

# **Memoirs of the Courts of Louis XV and XVI. Being secret memoirs of Madame Du Hausset, lady's maid to Madame de Pompadour, and of the Princess Lamballe — Volume 5 eBook**

## **Memoirs of the Courts of Louis XV and XVI. Being secret memoirs of Madame Du Hausset, lady's maid to Madame de Pompadour, and of the Princess Lamballe — Volume 5**

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## SECTION I.

[From the time that the Princesse de Lamballe saw the ties between the Queen and her favourite De Polignac drawing closer she became less assiduous in her attendance at Court, being reluctant to importune the friends by her presence at an intimacy which she did not approve. She could not, however, withhold her accustomed attentions, as the period of Her Majesty's accouchement approached; and she has thus noted the circumstance of the birth of the Duchesse d'Angouleme, on the 19th of December, 1778.]

"The moment for the accomplishment of the Queen's darling hope was now at hand: she was about to become a mother.

"It had been agreed between Her Majesty and myself, that I was to place myself so near the accoucheur, Vermond,

[Brother to the Abbe, whose pride was so great at this honour conferred on his relative, that he never spoke of him without denominating him Monsieur mon frere, d'accoucher de sa Majeste, Vermond.]

as to be the first to distinguish the sex of the new-born infant, and if she should be delivered of a Dauphin to say, in Italian, 'Il figlio e nato.'

"Her Majesty was, however, foiled even in this the most blissful of her desires. She was delivered of a daughter instead of a Dauphin.

"From the immense crowd that burst into the apartment the instant Vermond said, The Queen is happily delivered, Her Majesty was nearly suffocated. I had hold of her hand, and as I said 'La regina e andato', mistaking 'andato' for 'nato', between the joy of giving birth to a son and the pressure of the crowd, Her Majesty fainted. Overcome by the dangerous situation in which I saw my royal mistress, I myself was carried out of the room in a lifeless state. The situation of Her Majesty was for some time very doubtful, till the people were dragged with violence from about her, that she might have air. On her recovering, the King was the first person who told her that she was the mother of a very fine Princess.

"'Well, then,' said the Queen, 'I am like my mother, for at my birth she also wished for a son instead of a daughter; and you have lost your wager:' for the King had betted with Maria Theresa that it would be a son.

"The King answered her by repeating the lines Metastasio had written on that occasion.

"'Io perdei: l'augusta figlia  
A pagar, m'a condannato;



Ma s'e ver the a voi somiglia  
Tutto il moudo ha guadagnato.”

[The Princesse de Lamballe again ceased to be constantly about the Queen. Her danger was over, she was a mother, and the attentions of disinterested friendship were no longer indispensable. She herself about this time met with a deep affliction. She lost both of her own parents; and to her sorrows may, in a great degree, be ascribed her silence upon the events which intervened between the birth of Madame and that of the Dauphin. She was as assiduous as ever

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in her attentions to Her Majesty on her second lying-in. The circumstances of the death of Maria Theresa, the Queen's mother, in the interval which divided the two accouchements, and Her Majesty's anguish, and refusal to see any but De Lamballe and De Polignac, are too well known to detain us longer from the notes of the Princess. It is enough for the reader to know that the friendship of Her Majesty for her superintendent seemed to be gradually reviving in all its early enthusiasm, by her unremitting kindness during the confinements of the Queen, till, at length, they became more attached than ever. But, not to anticipate, let me return to the narrative.]

"The public feeling had undergone a great change with respect to Her Majesty from the time of her first accouchement. Still, she was not the mother of a future King. The people looked upon her as belonging to them more than she had done before, and faction was silenced by the general delight. But she had not yet attained the climax of her felicity. A second pregnancy gave a new excitement to the nation; and, at length, on the 22nd October, 1781, dawned the day of hope.

"In consequence of what happened on the first accouchement, measures were taken to prevent similar disasters on the second. The number admitted into the apartment was circumscribed. The silence observed left the Queen in uncertainty of the sex to which she had given birth, till, with tears of joy, the King said to her: 'Madame, the hopes of the nation, and mine, are fulfilled. You are the mother of a Dauphin.'

"The Princesse Elizabeth and myself were so overjoyed that we embraced every one in the room.

