary to the proper comprehension of important or interesting matters to which they related. Madame la Duchesse de Berry would constrain herself in nothing; she was indignant that people would dare to speak of what she did not take the trouble to hide from them; and nevertheless she was grieved to death that her conduct was known.

She was in the family way by Rion, but hid—it as much as she could. Madame de Mouchy was their go-between, although her conduct was as clear as day. Rion and Mouchy, in fact, were in love with each other, and had innumerable facilities for indulging their passion. They laughed at the Princess, who was their dupe, and from whom they drew in council all they could. In one word, they were the masters of her and of her household, and so insolently, that M. le Duc and Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans, who knew them and hated them, feared them also and temporised with them. Madame de Saint-Simon, sheltered from all that, extremely loved and respected by all the household, and respected even by this couple who made themselves so much dreaded and courted, only saw Madame la Duchesse de Berry during the moments of presentation at the Luxembourg, whence she returned as soon as all was finished, entirely ignorant of what was passing, though she might have been perfectly instructed.

The illness of Madame la Duchesse de Berry came on, and this illness, ill prepared for by suppers washed down by wine and strong liquors, became stormy and dangerous. Madame de Saint-Simon could not avoid becoming assiduous in her attendance as soon as the peril appeared, but she never would yield to the instances of M. le Duc and Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans, who, with all the household; wished her to sleep in the chamber allotted to her, and which she never put foot in, not even during the day. She found Madame la Duchesse de Berry shut up in a little chamber, which had private entrances—very useful just then, with no one near her but La Mouchy and Rion, and a few trusty waiting-women. All in attendance had free entrance to this room. M. le Duc and Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans were not allowed to enter when they liked; of course it was the same with the lady of honour, the other ladies, the chief femme de chambre, and the doctors. All entered from time to time, but ringing for an

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instant. A bad headache or want of sleep caused them often to be asked to stay away, or, if they entered, to leave directly afterwards. They did not press their presence upon the sick woman, knowing only too well the nature of her malady; but contented themselves by asking after her through Madame de Mouchy, who opened the door to reply to them, keeping it scarcely ajar: This ridiculous proceeding passed before the crowd of the Luxembourg, of the Palais Royal, and of many other people who, for form's sake or for curiosity, came to inquire the news, and became common town-talk.

The danger increasing, Languet, a celebrated cure of Saint-Sulpice, who had always rendered himself assiduous, spoke of the sacraments to M. le Duc d'Orleans. The difficulty was how to enter and propose them to Madame la Duchesse de Berry. But another and greater difficulty soon appeared. It was this: the cure, like a man knowing his duty, refused to administer the sacrament, or to suffer it to be administered, while Rion or Madame de Mouchy remained in the chamber, or even in the Luxembourg! He declared this aloud before everybody, expressly in presence of M. le Duc d'Orleans, who was less shocked than embarrassed. He took the cure aside, and for a long time tried to make him give way. Seeing him inflexible, he proposed reference to the Cardinal de Noailles. The cure immediately agreed, and promised to defer to his orders, Noailles being his bishop, provided he was allowed to explain his reasons. The affair passed, and Madame la Duchesse de Berry made confession to a Cordelier, her confessor. M. le Duc d'Orleans flattered himself, no doubt, he would find the diocesan more flexible than the cure. If he hoped so he deceived himself.

The Cardinal de Noailles arrived; M. le Duc d'Orleans took him aside with the cure, and their conversation lasted more than half an hour. As the declaration of the cure had been public, the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris judged it fitting that his should be so also. As all three approached the door of the chamber, filled with company, the Cardinal de Noailles said aloud to the cure, that he had very worthily done his duty, that he expected nothing less from such a good, experienced, and enlightened man as he was; that he praised him for what he had demanded before administering the sacrament to Madame la Duchesse de Berry; that he exhorted him not to give in, or to suffer himself to be deceived upon so important a thing; and that if he wanted further authorisation he, as his bishop, diocesan, and superior, prohibited him from administering the sacraments, or allowing them to be administered, to Madame la Duchesse de Berry while Rion and Madame de Mouchy were in the chamber, or even in the Luxembourg.

It may be imagined what a stir such inevitable scandal as this made in a room so full of company; what embarrassment it caused M. le Duc d'Orleans, and what a noise it immediately made everywhere. Nobody, even the chiefs of the constitution, the mass without, enemies of the Cardinal de Noailles, the most fashionable bishops, the most distinguished women, the libertines even—not one blamed the cure or his archbishop: some because they knew the rules of the Church, and did not dare to impugn them;

others, the majority, from horror of the conduct of Madame la Duchesse de Berry, and hatred drawn upon her by her pride.

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Now came the question between the Regent, the Cardinal, and the cure, which should announce this determination to Madame la Duchesse de Berry, who in no way expected it, and who, having confessed, expected every moment to see the Holy Sacrament enter, and to take it. After a short colloquy urged on by the state of the patient, the Cardinal and the cure withdrew a little, while M. le Duc d'Orleans slightly opened the door and called Madame de Mouchy. Then, the door ajar, she within, he without, he told her what was in debate. La Mouchy, much astonished, still more annoyed, rode the high horse, talked of her merit, and of the affront that bigots wished to cast upon her and Madame la Duchesse de Berry, who would never suffer it or consent to it, and that she would die—in the state she was—if they had the impudence and the cruelty to tell it to her.

The conclusion was that La Mouchy undertook to announce to Madame la Duchesse de Berry the resolution that had been taken respecting the sacraments—what she added of her own may be imagined. A negative response did not fail to be quickly delivered to M. le Duc d'Orleans through the half-opened door. Coming through such a messenger, it was just the reply he might have expected. Immediately after, he repeated it to the Cardinal, and to the cure; the cure, being supported by his archbishop, contented himself with shrugging his shoulders. But the Cardinal said to M. le Duc d'Orleans that Madame de Mouchy, one of the two who ought to be sent away, was not a fit person to bring Madame la Duchesse to reason; that it was his duty to carry this message to her, and to exhort her to do her duty as a Christian shortly about to appear before God; and the Archbishop pressed the Regent to go and say so to her. It will be believed, without difficulty, that his eloquence gained nothing. This Prince feared too much his daughter, and would have been but a feeble apostle with her.

Reiterated refusals determined the Cardinal to go and speak to Madame la Duchesse de Berry, accompanied by the cure, and as he wished to set about it at once, M. le Duc d'Orleans, who did not dare to hinder him, but who feared some sudden and dangerous revolution in his daughter at the sight and at the discourses of the two pastors, conjured him to wait until preparations could be made to receive him. He went, therefore, and held another colloquy through the door with Madame de Mouchy, the success of which was equal to the other. Madame la Duchesse de Berry flew into fury, railed in unruly terms against these hypocritical humbugs, who took advantage of her state and their calling to dishonour her by an unheard-of scandal, not in the least sparing her father for his stupidity and feebleness in allowing it. To have heard her, you would have thought that the cure and the Cardinal ought to be kicked downstairs.

M. le Duc d'Orleans returned to the ecclesiastics, looking very small, and not knowing what to do between his daughter and them. However, he said to them that she was so weak and suffering that they must put off their visit, persuading them as well as he could. The attention and anxiety of the large company which filled the room were extreme: everything was known afterwards, bit by bit, during the day.

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The Cardinal de Noailles remained more than two hours with M. le Duc d'Orleans, round whom people gathered at last. The Cardinal, seeing that he could not enter the chamber without a sort of violence, much opposed to persuasion, thought it indecent and useless to wait any longer. In going away, he reiterated his orders to the cure, and begged him to watch so as not to be deceived respecting the sacraments, lest attempts were made to administer them clandestinely. He afterwards approached Madame de Saint-Simon, took her aside, related to her what had passed, and deplored with her a scandal that he had not been able to avoid. M. le Duc d'Orleans hastened to announce to his daughter the departure of the Cardinal, at which he himself was much relieved. But on leaving the chamber he was astonished to find the cure glued against the door, and still more so to hear he had taken up his post there, and meant to remain, happen what might, because he did not wish to be deceived respecting the sacraments. And, indeed, he remained there four days and four nights, except during short intervals for food and repose that he took at home, quite close to the Luxembourg, and during which his place was filled by two priests whom he left there. At last, the danger being passed, he raised the siege.

Madame la Duchesse de Berry, safely delivered of a daughter, had nothing to do but to re-establish herself; but she remained firm against the cure and the Cardinal de Noailles, neither of whom she ever pardoned. She became more and more bewitched by the two lovers, who laughed at her, and who were attached to her only for their fortune and their interest. She remained shut up without seeing M. and Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans, except for a few moments; no one, commencing with Madame de Saint-Simon, showed any eagerness to see her, for everybody knew what kept the door shut.

Madame la Duchesse de Berry, infinitely pained by the manner in which everybody, even the people, looked upon her malady, thought to gain a little lost ground by throwing open the gardens of the Luxembourg to the public, after having long since closed them. People were glad: they profited by the act; that was all. She made a vow that she would give herself up to religion, and dress in white—that is, devote herself to the service of the Virgin—for six months. This vow made people laugh a little.

Her illness had begun on the 26th of March, 1719, and Easter-day fell on the 9th of April. She was then quite well, but would not see a soul. A new cause of annoyance had arisen to trouble her. Rion, who saw himself so successful as the lover of Madame la Duchesse de Berry, wished to improve his position by becoming her husband. He was encouraged in this desire by his uncle, M. de Lauzun, who had also advised him to treat her with the rigour, harshness—nay, brutality, which I have already described. The maxim of M. de Lauzun was, that the Bourbons must be ill-used and treated with a high hand in order to maintain empire over them. Madame de Mouchy was as strongly in favour of this marriage as Rion. She knew she was sure of her lover, and that when he became the husband of Madame la Duchesse de Berry, all the doors which shut intimacy would be thrown down. A secret marriage accordingly took place.

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This marriage gave rise to violent quarrels, and much weeping. In order to deliver herself from these annoyances, and at the same time steer clear of Easter, the Duchess resolved to go away to Meudon on Easter Monday. It was in vain that the danger was represented to her, of the air, of the movement of the coach, and of the change of place at the end of a fortnight. Nothing could make her endure Paris any longer. She set out, therefore, followed by Rion and the majority of her ladies and her household.

M. le Duc d'Orleans informed me then of the fixed design of Madame la Duchesse de Berry to declare the secret marriage she had just made with Rion. Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans was at Montmartre for a few days, and we were walking in the little garden of her apartments. The marriage did not surprise me much, knowing the strength of her passion, her fear of the devil, and the scandal which had just happened. But I was astonished, to the last degree, at this furious desire to declare the marriage, in a person so superbly proud.

M. le Duc d'Orleans dilated upon his troubles, his anger, that of Madame (who wished to proceed to the most violent extremities), and the great resolve of Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans. Fortunately the majority of the officers destined to serve against Spain, (war with that country had just been declared) were leaving every day, and Rion had remained solely on account of the illness of Madame la Duchesse de Berry, M. le Duc d'Orleans thought the shortest plan would be to encourage hope by delay, in forcing Rion to depart, flattering himself that the declaration would be put off much more easily in his absence than in his presence. I strongly approved this idea, and on the morrow, Rion received at Meudon a curt and positive order to depart at once and join his regiment in the army of the Duc de Berwick. Madame la Duchesse de Berry was all the more outraged, because she knew the cause of this order, and consequently felt her inability to hinder its execution. Rion on his side did not dare to disobey it. He set out, therefore; and M. le Duc d'Orleans, who had not yet been to Meudon, remained several days without going there.

Father and daughter feared each other, and this departure had not put them on better terms. She had told him, and repeated it, that she was a rich widow, mistress of her own actions, independent of him; had flown into a fury, and terribly abused M. le Duc d'Orleans when he tried to remonstrate with her. He had received much rough handling from her at the Luxembourg when she was better; it was the same at Meudon during the few visits he paid her there. She wished to declare her marriage; and all the art, intellect, gentleness, anger, menace, prayers, and interest of M. le Duc d'Orleans barely sufficed to make her consent to a brief delay.

If Madame had been listened to, the affair would have been finished before the journey to Meudon; for M. le Duc d'Orleans would have thrown Rion out of the windows of the Luxembourg!

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The premature journey to Meudon, and quarrels so warm, were not calculated to re-establish a person just returned from the gates of death. The extreme desire she had to hide her state from the public, and to conceal the terms on which she was with her father (for the rarity of his visits to her began to be remarked), induced her to give a supper to him on the terrace of Meudon about eight o'clock one evening. In vain the danger was represented to her of the cool evening air so soon after an illness such as she had just suffered from, and which had left her health still tottering. It was specially on this account that she stuck more obstinately to her supper on the terrace, thinking that it would take away all suspicion she had been confined, and induce the belief that she was on the same terms as ever with M. le Duc d'Orleans, though the uncommon rarity of his visits to her had been remarked.

This supper in the open air did not succeed. The same night she was taken ill. She was attacked by accidents, caused by the state in which she still was, and by an irregular fever, that the opposition she met with respecting the declaration of her marriage did not contribute to diminish. She grew disgusted with Meudon, like people ill in body and mind, who in their grief attribute everything to the air and the place. She was annoyed at the few visits she received from M. le Duc and Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans,-her pride, however, suffering more than her tenderness.

In despite of all reason, nothing could hinder her from changing her abode. She was transferred from Meudon to the Muette, wrapped up in sheets, and in a large coach, on Sunday, the 14th of May, 1719. Arrived so near Paris, she hoped M. le Duc and Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans would come and see her more frequently, if only for form's sake.

This journey was painful by the sufferings it caused her, added to those she already had, which no remedies could appease, except for short intervals, and which became very violent. Her illness augmented; but hopes and fears sustained her until the commencement of July. During all this time her desire to declare her marriage weakened, and M. le Duc and Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans, as well as Madame, who passed the summer at Saint-Cloud, came more frequently to see her. The month of July became more menacing because of the augmentation of pain and fever. These ills increased so much, in fact, that, by the 14th of July, fears for her life began to be felt.

The night of the 14th was so stormy, that M. le Duc d'Orleans was sent to at the Palais Royal, and awakened. At the same time Madame de Pons wrote to Madame de Saint-Simon, pressing her to come and establish herself at La Muette. Madame de Saint-Simon, although she made a point of scarcely ever sleeping under the same roof as Madame la Duchesse de Berry (for reasons which need no further explanation than those already given), complied at once with this request, and took up her quarters from this time at La Muette.

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Upon arriving, she found the danger great. Madame la Duchesse de Berry had been bled in the arm and in the foot on the 10th, and her confessor had been sent for. But the malady still went on increasing. As the pain which had so long afflicted her could not induce her to follow a regimen necessary for her condition, or to think of a future state, relations and doctors were at last obliged to speak a language to her, not used towards princesses, except at the most urgent extremity. This, at last, had its effect. She submitted to the medical treatment prescribed for her, and received the sacrament with open doors, speaking to those present upon her life and upon her state, but like a queen in both instances. After this sight was over, alone with her familiars, she applauded herself for the firmness she had displayed, asked them if she had not spoken well, and if she was not dying with greatness and courage.

A day or two after, she wished to receive Our Lord once more. She received, accordingly, and as it appeared, with much piety, quite differently from the first time.

At the extremity to which she had arrived, the doctors knew not what to do; everybody was tried. An elixir was spoken of, discovered by a certain Garus, which made much stir just then, and the secret of which the King has since bought. Garus was sent for and soon arrived. He found Madame la Duchesse de Berry so ill that he would answer for nothing. His remedy was given, and succeeded beyond all hopes. Nothing remained but to continue it. Above all things, Garus had begged that nothing should, on any account, be given to Madame la Duchesse de Berry except by him, and this had been most expressly commanded by M. le Duc and Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans. Madame la Duchesse de Berry continued to be more and more relieved and so restored, that Chirac, her regular doctor, began to fear for his reputation, and taking the opportunity when Garus was asleep upon a sofa, presented, with impetuosity, a purgative to Madame la Duchesse de Berry, and made her swallow it without saying a word to anybody, the two nurses standing by, the only persons present, not daring to oppose him.

The audacity of this was as complete as its villainy, for M. le Duc and Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans were close at hand in the salon. From this moment to that in which the patient fell into a state worse than that from which the elixir had drawn her, there was scarcely an interval. Garus was awaked and called. Seeing this disorder, he cried that a purgative had been given, and whatever it might be, it was poison in the state to which the princess was now reduced. He wished to depart, he was detained, he was taken to Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans. Then followed a great uproar, cries from Garus, impudence and unequalled hardihood of Chirac, in defending what he had done.

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He could not deny it, for the two nurses had been questioned, and had told all. Madame la Duchesse de Berry drew near her end during this debate, and neither Chirac nor Garus could prevent it. She lasted, however, the rest of the day, and did not die until about midnight. Chirac, seeing the death-agony advance, traversed the chamber, made an insulting reverence at the foot of the bed, which was open, and wished her “a pleasant journey” (in equivalent terms), and thereupon went off to Paris. The marvel is that nothing came of this, and that he remained the doctor of M. le Duc d’Orleans as before!

While the end was yet approaching, Madame de Saint-Simon, seeing that there was no one to bear M. le Duc d’Orleans company, sent for me to stand by him in these sad moments. It appeared to me that my arrival pleased him, and that I was not altogether useless to him in relieving his grief. The rest of the day was passed in entering for a moment at a time into the sick-chamber. In the evening I was nearly always alone with him.

He wished that I should charge myself with all the funeral arrangements, and in case Madame la Duchesse de Berry, when opened, should be found to be enceinte, to see that the secret was kept. I proposed that the funeral should be of the simplest, without show or ceremonial. I explained my reasons, he thanked me, and left all the orders in my hands. Getting rid of these gloomy matters as quickly as possible, I walked with him from time to time in the reception rooms, and in the garden, keeping him from the chamber of the dying as much as possible.

The night was well advanced, and Madame la Duchesse de Berry grew worse and worse, and without consciousness since Chirac had poisoned her. M. le Duc d’Orleans returned into the chamber, approached the head of the bed—all the curtains being pulled back; I allowed him to remain there but a few moments, and hurried him into the cabinet, which was deserted just then. The windows were open, he leaned upon the iron balustrade, and his tears increased so much that I feared lest they should suffocate him. When this attack had a little subsided, he began to talk of the misfortunes of this world, and of the short duration of its most agreeable pleasures. I urged the occasion to say to him everything God gave me the power to say, with all the gentleness, emotion, and tenderness, I could command. Not only he received well what I said to him, but he replied to it and prolonged the conversation.

After we had been there more than an hour, Madame de Saint-Simon gently warned me that it was time to try and lead M. le Duc d’Orleans away, especially as there was no exit from the cabinet, except through the sick-chamber. His coach, that Madame de Saint-Simon had sent for, was ready. It was without difficulty that I succeeded in gently moving away M. le Duc d’Orleans, plunged as he was in the most bitter grief. I made him traverse

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the chamber at once, and supplicated him to return to Paris. At last he consented. He wished me to remain and give orders, and begged, with much positiveness, Madame de Saint-Simon to be present when seals were put upon the effects, after which I led him to his coach, and he went away. I immediately repeated to Madame de Saint-Simon the orders he had given me respecting the opening of the body, in order that she might have them executed, and I hindered her from remaining in the chamber, where there was nothing now but horror to be seen.

At last, about midnight, on the 21st of July, 1819, Madame la Duchesse de Berry died, ten days after Chirac had consummated his crime. M. le Duc d'Orleans was the only person touched. Some people grieved; but not one of them who had enough to live upon appeared ever to regret her loss. Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans felt her deliverance, but paid every attention to decorum. Madame constrained herself but little. However affected M. le Duc d'Orleans might be, consolation soon came. The yoke to which he had submitted himself, and which he afterwards found heavy, was severed. Above all, he was free from all annoyance on the score of Rion's marriage, and its results, annoyance that would have been all the greater, inasmuch as at the opening of the poor princess she was found to be again enceinte; it was also found that her brain was deranged. These circumstances were for the time carefully hidden. It may be imagined what a state Rion fell into in learning at the army the death of Madame la Duchesse de Berry. All his romantic notions of ambition being overturned, he was more than once on the point of killing himself, and for a long time was always kept in sight by his friends. He sold out at the end of the campaign. As he had been gentle and polite to his friends, they did not desert him. But he ever afterwards remained in obscurity.

On account of this death the theatres were closed for eight days.

On Saturday, the 22nd of July, the heart of Madame la Duchesse de Berry was taken to the Val-de-Grace.

On Sunday, the 23rd of July, her body was carried in an eight-horse coach to Saint-Denis. There was very little display; only about forty torches were carried by pages and guards.

The funeral service was performed at Saint-Denis in the early part of September. There was no funeral oration.

Madame de Saint-Simon had been forced, as I have shown, to accept the post of lady of honour to Madame la Duchesse de Berry, and had never been able to quit it. She had been treated with all sorts of consideration, had been allowed every liberty, but this did not console her for the post she occupied; so that she felt all the pleasure, not to say

the satisfaction, of a deliverance she did not expect, from a princess twenty-four years of age. But the extreme fatigue of the last days of the illness, and of those which followed death, caused her a malignant fever, which left her at death's portal during six weeks in a house at Passy. She was two months recovering herself.

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This accident, which almost turned my head, sequestered me from anything for two months, during which I never left the house, scarcely left the sick-chamber, attended to nothing, and saw only a few relatives or indispensable friends.

When my wife began to be re-established, I asked M. le Duc d'Orleans for a lodging at the new chateau at Meudon. He lent me the whole chateau; completely furnished. We passed there the rest of this summer, and several other summers afterwards. It is a charming place for rides or drives. We counted upon seeing only our friends there, but the proximity to Paris overwhelmed us with people, so that all the new chateau was sometimes completely filled, without reckoning the people of passage.

I have little need to say anything more of Madame la Duchesse de Berry. These pages have already painted her. She was a strange mixture of pride and shamelessness. Drunkenness, filthy conversation, debauchery of the vilest kind, and impiety, were her diversions, varied, as has been seen, by occasional religious fits. Her indecency in everything, language, acts, behaviour, passed all bounds; and yet her pride was so sublime that she could not endure that people should dare to speak of her amid her depravity, so universal and so public; she had the hardihood to declare that nobody had the right to speak of persons of her rank, or blame their most notorious actions!

Yet she had by nature a superior intellect, and, when she wished, could be agreeable and amiable. Her face was commanding, though somewhat spoiled at last by fat. She had much eloquence, speaking with an ease and precision that charmed and overpowered. What might she not have become, with the talents she possessed! But her pride, her violent temper, her irreligion, and her falsehood, spoiled all, and made her what we have seen her.

CHAPTER XCIX

Law had established his Mississippi Company, and now began to do marvels with it. A sort of language had been invented, to talk of this scheme, language which, however, I shall no more undertake to explain than the other finance operations. Everybody was mad upon Mississippi Stock. Immense fortunes were made, almost in a breath; Law, besieged in his house by eager applicants, saw people force open his door, enter by the windows from the garden, drop into his cabinet down the chimney! People talked only of millions.

Law, who, as I have said, came to my house every Tuesday, between eleven and twelve, often pressed me to receive some shares for nothing, offering to manage them without any trouble to me, so that I must gain to the amount of several millions! So many people had already gained enormously by their own exertions that it was not doubtful Law could gain for me even more rapidly. But I never would lend myself to it. Law addressed himself to Madame de Saint-Simon, whom he found as inflexible. He

would have much preferred to enrich me than many others; so as to attach me to him by interest, intimate as he saw me with the Regent. He spoke to M. le Duc d'Orleans, even, so as to vanquish me by his authority. The Regent attacked me more than once, but I always eluded him.

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At last, one day when we were together by appointment, at Saint-Cloud, seated upon the balustrade of the orangery, which covers the descent into the wood of the goulottes, the Regent spoke again to me of the Mississippi, and pressed me to receive some shares from Law.

The more I resisted, the more he pressed me, and argued; at last he grew angry, and said that I was too conceited, thus to refuse what the King wished to give me (for everything was done in the King's name), while so many of my equals in rank and dignity were running after these shares. I replied that such conduct would be that of a fool, the conduct of impertinence, rather than of conceit; that it was not mine, and that since he pressed me so much I would tell him my reasons. They were, that since the fable of Midas, I had nowhere read, still less seen, that anybody had the faculty of converting into gold all he touched; that I did not believe this virtue was given to Law, but thought that all his knowledge was a learned trick, a new and skilful juggle, which put the wealth of Peter into the pockets of Paul, and which enriched one at the expense of the other; that sooner or later the game would be played out, that an infinity of people would be ruined; finally, that I abhorred to gain at the expense of others, and would in no way mix myself up with the Mississippi scheme.

M. le Duc d'Orleans knew only too well how to reply to me, always returning to his idea that I was refusing the bounties of the King. I said that I was so removed from such madness, that I would make a proposition to him, of which assuredly I should never have spoken, but for his accusation.

I related to him the expense to which my father had been put in defending Blaye against the party of M. le Prince in years gone by. How he had paid the garrison, furnished provisions, cast cannon, stocked the place, during a blockade of eighteen months, and kept up, at his own expense, within the town, five hundred gentlemen, whom he had collected together. How he had been almost ruined by the undertaking, and had never received a sou, except in warrants to the amount of five hundred thousand livres, of which not one had ever been paid, and that he had been compelled to pay yearly the interest of the debts he had contracted, debts that still hung like a mill-stone upon me. My proposition was that M. le Duc d'Orleans should indemnify me for this loss, I giving up the warrants, to be burnt before him.

This he at once agreed to. He spoke of it the very next day to Law: my warrants were burnt by degrees in the cabinet of M. le Duc d'Orleans, and it was by this means I paid for what I had done at La Ferme.

Meanwhile the Mississippi scheme went on more swimmingly than ever. It was established in the Rue Quincampoix, from which horses and coaches were banished. About the end of October of this year, 1817, its business so much increased, that the office was thronged all day long, and it was found necessary to place clocks and guards with drums at each end of the street, to inform people, at seven o'clock in the morning,

of the opening of business, and of its close at night: fresh announcements were issued, too, prohibiting people from going there on Sundays and fete days.

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Never had excitement or madness been heard of which approached this.

M. le Duc d'Orleans distributed a large number of the Company's shares to all the general officers and others employed in the war against Spain. A month after, the value of the specie was diminished; then the whole of the coin was re-cast.

Money was in such abundance—that is to say, the notes of Law, preferred then to the metallic currency—that four millions were paid to Bavaria, and three millions to Sweden, in settlement of old debts. Shortly after, M. le Duc d'Orleans gave 80,000 livres to Meuse; and 80,000 livres to Madame de Chateauthiers, dame d'atours of Madame. The Abbe Alari, too, obtained 2000 livres pension. Various other people had augmentation of income given to them at this time.

Day by day Law's bank and his Mississippi increased in favour. The confidence in them was complete. People could not change their lands and their houses into paper fast enough, and the result of this paper was, that everything became dear beyond all previous experience. All heads were turned, Foreigners envied our good fortune, and left nothing undone to have a share in it. The English, even, so clear and so learned in banks, in companies, in commerce, allowed themselves to be caught, and bitterly repented it afterwards. Law, although cold and discreet, felt his modesty giving way. He grew tired of being a subaltern. He hankered after greatness in the midst of this splendour; the Abbe Dubois and M. le Duc d'Orleans desired it for him more than he; nevertheless, two formidable obstacles were in the way: Law was a foreigner and a heretic, and he could not be naturalised without a preliminary act of abjuration. To perform that, somebody must be found to convert him, somebody upon whom good reliance could be placed. The Abbe Dubois had such a person all ready in his pocket, so to speak. The Abbe Tencin was the name of this ecclesiastic, a fellow of debauched habits and shameless life, whom the devil has since pushed into the most astonishing good fortune; so true it is that he sometimes departs from his ordinary rules, in order to recompense his servitors, and by these striking examples dazzle others, and so secure them.

As may be imagined, Law did not feel very proud of the Abbe who had converted him: more especially as that same Abbe was just about this time publicly convicted of simony, of deliberate fraud, of right-down lying (proved by his own handwriting), and was condemned by the Parliament to pay a fine, which branded him with infamy, and which was the scandal of the whole town. Law, however, was converted, and this was a subject which supplied all conversation.

Soon after, he bought, for one million livres, the Hotel Mazarin for his bank, which until then had been established in a house he hired of the Chief-President, who had not need of it, being very magnificently lodged in the Palace of the Parliament by virtue of his office. Law bought, at the same time, for 550,000 livres, the house of the Comte de Tesse.

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Yet it was not all sunshine with this famous foreigner, for the sky above him was heavy with threatening clouds. In the midst of the flourishing success of his Mississippi, it was discovered that there was a plot to kill him. Thereupon sixteen soldiers of the regiment of the Guards were given to him as a protection to his house, and eight to his brother, who had come to Paris some little time before.

Law had other enemies besides those who were hidden. He could not get on well with Argenson, who, as comptroller of the finances, was continually thrown into connection with him. The disorder of the finances increased in consequence every day, as well as the quarrels between Law and Argenson, who each laid the blame upon the other. The Scotchman was the best supported, for his manners were pleasing, and his willingness to oblige infinite. He had, as it were, a finance tap in his hand, and he turned it on for every one who helped him. M. le Duc, Madame la Duchesse, Tesse, Madame de Verue, had drawn many millions through this tap, and drew still. The Abbe Dubois turned it on as he pleased. These were grand supports, besides that of M. le Duc d'Orleans, who could not part with his favourite.

Argenson, on the contrary, was not much liked. He had been at the head of the police so long that he could not shake off the habits he had acquired in that position: He had been accustomed to give audiences upon all sorts of police matters at dead of night, or at the small hours of the morning, and he appeared to see no reason why he should not do the same now that he was Keeper of the Seals. He irritated people beyond all bearing, by making appointments with them at these unreasonable hours, and threw into despair all who worked under him, or who had business with him. The difficulty of the finances, and his struggles with Law, had thrown him into ill-humour, which extended through all his refusals. Things, in fact, had come to such a pass, that it was evident one or the other must give up an administration which their rivalry threw into confusion.

Argenson saw the storm coming, and feeling the insecurity of his position, wished to save himself. He had too much sense and too much knowledge of the world not to feel that if he obstinately clung to the finances he should not only lose them but the seals also. He yielded therefore to Law, who was at last declared comptroller-general of the finances, and who, elevated to this (for him) surprising point, continued to visit me as usual every Tuesday morning, always trying to persuade me into belief of his past miracles, and of those to come.

Argenson remained Keeper of the Seals, and skilfully turned to account the sacrifice he had made by obtaining through it the permission to surrender his appointment of Chancellor of the Order of Saint-Louis to his eldest son, and the title, effectively, to his younger son. His place of Conseiller d'Etat, that he had retained,—he also gave to his eldest son, and made the other lieutenant of police. The murmur was great upon seeing a foreigner comptroller-general, and all abandoned to a finance system which already had begun to be mistrusted. But Frenchmen grow accustomed to everything,

and the majority were consoled by being no longer exposed to the sharp humour of Argenson, or his strange hours of business.

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But Law's annoyances were not over when this change had been made. M. le Prince de Conti began to be troublesome. He was more grasping than any of his relatives, and that is not saying a little. He accosted Law now, pistol in hand, so to speak, and with a perfect "money or your life" manner. He had already amassed mountains of gold by the easy humour of M. le Duc d'Orleans; he had drawn, too, a good deal from Law, in private. Not content with this, he wished to draw more. M. le Duc d'Orleans grew tired, and was not over-pleased with him. The Parliament just then was at its tricks again; its plots began to peep out, and the Prince de Conti joined in its intrigues in order to try and play a part indecent, considering his birth; little fitting his age; shameful, after the monstrous favours unceasingly heaped upon him.

Repelled by the Regent, he turned, as I have said, towards Law, hoping for more success. His expectations were deceived; prayers, cringing meanness (for he stopped at nothing to get money) being of no effect, he tried main strength, and spared Law neither abuse nor menaces. In fact, not knowing what else to do to injure his bank, he sent three waggons there, and drove them away full of money, which he made Law give him for paper he held. Law did not dare to refuse, and thus show the poverty of his metallic funds, but fearing to accustom so insatiable a prince to such tyranny as this, he went, directly the waggons left, to M. le Duc d'Orleans, and complained of what had occurred. The Regent was much annoyed; he saw the dangerous results, and the pernicious example of so violent a proceeding, directed against an unsupported foreigner, whom rather lightly he had just made comptroller-general. He flew into a violent rage, sent for the Prince de Conti, and, contrary to his nature, reprimanded him so severely, that he was silenced and cried for mercy. But annoyed at having failed, and still more at the sharp scolding he had received, the Prince de Conti consoled himself, like a woman, by spreading all sorts of reports against Law, which caused him but little fear, and did him still less harm, but which did slight honour to M. le Prince de Conti, because the cause of these reports, and also the large sums he had drawn from the financier, were not unknown to the public; blame upon him was general, and all the more heavy, because Law had fallen out of public favour, which a mere trifle had changed into spite and indignation.

This is the trifle. The Marechal de Villeroy, incapable of inspiring the King with any solid ideas, adoring even to worship the deceased King, full of wind, and lightness, and frivolity, and of sweet recollections of his early years, his grace at fetes and ballets, his splendid gallantries, wished that the King, in imitation of the deceased monarch, should dance in a ballet. It was a little too early to think of this. This pleasure seemed a trifle too much of pain to so young a King; his timidity should have been vanquished by degrees, in order to accustom him to society which he feared, before engaging him to show himself off in public, and dance upon a stage.

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The deceased King,—educated in a brilliant Court, where rule and grandeur were kept up with much distinction, and where continual intercourse with ladies, the Queen-mother, and others of the Court, had early fashioned and emboldened him, had relished and excelled in these sorts of fetes and amusements, amid a crowd of young people of both sexes, who all rightfully bore the names of nobility, and amongst whom scarcely any of humble birth were mixed, for we cannot call thus some three or four of coarser stuff, who were admitted simply for the purpose of adding strength and beauty to the ballet, by the grace of their faces and the elegance of their movements, with a few dancing-masters to regulate and give the tone to the whole. Between this time and that I am now speaking of was an abyss. The education of those days instructed every one in grace, address, exercise, respect for bearing, graduated and delicate politeness, polished and decent gallantry. The difference, then, between the two periods is seen at a glance, without time lost in pointing it out.

Reflection was not the principal virtue of the Marechal de Villeroy. He thought of no obstacle either on the part of the King or elsewhere, and declared that his Majesty would dance in a ballet. Everything was soon ready for the execution. It was not so with the action. It became necessary to search for young people who could dance: soon, whether they danced ill or well, they were gladly received; at last the only question was, “Whom can we get?” consequently a sorry lot was obtained. Several, who ought never to have been admitted, were, and so easily, that from one to the other Law had the temerity to ask M. le Duc d’Orleans to allow his son, who danced very well, to join the ballet company! The Regent, always easy, still enamoured of Law, and, to speak truth, purposely contributing as much as possible to confusion of rank, immediately accorded the demand, and undertook to say so to the Marechal de Villeroy.

The Marechal, who hated and crossed Law with might and main, reddened with anger, and represented to the Regent what, in fact, deserved to be said: the Regent, in reply, named several young people, who, although of superior rank, were not so well fitted for the ballet as young Law; and although the answer to this was close at hand, the Marechal could not find it, and exhausted himself in vain exclamations. He could not, therefore, resist the Regent; and having no support from M. le Duc, superintendent of the King’s education and a great protector of Law and of confusion, he gave in, and the financier’s son was named for the ballet.

It is impossible to express the public revolt excited by this bagatelle, at which every one was offended. Nothing else was spoken of for some days; tongues wagged freely, too; and a good deal of dirty water was thrown upon other dancers in the ballet.

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At last the public was satisfied. The small-pox seized Law's son, and (on account of its keeping him from the ballet) caused universal joy. The ballet was danced several times, its success answering in no way to the Marechal de Villeroy. The King was so wearied, so fatigued, with learning, with rehearsing, and with dancing this ballet, that he took an aversion for these fetes and for everything offering display, which has never quitted him since, and which does not fail to leave a void in the Court; so that this ballet ceased sooner than was intended, and the Marechal de Villeroy never dared to propose another.

M. le Duc d'Orleans, either by his usual facility, or to smooth down the new elevation of Law to the post of comptroller-general, bestowed a number of pecuniary favours; he gave 600,000 livres to La Fare, captain of his guard; 200,000 livres to Castries, chevalier d'honneur to Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans; 200,000 livres to the old Prince de Courtenay, who much needed them; 20,000 livres pension to the Prince de Talmont; 6000 livres to the Marquise de Bellefonds, who already had a similar sum; and moved by cries on the part of M. le Prince de Conti, 60,000 livres to the Comte de la Marche his son, scarcely three years old; he gave, also, smaller amounts to various others. Seeing so much depredation, and no recovery to hope for, I asked M. le Duc d'Orleans to attach 12,000 livres, by way of increase, to my government of Senlis, which was worth only 1000 livres, and of which my second son had the reversion. I obtained it at once.

CHAPTER C

About the commencement of the new year, 1720, the system of Law approached its end. If he had been content with his bank his bank within wise and proper limits—the money of the realm might have been doubled, and an extreme facility afforded to commerce and to private enterprise, because, the establishment always being prepared to meet its liabilities, the notes it issued would have been as good as ready money, and sometimes even preferable, on account of the facility of transport. It must be admitted, however, as I declared to M. le Duc d'Orleans in his cabinet, and as I openly said in the Council of the Regency when the bank passed there, that good as this establishment might be in itself, it could only be so in a republic, or in a monarchy, like that of England, where the finances are absolutely governed by those who furnish them, and who simply furnish as much or as little as they please; but in a trivial, changing, and more than absolute state like France solidity necessarily is wanting, consequently confidence (at least of a discreet and proper kind): since a king, and under his name, a mistress, a minister, favourites; still more, extreme necessities, such as the deceased King experienced in the years 1707-8-9 and 10,—a hundred things, in fact, could overthrow the bank, the allurements of which were,

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at once, too great and too easy. But to add to the reality of this bank, the chimera of the Mississippi, with its shares, its special jargon, its science (a continual juggle for drawing money from one person to give it to another), was to almost guarantee that these shares should at last end in smoke (since we had neither mines, nor quarries of the philosopher's stone), and that the few would be enriched at the expense of the many, as in fact happened.

What hastened the fall of the bank, and of the system, was the inconceivable prodigality of M. le Duc d'Orleans, who, without bounds, and worse still, if it can be, without choice, could not resist the importunities even of those whom he knew, beyond all doubt, to have been the most opposed to him, and who were completely despicable, but gave with open hands; and more frequently allowed money to be drawn from him by people who laughed at him, and who were grateful only to their effrontery. People with difficulty believe what they have seen; and posterity will consider as a fable what we ourselves look upon as a dream. At last, so much was given to a greedy and prodigal nation, always covetous and in want on account of its luxury, its disorder, and its confusion of ranks, that paper became scarce, and the mills could not furnish enough.

It may be imagined by this, what abuse had been made of a bank, established as a resource always ready, but which could not exist as such without being always delicately adjusted; and above all, kept in a state to meet the obligations it had contracted. I obtained information on this point from Law, when he came to me on Tuesday mornings; for a long time he played with me before admitting his embarrassments, and complained modestly and timidly, that the Regent was ruining everything by his extravagance. I knew from outsiders more than he thought, and it was this that induced me to press him upon his balance-sheet. In admitting to me, at last, although faintly, what he could no longer hide, he assured me he should not be wanting in resources provided M. le Duc d'Orleans left him free. That did not persuade me. Soon after, the notes began to lose favour; then to fall into discredit, and the discredit to become public. Then came the necessity to sustain them by force, since they could no longer be sustained by industry; and the moment force showed itself every one felt that all was over. Coercive authority was resorted to; the use of gold, silver, and jewels was suppressed (I speak of coined money); it was pretended that since the time of Abraham,—Abraham, who paid ready money for the sepulchre of Sarah,—all the civilised nations in the world had been in the greatest error and under the grossest delusion, respecting money and the metals it is made of; that paper alone was useful and necessary; that we could not do greater harm to our neighbours—jealous of our greatness and of our advantages—than to send to them all our money and all our jewels; and this idea was

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in no way concealed, for the Indian Company was allowed to visit every house, even Royal houses, confiscate all the louis d'or, and the coins it could find there; and to leave only pieces of twenty sous and under (to the amount of not more than 200 francs), for the odd money of bills, and in order to purchase necessary provisions of a minor kind, with prohibitions, strengthened by heavy punishment, against keeping more; so that everybody was obliged to take all the ready money he possessed to the bank, for fear of its being discovered by a valet. But nobody, as may be imagined, was persuaded of the justice of the power accorded to the Company, and accordingly authority was more and more exerted; all private houses were searched, informations were laid against people in order that no money might be kept back, or if it were, that the guilty parties might be severely punished.

Never before had sovereign power been so violently exercised, never had it attacked in such a manner the temporal interests of the community. Therefore was it by a prodigy, rather than by any effort or act of the government, that these terribly new ordonnances failed to produce the saddest and most complete revolutions; but there was not even talk of them; and although there were so many millions of people, either absolutely ruined or dying of hunger, and of the direst want, without means to procure their daily subsistence, nothing more than complaints and groans was heard.

This violence was, however, too excessive, and in every respect too indefensible to last long; new paper and new juggling tricks were of necessity resorted to; the latter were known to be such—people felt them to be such—but they submitted to them rather than not have twenty crowns in safety in their houses; and a greater violence made people suffer the smaller. Hence so many projects, so many different faces in finance, and all tending to establish one issue of paper upon another; that is to say, always causing loss to the holders of the different paper (everybody being obliged to hold it), and the universal multitude. This is what occupied all the rest of the government, and of the life of M. le Duc d'Orleans; which drove Law out of the realm; which increased six-fold the price of all merchandise, all food even the commonest; which ruinously augmented every kind of wages, and ruined public and private commerce; which gave, at the expense of the public, sudden riches to a few noblemen who dissipated it, and were all the poorer in a short time; which enabled many financiers' clerks, and the lowest dregs of the people, profiting by the general confusion, to take advantage of the Mississippi, and make enormous fortunes; which occupied the government several years after the death of M. le Duc d'Orleans; and which, to conclude, France never will recover from, although it may be true that the value of land is considerably augmented. As a last affliction, the all-powerful, especially the princes and princesses

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of the blood, who had been mixed up, in the Mississippi, and who had used all their authority to escape from it without loss, re-established it upon what they called the Great Western Company, which with the same juggles and exclusive trade with the Indies, is completing the annihilation of the trade of the realm, sacrificed to the enormous interest of a small number of private individuals, whose hatred and vengeance the government has not dared to draw upon itself by attacking their delicate privileges.

Several violent executions, and confiscations of considerable sums found in the houses searched, took place. A certain Adine, employed at the bank, had 10,000 crowns confiscated, was fined 10,000 francs, and lost his appointment. Many people hid their money with so much secrecy, that, dying without being able to say where they had put it, these little treasures remained buried and lost to the heirs.

In the midst of the embarrassments of the finances, and in spite of them, M. le Duc d'Orleans continued his prodigal gifts. He attached pensions of 6000 livres and 4000 livres to the grades of lieutenant-general and camp-marshal. He gave a pension of 20,000 livres to old Montauban; one of 6000 livres to M. de Montauban (younger brother of the Prince de Guemene); and one of 6000 livres to the Duchesse de Brissac. To several other people he gave pensions of 4000 livres; to eight or ten others, 3000 or 2000 livres. I obtained one of 8000 livres for Madame Marechal de Lorges; and one of 6000 livres was given to the Marechal de Chamilly, whose affairs were much deranged by the Mississippi. M. de Soubise and the Marquis Noailles had each upwards of 200,000 livres. Even Saint-Genies, just out of the Bastille, and banished to Beauvais, had a pension of 1000. Everybody in truth wanted an augmentation of income, on account of the extreme high price to which the commonest, almost necessary things had risen, and even all other things; which, although at last diminished by degrees, remain to this day much dearer than they were before the Mississippi.

The pensions being given away, M. le Duc d'Orleans began to think how he could reduce the public expenditure. Persuaded by those in whose financial knowledge he had most confidence, he resolved to reduce to two per cent. the interest upon all the funds. This much relieved those who paid, but terribly cut down the income of those who received, that is to say, the creditors of the state, who had lent their money at five per cent., according to the loan—and, public faith and usage, and who had hitherto peacefully enjoyed that interest. M. le Duc d'Orleans assembled at the Palais Royal several financiers of different rank, and resolved with them to pass this edict. It made much stir among the Parliament men, who refused to register it. But M. le Duc d'Orleans would not change his determination, and maintained his decree in spite of them.

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By dint of turning and turning around the Mississippi, not to say of juggling with it, the desire came to establish, according to the example of the English, colonies in the vast countries beyond the seas. In order to people these colonies, persons without means of livelihood, sturdy beggars, female and male, and a quantity of public creatures were carried off. If this had been executed with discretion and discernment, with the necessary measures and precautions, it would have ensured the object proposed, and relieved Paris and the provinces of a heavy, useless, and often dangerous burthen; but in Paris and elsewhere so much violence, and even more roguery, were mixed up with it, that great murmuring was excited. Not the slightest care had been taken to provide for the subsistence of so many unfortunate people, either while in the place they were to embark from, or while on the road to reach it; by night they were shut up, with nothing to eat, in barns, or in the dry ditches of the towns they stopped in, all means of egress being forbidden them. They uttered cries which excited pity and indignation; but the alms collected for them not being sufficient, still less the little their conductors gave them, they everywhere died in frightful numbers.

[Illustration: Mississippi Colonization—Painted by C. E. Delort—1176]

This inhumanity, joined to the barbarity of the conductors, to violence of a kind unknown until this, and to the rascality of carrying off people who were not of the prescribed quality, but whom others thus got rid of by whispering a word in the ear of the conductors and greasing their palms; all these things, I say, caused so much stir, so much excitement, that the system, it was found, could not be kept up. Some troops had been embarked, and during the voyage were not treated much better than the others. The persons already collected were set at liberty, allowed to do what they pleased, and no more were seized. Law, regarded as the author of these seizures, became much detested, and M. le Duc d'Orleans repented having ever fallen in with the scheme.

The 22nd of May of this year, 1720, became celebrated by the publication of a decree of the Council of State, concerning the shares of the Company of the Indies (the same as that known under the name of Mississippi) and the notes of Law's bank. This decree diminished by degrees, and from month to month, the value of the shares and the notes, so that, by the end of the year, that value would have been reduced one-half.

This, in the language of finance and of bankruptcy, was to turn tail with a vengeance: and its effect, while remedying nothing, was to make people believe that things were in a worse state than was actually the case. Argenson, who, as we have seen, had been turned out of the finances to make room for Law, was generally accused of suggesting this decree out of malice, already foreseeing all the evils that must

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arise from it. The uproar was general and frightful. There was not a rich person who did not believe himself lost without resource; not a poor one who did not see himself reduced to beggary. The Parliament, so opposed to the new money system, did not let slip this fine opportunity. It rendered itself the protector of the public by refusing to register the decree, and by promptly uttering the strongest remonstrance against it. The public even believed that to the Parliament was due the sudden revocation of the edict, which, however, was simply caused by the universal complaining, and the tardy discovery of the fault committed in passing it. The little confidence in Law remaining was now radically extinguished; not an atom of it could ever be set afloat again. Seditious writings and analytical and reasonable pamphlets rained on all sides, and the consternation was general.

The Parliament assembled on Monday, the 27th of May, in the morning, and named certain of its members to go to M. le Duc d'Orleans, with remonstrances against the decree. About noon of the same day, M. le Duc d'Orleans sent La Vrilliere to say to the Parliament that he revoked that decree, and that the notes would remain as before. La Vrilliere, finding that the Parliament had adjourned, went to the Chief-President, to say with what he was charged. After dinner the Parliamentary deputies came to the Palais Royal, where they were well received; M. le Duc d'Orleans confirmed what they had already heard from La Vrilliere, and said to them that he would re-establish the funds of the Hotel de Ville at two-and-a-half percent. The deputies expected that in justice and in goodness he ought to raise them to at least three per cent. M. le Duc d'Orleans answered, that he should like not only to raise them to three, but to four, nay, five per cent.; but that the state of affairs would not permit him to go beyond two-and-a-half. On the next day was published the counter-decree, which placed the shares and actions as they were before the 22nd of May. The decree of that date was therefore revoked in six days, after having caused such a strange effect.

On Wednesday, the 29th, a pretty little comedy was played. Le Blanc, Secretary of State, went to Law, told him that M. le Duc d'Orleans discharged him from his office as comptroller-general of the finances, thanked him for the attention he had given to it, and announced that as many people in Paris did not like him, a meritorious officer should keep guard in his house to prevent any accident that might happen to him. At the same time, Benzualde, major of the regiment of Swiss guards, arrived with sixteen of his men to remain night and day in Law's house.

The Scotchman did not in the least expect this dismissal or this guard, but he appeared very tranquil respecting both, and maintained his usual coolness. The next day he was taken by the Duc de la Force to the Palais Royal. Then comedy number two was played. M. le Duc d'Orleans refused to see the financier, who went away without an interview. On the day after, however, Law was admitted by the back stairs, closeted with the Regent, and was treated by him as well as ever. The comedies were over.

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On Sunday, the 2nd of June, Benzualde and his Swiss withdrew from Law's house. Stock-jobbing was banished at the same time from the Rue Quincampoix, and established in the Place Vendome. In this latter place there was more room for it. The passers-by were not incommoded. Yet some people did not find it as convenient as the other. At this time the King gave up to the bank one hundred million of shares he had in it.

On the 5th July, a decree of the Council was issued, prohibiting people from possessing jewels, from keeping them locked up, or from selling them to foreigners. It may be imagined what a commotion ensued. This decree was grafted upon a number of others, the object of all, too visibly, being to seize upon all coin, in favour of the discredited paper, in which nobody could any longer have the slightest confidence. In vain M. le Duc d'Orleans, M. le Duc, and his mother, tried to persuade others, by getting rid of their immense stores of jewels, that is to say, by sending them abroad on a journey—nothing more: not a person was duped by this example; not a person omitted to conceal his jewels very carefully: a thing much more easy to accomplish than the concealment of gold or silver coin, on account of the smaller value of precious stones. This jewellery eclipse was not of long duration.

CHAPTER CI

Immediately after the issue of this decree an edict was drawn up for the establishment of an Indian commercial company, which was to undertake to reimburse in a year six, hundred millions of bank notes, by paying fifty thousand dollars per month. Such was the last resource of Law and his system. For the juggling tricks of the Mississippi, it was found necessary to substitute something real; especially since the edict of the 22nd of May, so celebrated and so disastrous for the paper. Chimeras were replaced by realities—by a true India Company; and it was this name and this thing which succeeded, which took the place of the undertaking previously known as the Mississippi. It was in vain that the tobacco monopoly and a number of other immense monopolies were given to the new company; they could not enable it to meet the proper claims spread among the public, no matter what trouble might be taken to diminish them at all hazard and at all loss.

It was now necessary to seek other expedients. None could be found except that of rendering this company a commercial one; this was, under a gentler name, a name vague and unpretending, to hand over to it the entire and exclusive commerce of the country. It may be imagined how such a resolution was received by the public, exasperated by the severe decree, prohibiting people, under heavy penalties, from having more than five-hundred livres, in coin, in their possession, subjecting them to visits of inspection, and leaving them nothing but bank notes to, pay for the commonest necessities of daily life. Two things resulted; first, fury, which day by day was so embittered by the difficulty of obtaining money for daily subsistence, that it was a marvel

all Paris did not revolt at once, and that the emeute was appeased; second, the Parliament, taking its stand upon this public emotion, held firm to the end in refusing to register the edict instituting the new company.

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On the 15th of July, the Chancellor showed in his own house the draught of the edict to deputies from the Parliament, who remained with him until nine o'clock at night, without being persuaded. On the morrow, the 16th, the edict was brought forward in the Regency Council. M. le Duc d'Orleans, sustained by M. le Duc, spoke well upon it, because he could not speak ill, however bad his theme. Nobody said a word, and all bowed their necks. It was resolved, in this manner, to send the edict to the Parliament on the morrow, the 17th of July.

That same 17th of July, there was such a crowd in the morning, at the bank and in the neighbouring streets, for the purpose of obtaining enough money to go to market with, that ten or twelve people were stifled. Three of the bodies were tumultuously carried to the Palais Royal, which the people, with loud cries, wished to enter. A detachment of the King's guards at the Tuileries was promptly sent there. La Vrilliere and Le Blanc separately harangued the people. The lieutenant of police came; brigades of the watch were sent for. The dead bodies were afterwards carried away, and by gentleness and cajoleries the people were at length dispersed. The detachment of the King's guards returned to the Tuileries. By about ten o'clock in the morning, all being over, Law took it into his head to go to the Palais Royal. He received many imprecations as he passed through the streets. M. le Duc d'Orleans thought it would be well not to let him leave the Palais Royal, and gave him a lodging there. He sent back Law's carriage, however, the windows of which were smashed on the way by the stones thrown at them. Law's house, too, was attacked, amid much breaking of windows. All this was known so late in our quarter of the Jacobins of the Saint-Dominique, that when I arrived at the Palais Royal there was not a vestige visible of any disturbance. M. le Duc d'Orleans, in the midst of a very small company, was very tranquil, and showed that you would not please him unless you were so also. I did not stop long, having nothing to do or say.

This same morning the edict was carried to the Parliament, which refused to register it, and sent a deputation to M. le Duc d'Orleans with its reasons for this, at which the Regent was much vexed. The next morning an ordonnance of the King was pasted all over the town, prohibiting the people, under heavy penalties, to assemble, and announcing that in consequence of the disturbances which had taken place the previous day at the bank, that establishment would remain closed until further notice, and no more money would be paid by it. Luck supplied the place of prudence; for people knew not how they were to live in the meanwhile, yet no fresh disturbance occurred fact which shows the goodness and obedience of the people, subjected to so many and to such strange trials. Troops, however, were collected at Charenton, who were at work upon the canal of Montargis: some regiments of

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cavalry and of dragoons were stationed at Saint-Denis, and the King's regiment was posted upon the heights of Chaillot. Money was sent to Gonesse to induce the bakers to come as usual, and for fear they should refuse bank notes, like the Paris workmen and shopkeepers, nearly all of whom would no longer receive any paper, the regiment of the guards had orders to hold itself ready, and the musketeers to keep within their quarters, their horses saddled and bridled.

As for the Parliament, M. le Duc d'Orleans determined to punish its disobedience by sending it to Blois. This resolution was carried in full council. The Regent hoped that the Parliamentary men, accustomed to the comfort of their Paris homes, and to the society there of their wives; children, and friends, would soon grow tired of being separated from them, and of the extra expense they would be put to, and would give in. I agreed to the project, although I saw, alas! that by this exile the Parliament would be punished, but would be neither conciliated nor tamed into submission. To make matters worse, Blois was given up, and Pontoise was substituted for it! This latter town being close to Paris, the chastisement became ridiculous, showed the vacillating weakness of the Regent, and encouraged the Parliament to laugh at him. One thing was, however, well done. The resolution taken to banish the Parliament was kept so secret that that assembly had not the slightest knowledge of it.

On Sunday, the 21st of July, squadrons of the guards, with officers at their head, took possession, at four o'clock in the morning, of all the doors of the Palais de justice. The musketeers seized at the same time upon the doors of the Grand Chamber, whilst others invaded the house of the Chief-President, who was in much fear during the first hour. Other musketeers went in parties of four to all the officers of the Parliament, and served them with the King's order, commanding them to repair to Pontoise within twice twenty-four hours. All passed off very politely on both sides, so that there was not the slightest complaint: several members obeyed the same day and went to Pontoise.

Rather late in the evening M. le Duc d'Orleans sent to the Attorney-General 200,000 livres in coin, and as much in bank notes of 100 livres, and of 10 livres to be given to those who should need them for the journey, but not as gifts. The Chief-President was more brazen and more fortunate; he made so many promises, showed so much meanness, employed so much roguery, that abusing by these means the feebleness and easiness of the Regent, whom he laughed at, he obtained more than 100,000 ecus for his expenses. The poor prince gave him the money, under the rose, in two or three different payments, and permitted the Duc de Bouillon to lend him his house at Pontoise, completely furnished, and the garden of which, on the banks of the river, is admirable and immense, a masterpiece of its kind, and had been the delight

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of Cardinal Bouillon, being perhaps the only thing in France he regretted. With such fine assistance the Chief-President—on bad terms with his companions, who had openly despised him for some time—perfectly made it up with them. He kept at Pontoise open table for the Parliament; all were every day at liberty to use it if they liked, so that there were always several tables, all equally, delicately, and splendidly served. He sent, too, to those who asked for them, liquors, *etc.*, as they could desire. Cooling drinks and fruits of all kinds were abundantly served every afternoon, and there were a number of little one and two-horse vehicles always ready for the ladies and old men who liked a drive, besides play-tables in the apartments until supper time. The result of all this magnificence was, as I have said, that the Chief-President completely reinstated himself in the good graces of his companions; but it was at the expense of the Regent, who was laughed at for his pains. A large number of the members of the Parliament did not go to Pontoise at all, but took advantage of the occasion to recreate themselves in the country. Only a few of the younger members mounted guard in the assembly, where nothing but the most trivial and make-believe business was conducted. Everything important was deliberately neglected. Woe! to those, therefore, who had any trial on hand. The Parliament, in a word, did nothing but divert itself, leave all business untouched, and laugh at the Regent and the government. Banishment to Pontoise was a fine punishment!

This banishment of the Parliament to Pontoise was followed by various financial operations and by several changes in the administrations. Des Forts had the general control of the finances and all authority, but without the name. The disordered state of the exchequer did not hinder M. le Duc d'Orleans from indulging in his strange liberalities to people without merit and without need, and not one of whom he could possibly care a straw for. He gave to Madame la Grande Duchesse an augmentation of her pension of 50,000 livres; one of 8,000 livres to Trudaine: one of 9,000 livres to Chateauneuf; one of 8,000 livres to Bontems, chief valet de chambre of the King; one of 6,000 livres to the Marechal de Montesquieu; one of 3,000 livres to Faucault; and one of 9,000 livres to the widow of the Duc d'Albemarle, secretly remarried to the son of Mahoni.

All this time the public stock-jobbing still continued on the Place Vendome. The Mississippi had tempted everybody. It was who should fill his pockets first with millions, through M. le Duc d'Orleans and Law. The crowd was very great. One day the Marechal de Villars traversed the Place Vendome in a fine coach, loaded with pages and lackeys, to make way for which the mob of stock-jobbers had some difficulty. The Marechal upon this harangued the people in his braggart manner from the carriage window, crying out against the iniquity of stock-jobbing,

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and the shame it cast upon all. Until this point he had been allowed to say on, but when he thought fit to add that his own hands were clean, and that he had never dabbled in shares, a voice uttered a cutting sarcasm, and all the crowd took up the word, at which the Marechal, ashamed and confounded, despite his ordinary authority, buried himself in his carriage and finished his journey across the Place Vendome at a gentle trot in the midst of a hue and cry, which followed him even beyond, and which diverted Paris at his expense for several days, nobody pitying him.

At last it was found that this stock-jobbing too much embarrassed the Place Vendome and the public way; it was transferred, therefore, to the vast garden of the Hotel de Soissons. This was, in fact, its proper place. Law, who had remained at the Palais Royal some time, had returned to his own house, where he received many visits. The King several times went to see the troops that had been stationed near Paris; after this they were sent away again. Those which had formed a little camp at Charenton, returned to Montargis to work at the canal making there.

Law, for commercial reasons, had some time ago caused Marseilles to be made a free port. The consequence of this was that an abundance of vessels came there, especially vessels from the Levant, and from want of precautions the plague came also, lasted a long while, desolated the town, province; and the neighbouring provinces. The care and precautions afterwards taken restrained it as much as possible, but did not hinder it from lasting a long time, or from creating frightful disorders. These details are so well known that they can be dispensed with here.

I have a few more words to say of Law and his Mississippi. The bubble finally burst at the end of the year (1720). Law, who had no more resources, being obliged secretly to depart from the realm, was sacrificed to the public. His flight was known only through the eldest son of Argenson, intendant at Mainbeuge, who had the stupidity to arrest him. The courier he despatched with the news was immediately sent back, with a strong reprimand for not having deferred to the passport with which Law had been furnished by the Regent. The financier was with his son, and they both went to Brussels where the Marquis de Prie, Governor of the Imperial Low Countries, received them very well, and entertained them. Law did not stop long, gained Liege and Germany, where he offered his talents to several princes, who all thanked him; nothing more. After having thus roamed, he passed through the Tyrol, visited several Italian courts, not one of which would have him, and at last retired to Venice. This republic, however, did not employ him. His wife and daughter followed him some time after. I don't know what became of them or of the son.

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Law was a Scotchman; of very doubtful birth; tall and well made; of agreeable face and aspect; gallant, and on very good terms with the ladies of all the countries he had travelled in. His wife was not his wife; she was of a good English family and well connected; had followed Law for love; had had a son and a daughter by him, passed for his wife, and bore his name without being married to him. This was suspected towards the end; after his departure it became certain. She had one eye and the top of one cheek covered by an ugly stain as of wine; otherwise she was well made, proud, impertinent in her conversation and in her manners, receiving compliments, giving next to none, paying but few visits, these rare and selected, and exercising authority in her household. I know not whether her credit over her husband was great; but he appeared full of regard, of care, and of respect for her; at the time of their departure they were each about fifty and fifty-five years old. Law had made many acquisitions of all kinds and still more debts, so that this tangle is not yet unravelled by the committee of the council appointed to arrange his affairs with his creditors. I have said elsewhere, and I repeat it here, that there was neither avarice nor roguery in his composition. He was a gentle, good, respectable man, whom excess of credit and fortune had not spoiled, and whose deportment, equipages, table, and furniture could not scandalise any one. He suffered with singular patience and constancy all the vexations excited by his operations, until towards the last, when, finding himself short of means and wishing to meet his difficulty, he became quick and bad-tempered, and his replies were often ill-measured. He was a man of system, of calculation, of comparison, well and profoundly instructed in these things, and, without ever cheating, had everywhere gained at play by dint of understanding—which seems to me incredible—the combinations of cards.

His bank, as I have elsewhere said, was an excellent thing for a republic, or for a country like England, where finance is as in a republic. His Mississippi he was the dupe of, and believed with good faith he should make great and rich establishments in America. He reasoned like an Englishman, and did not know how opposed to commerce and to such establishments are the frivolity of the (French) nation, its inexperience, its avidity to enrich itself at once, the inconvenience of a despotic government, which meddles with everything, which has little or no consistency, and in which what one minister does is always destroyed by his successor.

Law's proscription of specie, then of jewels, so as to have only paper in France, is a system I have never comprehended, nor has anybody, I fancy, during all the ages which have elapsed since that in which Abraham, after losing Sarah, bought, for ready-money, a sepulchre for her and for her children. But Law was a man of system, and of system so deep, that nobody ever could get to the bottom of it, though he spoke easily, well and clearly, but with a good deal of English in his French.

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He remained several years at Venice, upon very scanty means, and died there a Catholic, having lived decently, but very humbly, wisely, and modestly, and received with piety the last sacraments of the Church.

Thus terminates all I have to say of Law. But a painful truth remains. I have to speak of the woful disorder in the finances which his system led to, disorder which was not fully known until after his departure from France. Then people saw, at last, where all the golden schemes that had flooded upon popular credulity had borne us;—not to the smiling and fertile shores of Prosperity and Confidence, as may be imagined; but to the bleak rocks and dangerous sands of Ruin and Mistrust, where dull clouds obscure the sky, and where there is no protection against the storm.

CHAPTER CII

Not long after the flight of Law, that is to say, on Sunday, the 24th of January, of the new year, 1721, a council was held at the Tuileries, at four o'clock in the afternoon, principally for the purpose of examining the state of the finances and of Law's Bank and India Company. It was, in fact, high time to do something to diminish the overgrown disorder and confusion everywhere reigning. For some time there had been complete stagnation in all financial matters; the credit of the King had step by step diminished, private fortune had become more and more uncertain. The bag was at last empty, the cards were cast aside, the last trick was played: The administration of the finances had passed into the hands of La Houssaye, and his first act was to call the attention of the Regency Council to the position of the bank and the company. We were prepared to hear that things were in a very bad state, but we were scarcely prepared to find that they so closely resembled utter ruin and bankruptcy.

I need not relate all that passed at this council; the substance of it is enough. From the statement there of M. le Duc d'Orleans, it appeared that Law had issued 1,200,000,000 livres of bank notes more than he ought to have issued. The first 600,000,000 livres had not done much harm, because they had been kept locked up in the bank; but after the 22nd of May, another issue of 600,000,000 had taken place, and been circulated among the public, without the knowledge of the Regent, without the authorisation of any decree. "For this," said M. le Duc d'Orleans, "Law deserved to be hanged, but under the circumstances of the case, I drew him from his embarrassment, by an ante-dated decree, ordering the issue of this quantity of notes."

Thereupon M. le Duc said to the Regent, "But, Monsieur, why, knowing this, did you allow him to leave the realm?"

"It was you who furnished him with the means to do so," replied M. le Duc d'Orleans.

"I never asked you to allow him to quit the country," rejoined M. le Duc.

“But,” insisted the Regent, “it was you yourself who sent him his passports.”

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"That's true," replied M. le Duc, "but it was you who gave them to me to send to him; but I never asked you for them, or to let him leave the realm. I know that I have the credit for it amongst the public, and I am glad of this opportunity to explain here the facts of the case. I was against the proposition for sending M. Law to the Bastille, or to any other prison, because I believed that it was not to your interest to sanction this, after having made use of him as you had; but I never asked you to let him leave the realm, and I beg you, Monsieur, in presence of the King, and before all these gentlemen, to say if I ever did."

"'Tis true," replied the Regent, "you never asked me; I allowed him to go, because I thought his presence in France would injure public credit, and the operations of the public."

"So far was I from asking you," said M. le Duc, "that if you had done me the honour to demand my opinion, I should have advised you to take good care not to let him depart from the country."

This strange conversation, which roused our astonishment to an incredible point, and which was sustained with so much out-spoken freedom by M. le Duc, demands a word or two of explanation.

M. le Duc was one of those who, without spending a farthing, had drawn millions from Law's notes and shares. He had had large allotments of the latter, and now that they had become utterly valueless, he had been obliged to make the best of a bad bargain, by voluntarily giving them up, in order to lighten the real responsibilities of the Company. This he had done at the commencement of the Council, M. le Prince de Conti also. But let me explain at greater length.

The 22nd of May, the day of the decree, was the period at which commenced the final decay of the Company, and of the bank, and the extinction of all confidence by the sad discovery that there was no longer any money wherewith to pay the bank notes, they being so prodigiously in excess of the coin. After this, each step had been but a stumble: each operation a very feeble palliation. Days and weeks had been gained, obscurity had been allowed to give more chance, solely from fear of disclosing the true and terrible state of affairs, and the extent of the public ruin. Law could not wash his hands of all this before the world; he could not avoid passing for the inventor and instrument, and he would have run great risk at the moment when all was unveiled. M. le Duc d'Orleans, who, to satisfy his own prodigality, and the prodigious avidity of his friends, had compelled Law to issue so many millions of livres of notes more than he had any means of paying, and who had thus precipitated him into the abyss, could not let him run the chance of perishing, still less to save him, could he proclaim himself the real criminal. It was to extricate himself from this embarrassment that he made Law leave the country, when he saw that the monstrous deceit could no longer be hidden.

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This manifestation, which so strongly interested the shareholders, and the holders of bank notes, especially those who had received shares or notes as favours due to their authority, and who could show no other title to them, threw every one into despair. The most important holders, such as the Princes of the Blood, and others, whose profits had been immense, had by force or industry delayed this manifestation as long as possible. As they knew the real state of affairs, they felt that the moment all the world knew it also, their gains would cease, and their paper become worthless, that paper from which they had drawn so much, and which had not cost them a farthing! This is what induced M. le Duc d'Orleans to hide from them the day of this manifestation, so as to avoid being importuned by them; and by a surprise, to take from them the power of preparing any opposition to the measures it was proposed to carry out. M. le Duc, when he learned this, flew into a fury, and hence the strange scene between him and M. le Duc d'Orleans, which scandalised and terrified everybody in the Council.

M. le Duc d'Orleans, who, from taste, and afterwards from necessity, lived upon schemes and trickery, thought he had done marvels in saddling M. le Duc with the passport of Law. He wished to lay the blame of Law's departure upon M. le Duc; but as I have shown, he was defeated by his own weapons. He had to do with a man as sharp as himself. M. le Duc, who knew he had nothing to fear, would not allow it to be supposed that he had sanctioned the flight of the financier. That was why he pressed M. le Duc d'Orleans so pitilessly, and forced him to admit that he had never asked him to allow Law to leave the country.

The great and terrible fact brought out by this Council was, that Law, without the knowledge or authority of the Regent, had issued and disseminated among the public 600,000,000 livres of notes; and not only without being authorised by any edict, but contrary to express prohibition. But when the Regent announced this, who did he suppose would credit it? Who could believe that Law would have had the hardihood to issue notes at this rate without the sanction and approbation of his master?

However, to leave once and for all these unpleasant matters, let me say what was resolved upon by way of remedy to the embarrassments discovered to exist. The junction of the India Company with the bank, which had taken place during the previous February, had led to transactions which made the former debtor to the latter to an immense amount. But the bank being a governmental establishment, the King became thus the creditor of the Company. It was decreed, in fact, that the Company should be considered as debtor to the King. It was decided, however, that other debtors should receive first attention. Many private people had invested their money in the shares of the Company. It was not thought just that by the debt of the Company to the King, these people should be ruined; or, on the other hand, that those who had left the Company in good time, who had converted their shares into notes, or who had bought them at a low price in the market, should profit by the misfortune of the bona fide shareholders. Accordingly, commissioners, it was decided, were to be named, to

liquidate all these papers and parchments, and annul those which did not proceed from real purchases.

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M. le Duc said, upon this, "There are at least eighty thousand families, the whole of whose wealth consists of these effects; how are they to live during this liquidation?"

La Houssaye replied, that so many commissioners could be named, that the work would soon be done.

And so the Council ended.

But I must, perforce, retrace my steps at this point to many other matters, which I have left far behind me in going on at once to the end of this financial labyrinth. And first let me tell what happened to that monstrous personage, Alberoni, how he fell from the lofty pinnacle of dower on which he had placed himself, and lost all consideration and all importance in the fall. The story is mightily curious and instructive.

CHAPTER CIII

Alberoni had made himself detested by all Europe,—for all Europe, in one way or another, was the victim of his crimes. He was detested as the absolute master of Spain, whose guides were perfidy, ambition, personal interest, views always oblique, often caprice, sometimes madness; and whose selfish desires, varied and diversified according to the fantasy of the moment, were hidden under schemes always uncertain and oftentimes impossible of execution. Accustomed to keep the King and Queen of Spain in chains, and in the narrowest and obscurest prison, where he allowed them to communicate with no one, and made them see, feel, and breathe through him, and blindly obey his every wish; he caused all Spain to tremble, and had annihilated all power there, except his own, by the most violent acts, constraining himself in no way, despising his master and his mistress, whose will and whose authority he had utterly absorbed. He braved successively all the powers of Europe, and aspired to nothing less than to deceive them all, then to govern them, making them serve all his ends; and seeing at last his cunning exhausted, tried to execute alone, and without allies, the plan he had formed.

This plan was nothing less than to take away from the Emperor all that the peace of Utrecht had left him in Italy; all that the Spanish house of Austria had possessed there; to dominate the Pope and the King of Sicily; to deprive the Emperor of the help of France and England, by exciting the first against the Regent through the schemes of the ambassador Cellamare and the Duc du Maine; and by sending King James to England, by the aid of the North, so as to keep King George occupied with a civil war. In the end he wished to profit by all these disorders, by transporting into Italy (which his cardinalship made him regard as a safe asylum against all reverses) the immense treasures he had pillaged and collected in Spain, under pretext of sending the sums necessary to sustain the war, and the conquests he intended to make; and this last project was, perhaps, the motive power of all the rest. The madness of these schemes,

and his obstinacy in clinging to them, were not discovered until afterwards. The astonishment then was great indeed, upon discovering the poverty of the resources with which he thought himself capable of carrying out these wild projects. Yet he had made such prodigious preparations for war, that he had entirely exhausted the country without rendering it able for a moment to oppose the powers of Europe.

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Alberoni, abhorred in Spain as a cruel tyrant, in France, in England, in Rome, and by the Emperor as an implacable and personal enemy, did not seem to have the slightest uneasiness. Yet he might have had some, and with good cause, at the very moment when he fancied himself most powerful and most secure.

The Regent and the Abbe Dubois, who for a long time had only too many reasons to regard Alberoni as their personal enemy, were unceasingly occupied in silently plotting his fall; they believed the present moment favourable, and did not fail to profit by it. How they did so is a curious fact, which, to my great regret, has never reached me. M. le Duc d'Orleans survived Dubois such a few months that many things I should have liked to have gained information upon, I had not the time to ask him about; and this was one.

All I know is, that what Alberoni always dreaded, at last happened to him. He trembled, at every one, no matter of how little importance, who arrived from Parma (the Queen of Spain, it has not been forgotten, was of that Duchy); he omitted nothing by the aid of the Duke of Parma, and by other means, to hinder the Parmesans from coming to Madrid; and was in terror of the few of those whose journey he could not hinder, and whose dismissal he could not obtain.

Among these few people there was nobody he feared so much as the Queen's nurse, whom he drew up with a round turn occasionally, so to speak, but less from policy than ill-temper. This nurse, who was a rough country-woman of Parma, was named Donna Piscatori Laura. She had arrived in Spain some years after the Queen, who had always liked her, and who made her, shortly after her arrival, her 'assofeta', that is to say, her chief 'femme de chambre'; an office more considerable in Spain than with us. Laura had brought her husband with her, a peasant in every way, seen and known by nobody; but Laura had intelligence, shrewdness, cleverness, and ambitious views, in spite of the external vulgarity of her manners, which she had preserved either from habit, or from policy, for make herself less suspected. Like all persons of this extraction, she was thoroughly selfish. She was not unaware how impatiently Alberoni endured her presence, and feared her favour with the Queen, whom he wished to possess alone; and, more sensible to the gentle taps she from time to time received from him, than to his ordinary attentions, she looked upon him simply as a very formidable enemy, who kept her within very narrow limits, who hindered her from profiting by the favour of the Queen, and whose design was to send her back to Parma, and to leave nothing undone until he had carried it out.

This is all the information I have ever been able to obtain. The probability is, that Donna Laura was gained by the money of the Regent and the intrigues gained Dubois; and that she succeeded in convincing the Queen of Spain that Alberoni was a minister who had ruined the country, who was the sole obstacle in the way of peace, and who had sacrificed everything and everybody to his personal views, their Catholic Majesties

included. However, as I relate only what I know, I shall be very brief upon this interesting event.

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Laura succeeded. Alberoni, at the moment he least expected it, received a note from the King of Spain ordering him to withdraw at once, without attempting to see him or the Queen, or to write to them; and to leave Spain in twice twenty-four hours! An officer of the guards was to accompany him until his departure: How this overruling order was received, and what the Cardinal did, I know not; I only know that he obeyed it, and took the road for Arragon. So few precautions had been taken, that he carried off an immense number of papers, money, and jewels; and it was not until a few days had elapsed, that the King of Spain was informed that the original will of Charles the Second could not be found. It was at once supposed that Alberoni had carried away this precious document (by which Charles the Second named Philippe V. King of Spain), in order to offer it, perhaps, to the Emperor, so as to gain his favour and good graces. Alberoni was stopped. It was not without trouble, the most terrible menaces, and loud cries from him, that he surrendered the testament, and some other important papers which it was perceived were missing. The terror he had inspired was so profound, that, until this moment, no one had dared to show his joy, or to speak, though the tyrant was gone. But this event reassured every one against his return, and the result was an unexampled overflow of delight, of imprecations, and of reports against him, to the King and Queen, of the most public occurrences (which they alone were ignorant of) and of private misdeeds, which it was no longer thought necessary to hide.

M. le Duc d'Orleans did not restrain his joy, still less the Abbe Dubois; it was their work which had overthrown their personal enemy; with him fell the wall of separation, so firmly erected by Alberoni between the Regent and the King of Spain; and (at the same time) the sole obstacle against peace. This last reason caused joy to burst out in Italy, in Vienna, in London; and peace between France, and Spain soon resulted.

The allied princes felicitated themselves on what had happened; even the Dutch were ravished to be delivered of a minister so double-dealing, so impetuous, so powerful. M. le Duc d'Orleans dispatched the Chevalier de Morcieu, a very skilful and intelligent man, and certainly in the hands of the Abbe Dubois, to the extreme confines of the frontiers to wait for Alberoni, accompanying him until the moment of his embarkation in Provence for Italy; with orders never to lose sight of him, to make him avoid the large towns and principal places as much as possible; suffer no honours to be rendered to him; above all, to hinder him from communicating with anybody, or anybody with him; in a word, to conduct him civilly, like a prisoner under guard.

Morcieu executed to the letter this disagreeable commission; all the more necessary, because, entirely disgraced as was Alberoni, everything was to be forced from him while traversing a great part of France, where all who were adverse to the Regent might have recourse to him. Therefore it was not without good reason that every kind of liberty was denied him.

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It may be imagined what was suffered by a man so impetuous, and so accustomed to unlimited power; but he succeeded in accommodating himself to such a great and sudden change of condition; in maintaining his self-possession; in subjecting himself to no refusals; in being sage and measured in his manners; very reserved in speech, with an air as though he cared for nothing; and in adapting himself to everything without questions, without pretension, without complaining, dissimulating everything, and untiringly pretending to regard Morcieu as an accompaniment of honour. He received, then, no sort of civility on the part of the Regent, of Dubois, or of anybody; and performed the day's journeys, arranged by Morcieu, without stopping, almost without suite, until he arrived on the shores of the Mediterranean, where he immediately embarked and passed to the Genoa coast.

Alberoni, delivered of his Argus, and arrived in Italy, found himself in another trouble by the anger of the Emperor, who would suffer him nowhere, and by the indignation of the Court of Rome, which prevailed, on this occasion, over respect for the purple. Alberoni for a long time was forced to keep out of the way, hidden and a fugitive, and was not able to approach Rome until the death of the Pope. The remainder of the life of this most extraordinary man is not a subject for these memoirs. But what ought not to be forgotten is the last mark of rage, despair, and madness that he gave in traversing France. He wrote to M. le Duc d'Orleans, offering to supply him with the means of making a most dangerous war against Spain; and at Marseilles, ready to embark, he again wrote to reiterate the same offers, and press them on the Regent.

I cannot refrain from commenting here upon the blindness of allowing ecclesiastics to meddle with public affairs; above all, cardinals, whose special privilege is immunity from everything most infamous and most degrading. Ingratitude, infidelity, revolt, felony, independence, are the chief characteristics of these eminent criminals.

Of Alberoni's latter days I will say but a few words.

At the death of Clement XI., legal proceedings that had been taken to deprive Alberoni of his cardinalship, came to an end. Wandering and hidden in Italy, he was summoned to attend a conclave for the purpose of electing a new Pope. Alberoni was the opprobrium of the sacred college; proceedings, as I have said, were in progress to deprive him of his cardinalship. The King and Queen of Spain evidently stimulated those proceedings: the Pope just dead had opposed him; but the cardinals would not agree to his disgrace; they would not consent to strip him of his dignity. The example would have been too dangerous. That a cardinal, prince, or great nobleman, should surrender his hat in order to marry, the store of his house demands it; well and good; but to see a cardinal deprive himself of his hat by way of penitence, is what his brethren will not endure. A cardinal may be poisoned, stabbed, got rid of altogether, but lose his dignity he never can. Rome must be infallible, or she is nothing.

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It was decided, that if, at the election of the new Pope, Alberoni were not admitted to take part in the proceedings, he always might protest against them, and declare them irregular. Therefore he was, as I have said, admitted to the conclave. He arrived in Rome, without display, in his own coach, and was received in the conclave with the same honours as all the other cardinals, and performed all the duties of his position.

A few days after the election, he absented himself from Rome, as though to see whether proceedings would be continued against him. But they fell of themselves. The new Pope had no interest in them. The cardinals wished only for silence. Spain felt at last the inutility of her cries. Dubois was in favour of throwing a veil over his former crimes, so that, after a short absence, Alberoni hired in Rome a magnificent palace, and returned there for good, with the attendance, expense, and display his Spanish spoils supplied. He found himself face to face with the Cardinal Giudice, and with Madame des Ursins. The three formed a rare triangle, which caused many a singular scene in home. After seeing them both die, Alberoni became legate at Ferrara, continued there a long time, little esteemed at Rome, where he is now living, sound in mind and body, and eighty-six years of age.

CHAPTER CIV

The King attended the Royal Council for the first time on Sunday, the 18th of February, 1720. He said nothing while there, or on going away, excepting that when M. le Duc d'Orleans, who feared he might grow weary of the proceedings, proposed to him to leave, he said he would stop to the end. After this he did not come always, but often, invariably remaining to the last, without moving or speaking. His presence changed nothing in the order of our arrangements, because his armchair was always there, alone, at the end of the table, and M. le Duc d'Orleans, whether his Majesty came or not, had but a "stool" similar to those we all sat upon. Step by step this council had been so much increased, that now, by the entry of the Duc de Berwick, it numbered sixteen members! To say truth, we were far too many, and we had several among us who would have been much better away. I had tried, but in vain, to make the Regent see this. He did see at last, but it was too late; and meanwhile we were, as I have stated, sixteen in the council. I remember that one day, when the King came, a kitten followed him, and some time after jumped upon him, and thence upon the table, where it began to walk; the Duc de Noailles immediately crying out, because he did not like cats. M. le Duc d'Orleans wished to drive the animal away. I smiled, and said, "Oh, leave the kitten alone, it will make the seventeenth."

M. le Duc d'Orleans burst out laughing at this, and looked at the company, who laughed also, the King as well. His Majesty briefly spoke of it to me on the morrow, as though appreciating the joke, which, by the way, immediately ran over all Paris.

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The Abbe Dubois still maintained his pernicious influence over the Regent, and still looked forward to a cardinalship as the reward of his scheming, his baseness, and his perfidy. In the meantime, the Archbishopric of Cambrai became vacant (by the death, at Rome, of the Cardinal Tremoille). That is to say, the richest archbishopric, and one of the best posts in the Church. The Abbe Dubois was only tonsured; 150,000 livres, a year tempted him, and perhaps this position, from which he could more easily elevate himself to the cardinalship. Impudent as he might be, powerful as might be the empire he had acquired over his master, he was much embarrassed, and masked his effrontery under a trick. He said to M. le Duc d'Orleans, he had a pleasant dream; and related to him that he had dreamt he was Archbishop of Cambrai! The Regent, who smelt the rat, turned on his heel, and said nothing. Dubois, more and more embarrassed, stammered, and paraphrased his dream; then, re-assuring himself by an effort, asked, in an offhand manner, why he should not obtain it, His Royal Highness, by his will alone, being able thus to make his fortune.

M. le Duc d'Orleans was indignant, even terrified, little scrupulous as he might be as to the choice of bishops, and in a tone of contempt replied to Dubois, "What, you Archbishop of Cambrai!" making him thus feel his low origin, and still more the debauchery and scandal of his life. Dubois was, however, too far advanced to stop on the road, and cited examples; unfortunately these were only too many.

M. le Duc d'Orleans, less touched by such bad reasoning than embarrassed how to resist the ardor of a man whom for a long time he had not dared to contradict, tried to get out of the difficulty, by saying, "But you being such a scoundrel, where will you find another to consecrate you?"

"Oh, if it's only that!" exclaimed Dubois, "the thing is done. I know very well who will consecrate me; he is not far from here."

"And who the devil is he who will dare to do so?" asked the Regent.

"Would you like to know?" replied the Abbe, "and does the matter rest only upon that?"

"Well, who?" said the Regent.

"Your chief chaplain," replied Dubois, "who is close at hand. Nothing will please him better; I will run and speak to him."

And thereupon he embraces the knees of M. le Duc d'Orleans (who, caught thus in his own trap, had not the strength to refuse), runs to the Bishop of Nantes, says that he is to have Cambrai, begs the Bishop to consecrate him, and receives his promise to do so, returns, wheels round, tells M. le Duc d'Orleans that his chief chaplain has agreed to the consecration; thanks, praises, admires the Regent, fixes more and more firmly the office

by regarding it as settled, and by persuading M. le Duc d'Orleans, who dares not say no; and in this manner was Dubois made Archbishop of Cambrai!

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The extreme scandal of this nomination caused a strange, stir. Impudent as was the Abbe Dubois, he was extremely embarrassed; and M. le Duc d'Orleans so much ashamed, that it was soon remarked he was humbled if you spoke to him upon the subject. The next question was, from whom Dubois was to receive holy orders? The Cardinal de Noailles was applied to, but he stoutly refused to assist in any way. It may be imagined what an affront this was to Dubois. He never in his life pardoned the Cardinal, who was nevertheless universally applauded for his refusal. But the Abbe Dubois was not a man to be daunted by an ordinary obstacle; he turned his glances elsewhere, and soon went through all the formalities necessary.

The very day he took orders there was a Regency Council at the old Louvre, because the measles, which were then very prevalent, even in the Palais Royal, hindered us from meeting as usual in the Tuileries. A Regency Council without the Abbe Dubois present was a thing to marvel at, and yet his arrival to-day caused even more surprise than his absence would have caused. But he was not a man to waste his time in thanksgiving for what had just happened to him. This was a new scandal, which revived and aggravated the first. Everybody had arrived in the cabinet of the council, M. le Duc d'Orleans also; we were scattered about and standing. I was in a corner of the lower end, when I saw Dubois enter in a stout coat, with his ordinary bearing. We did not expect him on such a day, and naturally enough cried out surprised. M. le Prince de Conti, with his father's sneering manner, spoke to the Abbe Dubois, on his appearance among us on the very day of taking orders, and expressed his surprise at it with the most pathetic malignity imaginable.

Dubois, who had not had time to reply one word, let him say to the end; then coldly observed, that if he had been a little more familiar with ancient history, he would not have found what astonished him very strange, since he (the Abbe) had only followed the example of Saint-Ambrose, whose ordination he began to relate. I did not wait for his recital; at the mere mention of Saint-Ambrose I flew to the other end of the cabinet, horror-struck at the comparison Dubois had just made, and fearing lest I should be tempted to say to him, that the ordination of Saint-Ambrose had been forced upon him in spite of his resistance. This impious citation of Saint-Ambrose ran all over the town with the effect that may be imagined. The nomination and this ordination took place towards the end of February.

I will finish at once all that relates to this matter, so as not to separate it, or have to return to it. Dubois had his bulls at the commencement of May, and the consecration was fixed for Sunday the 9th of June. All Paris and the Court were invited to it, myself excepted. I was on bad terms with Dubois, because I in no way spared him when with M. le Duc d'Orleans. He on his side, fearing the power I had over the Regent, the liberty I enjoyed with him, and the freedom with which I spoke to him, did as much as he could to injure me, and to weaken the confidence of M. le Duc d'Orleans in me. Dubois and I continued, nevertheless, to be on good terms with each other in appearance, but it was in appearance only.

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This consecration was to be magnificent, and M. le Duc d'Orleans was to be present at it. If the nomination and the ordination of the Abbe Dubois had caused much stir, scandal, and horror, the superb preparations for the consecration caused even more: Great was the indignation against M. le Duc d'Orleans. I went, therefore, to him the evening before this strange ceremony was to take place, to beg him not to attend it. I represented to him that the nomination and ordination of the Abbe Dubois had created frightful effect upon the public, and that the consecration of a man of such low extraction, and whose manners and mode of life were so notorious; would create more. I added, that if he attended this ceremony, people would say it was simply for the purpose of mocking God, and insulting His Church; that the effect of this would be terrible, and always much to be feared; and that people would say the Abbe Dubois abused the mastery he had over him, and that this was evidence of dependence would draw down upon him hatred, disdain, and shame, the results of which were to be dreaded. I concluded by saying, that I spoke to him as his disinterested servitor; that his absence or his presence at this consecration would change in, nothing the fortune of the Abbe Dubois, who would be Archbishop of Cambrai all the same without prostituting his master in the eyes of all France, and of all Europe, by compelling him to be guilty of a measure to which it would be seen he had been urged by force. I conjured him not to go; and to show him on what terms I was with the Abbe Dubois, I explained to him I was the sole man of rank he had not invited to his consecration; but that, notwithstanding this circumstance, if he would give me his word that he would not go, I on my side would agree to go, though my horror at doing so would be very great.

My discourse, pronounced with warmth and developed with freedom, was listened to from beginning to end. I was surprised to hear the Regent say I was right, but I opened my eyes very wide when he embraced me, said that I spoke like a true friend, and that he would give me his word, and stick to it, he would not go. We parted upon this, I strengthening him in his resolution, promising anew I would go, and he thanking me for this effort. He showed no impatience, no desire that I should go; for I knew him well, and I examined him to the very bottom of his soul, and quitted him much pleased at having turned him from a measure so disgraceful and so extraordinary. Who could have guessed that he would not keep his word? But so it happened.

Although as I have said I felt sure of him, yet the extreme weakness of this prince, and the empire the Abbe Dubois had acquired over him; induced me to be quite certain of him before going to the consecration. I sent therefore the next morning to the Palais Royal to inquire after M. le Duc d'Orleans; keeping my carriage all ready for a start. But I was much confused, accustomed as I might be to his miserable vacillation, to hear from the person I had sent, that he had just seen the Regent jump into his coach, surrounded by all the pomp usual on grand occasions, and set out for the consecration. I had my horses put up at once, and locked myself into my cabinet.

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A day or two after I learnt from a friend of Madame de Parabere, then the reigning Sultana, but not a faithful one, that M. le Duc d'Orleans had been with her the previous night, and had spoken to her in praise of me, saying he would not go to the ceremony, and that he was very grateful to me for having dissuaded him from going. La Parabere praised me, admitted I was right, but her conclusion was that he would go.

M. le Duc d'Orleans, surprised, said to her she was then mad.

"Be it so," replied she, "but you will go."

"But I tell you I will not go," he rejoined.

"Yes, yes, I tell you," said she; "you will go."

"But," replied he, "this is admirable. You say M. de Saint-Simon is quite right, why then should I go?"

"Because I wish it," said she.

"Very good," replied he, "and why do you wish I should go—what madness is this?"

"I wish it because—," said she.

"Oh, because," replied he, "that's no reason; say why you wish it."

(After some dispute) "You obstinately desire then to know? Are you not aware that the Abbe Dubois and I quarreled four days ago, and that we have not yet made it up. He mixes in everything. He will know that you have been with me to-night. If to-morrow you do not go to his consecration, he will not fail to believe it is I who have hindered you; nothing will take this idea out of his head; he will never pardon me; he will undermine in a hundred ways my credit with you, and finish by embroiling us. But I don't wish such a thing to happen, and for that reason you must go to his consecration, although M. de Saint-Simon is right."

Thereupon ensued a feeble debate, then resolution and promise to go, which was very faithfully kept.

As for me I could only deplore the feebleness of the Regent, to whom I never afterwards spoke of this consecration, or he to me; but he was very much ashamed of himself, and much embarrassed with me afterwards. I do not know whether he carried his weakness so far as to tell Dubois what I had said to hinder him from going to the ceremony or whether the Abbe was told by La Parabere, who thought thus to take credit to herself for having changed the determination of M. le Duc d'Orleans, and to show her credit over him. But Dubois was perfectly informed of it, and never pardoned me.

The Val de Grace was chosen for the consecration as being a royal monastery, the most magnificent of Paris, and the most singular church. It was superbly decorated; all France was invited, and nobody dared to stop away or to be out of sight during the whole ceremony.

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There were tribunes with blinds prepared for the ambassadors and Protestant ministers. There was another more magnificent for M. le Duc d'Orleans and M. le Duc de Chartres, whom he took there. There were places for the ladies, and as M. le Duc d'Orleans entered by the monastery, and his tribune was within, it was open to all comers, so that outside and inside were filled with refreshments of all kinds, which officers distributed in profusion. This disorder continued all day, on account of the large number of tables that were served without and within for the subordinate people of the fete and all who liked to thrust themselves in. The chief gentlemen of the chamber of M. le Duc d'Orleans, and his chief officers did the business of the ceremony; placed distinguished people in their seats, received them, conducted them, and other of his officers paid similar attentions to less considerable people, while, all the watch and all the police were occupied in looking after the arrival and departure of the carriages in proper and regular order.

During the consecration, which was but little decent as far as the consecrated and the spectators were concerned, above all when leaving the building, M. le Duc d'Orleans evinced his satisfaction at finding so many considerable people present, and then went away to Asnieres to dine with Madame Parabere—very glad that a ceremony was over upon which he had bestowed only indirect attention, from the commencement to the end. All the prelates, the distinguished Abbess, and a considerable number of the laity, were invited during the consecration by the chief officers of M. le Duc d'Orleans to dine at the Palais Royal. The same officers did the honours of the feast, which was served with the most splendid abundance and delicacy. There were two services of thirty covers each, in a large room of the grand suite of apartments, filled with the most considerable people of Paris, and several other tables equally well served in adjoining rooms for people less distinguished. M. le Duc d'Orleans gave to the new Archbishop a diamond of great price to serve him as ring.

All this day was given up to that sort of triumph which draws down neither the approbation of man nor the blessing of God. I saw nothing of it all, however, and M. le Duc d'Orleans and I never spoke of it.

The Comte de Horn had been in Paris for the last two months, leading an obscure life of gaming and debauchery. He was a man of two-and-twenty, tall and well made, of that ancient and grand family of Horn, known in the eleventh century among the little dynasties of the Low Countries, and afterwards by a long series of illustrious generations. The Comte de Horn in question had been made captain in the Austrian army, less on account of his youth than because he was such an ill-behaved dog, causing vast trouble to his mother and brother. They heard so much of the disorderly life he was leading in Paris, that they sent there a confidential gentleman with money to pay his debts, to try and persuade him to return, and failing in this, to implore the authority of the Regent (to whom, through Madame, the Horns were related), in order to compel him to do so. As ill-luck would have it, this gentleman arrived the day after the Comte had committed the crime I am about to relate.

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On Friday, the 22nd of March, 1720, he went to the Rue Quincampoix, wishing, he said, to buy 100,000 ecus worth of shares, and for that purpose made an appointment with a stockbroker in a cabaret. The stock-broker came there with his pocket-book and his shares; the Comte de Horn came also, accompanied, as he said, by two of his friends; a moment after, they all three threw themselves upon this unfortunate stock-broker; the Comte de Horn stabbed him several times with a poniard, and seized his pocket-book; one of his pretended friends (a Piedmontese named Mille), seeing that the stock-broker was not dead, finished the work. At the noise they made the people of the house came, not sufficiently quick to prevent the murder, but in time to render themselves masters of the assassins, and to arrest them. In the midst of the scuffle, the other cut-throat escaped, but the Comte de Horn and Mille were not so fortunate. The cabaret people sent for the officers of justice, who conducted the criminals to the Conciergerie. This horrible crime, committed in broad daylight, immediately made an immense stir, and several kinsmen of this illustrious family at once went to M. le Duc d'Orleans to beg for mercy; but the Regent avoided speaking to them as much as possible, and very rightly ordered full and prompt justice to be done.

At last, the relatives of Horn penetrated to the Regent: they tried to make the Count pass for mad, saying even that he had an uncle confined in an asylum, and begging that he might be confined also. But the reply was, that madmen who carried their madness to fury could not be got rid of too quickly. Repulsed in this manner, they represented what an infamy it would be to their illustrious family, related to nearly all the sovereigns of Europe, to have one of its members tried and condemned. M. le Duc d'Orleans replied that the infamy was in the crime, and not in the punishment. They pressed him upon the honour the family had in being related to him. "Very well, gentlemen," said he, "I will divide the shame with you."

The trial was neither long nor difficult. Law and the Abbe Dubois, so interested in the safety of the stock-jobbers (without whom the paper must have fallen at once), supported M. le Duc d'Orleans might and main, in order to render him inexorable, and he, to avoid the persecutions he unceasingly experienced on the other side, left nothing undone in order to hurry the Parliament into a decision; the affair, therefore; went full speed, and it seemed likely that the Comte de Horn would be broken on the wheel.

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The relatives, no longer hoping to save the criminal, thought only of obtaining a commutation of the sentence. Some of them came to me, asking me to save them: though I was not related to the Horn family, they explained to me, that death on the wheel would throw into despair all that family, and everybody connected with it in the Low Countries, and in Germany, because in those parts there was a great and important difference between the punishments of persons of quality who had committed crimes; that decapitation in no way influenced the family of the decapitated, but that death on the wheel threw such infamy upon it, that the uncles, aunts, brothers, and sisters, and the three next generations, were excluded from entering into any noble chapter, which, in addition to the shame, was a very injurious deprivation, annihilating the family's chance of ecclesiastic preferment; this reason touched me, and I promised to do my best with M. le Duc d'Orleans to obtain a commutation of the sentence.

I was going off to La Ferme to profit by the leisure of Holy Week. I went therefore to M. le Duc d'Orleans, and explained to him what I had just learnt. I said that after the detestable crime the Comte de Horn had committed, every one must feel that he was worthy of death; but that every one could not admit it was necessary to break him on the wheel, in order to satisfy the ends of justice. I showed him how the family would suffer if this sentence were carried out, and I concluded by proposing to the Regent a 'mezzo termine', such as he was so fond of.

I suggested that the decree ordering death by the wheel should be pronounced. That another decree should at the same time be prepared and kept ready signed and sealed, with only a date to fill in, revoking the first, and changing the punishment into decapitation. That at the last moment this second decree should be produced, and immediately afterwards the head of the Comte de Horn be cut off. M. le Duc d'Orleans offered no objection, but consented at once to my plan. I said to him, by way of conclusion, that I was going to set out the next day, and that I begged him not to be shaken in the determination he had just formed, by the entreaties of Dubois or Law, both of whom were strongly in favour of punishment by the wheel. He assured me he would keep firm; reiterated the assurance; I took leave of him; and the next day went to La Ferme.

He was firm, however, in his usual manner. Dubois and Law besieged him, and led the attack so well that he gave in, and the first thing I learnt at La Ferme was that the Comte de Horn had been broken alive on the wheel at the Greve, on Holy Friday; the 26th March, 1720, about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and the scoundrel Mille with him on the same scaffold, after having both suffered torture.

The result of this was as I anticipated. The Horn family and all the grand nobility of the Low Countries, many of Germany, were outraged, and contained themselves neither in words nor in writings. Some of them even talked of strange vengeance, and a long time after the death of M. le Duc d'Orleans, I met with certain of the gentlemen upon whose hearts the memory of this punishment still weighed heavily.

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ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

A cardinal may be poisoned, stabbed, got rid of altogether
Enriched one at the expense of the other
Few would be enriched at the expense of the many
I abhorred to gain at the expense of others
Juggle, which put the wealth of Peter into the pockets of Paul
Not allowing ecclesiastics to meddle with public affairs
People with difficulty believe what they have seen
Rome must be infallible, or she is nothing