"At this time Their Majesties were adored. Marie Antoinette, with all her beauty and amiableness, was a mere cipher in the eyes of France previous to her becoming the mother of an heir to the Crown; but her popularity now arose to a pitch of unequalled enthusiasm.

"I have heard of but one expression to Her Majesty upon this occasion in any way savouring of discontent. This came from the royal aunts. On Marie Antoinette's expressing to them her joy in having brought a Dauphin to the nation, they replied, 'We will only repeat our father's observation on a similar subject. When one of our sisters complained to his late Majesty that, as her Italian husband had copied the Dauphin's whim, she could not, though long a bride, boast of being a wife, or hope to become a mother—"a prudent Princess," replied Louis XV., "never wants heirs!" But the feeling of the royal aunts was an exception to the general sentiment, which really seemed like madness.

"I remember a proof of this which happened at the time. Chancing to cross the King's path as he was going to Marly and I coming from Rambouillet, my two postillions

jumped from their horses, threw themselves on the high road upon their knees, though it was very dirty, and remained there, offering up their benedictions, till he was out of sight.



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“The felicity of the Queen was too great not to be soon overcast. The unbounded influence of the De Polignacs was now at its zenith. It could not fail of being attacked. Every engine of malice, envy, and detraction was let loose; and, in the vilest calumnies against the character of the Duchess, her royal mistress was included.

“It was, in truth, a most singular fatality, in the life of Marie Antoinette that she could do nothing, however beneficial or disinterested, for which she was not either criticised or censured. She had a tenacity, of character which made her cling more closely to attachments from which she saw others desirous of estranging her; and this firmness, however excellent in principle, was, in her case, fatal in its effects. The Abbe Vermond, Her Majesty’s confessor and tutor, and, unfortunately, in many respects, her ambitious guide, was really alarmed at the rising favour of the Duchess; and, though he knew the very obstacles thrown in her way only strengthened her resolution as to any favourite object, yet he ventured to head an intrigue to destroy the great influence of the De Polignacs, which, as he might have foreseen, only served to hasten their aggrandisement.

“At this crisis the dissipation of the Duc de Guemenee caused him to become a bankrupt. I know not whether it can be said in principle, but certainly it may in property, ‘It is an ill wind that blows no one any good.’ The Princess, his wife, having been obliged to leave her residence at Versailles, in consequence of the Duke’s dismissal from the King’s service on account of the disordered state of his pecuniary circumstances, the situation of governess to the royal children became necessarily vacant, and was immediately transferred to the Duchesse de Polignac. The Queen, to enable her friend to support her station with all the eclat suitable to its dignity, took care to supply ample means from her own private purse. A most magnificent suite of apartments was ordered to be arranged, under the immediate inspection of the Queen’s maitre d’hotel, at Her Majesty’s expense.

“Is there anything on earth more natural than the lively interest which inspires a mother towards those who have the care of her offspring? What, then, must have been the feelings of a Queen of France who had been deprived of that blessing for which connubial attachments are formed, and which, vice versa, constitutes the only real happiness of every young female, what must have been, I say, the ecstasy of Marie Antoinette when she not only found herself a mother, but the dear pledges of all her future bliss in the hands of one whose friendship allowed her the unrestrained exercise of maternal affection,—a climax of felicity combining not only the pleasures of an ordinary mother, but the greatness, the dignity, and the flattering popularity of a Queen of France.



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“Though the pension of the Duchesse de Polignac was no more than that usually allotted to all former governesses of the royal children of France, yet circumstances tempted her to a display not a little injurious to her popularity as well as to that of her royal mistress. She gave too many pretexts to imputations of extravagance. Yet she had neither patronage, nor sinecures, nor immunities beyond the few inseparable from the office she held, and which had been the same for centuries under the Monarchy of France. But it must be remembered, as an excuse for the splendour of her establishment, that she entered her office upon a footing very different from that of any of her predecessors. Her mansion was not the quiet, retired, simple household of the governess of the royal children, as formerly: it had become the magnificent resort of the first Queen in Europe; the daily haunt of Her Majesty. The Queen certainly visited the former governess, as she had done the Duchesse de Duras and many other frequenters of her Court parties; but she made the Duchesse de Polignac’s her Court; and all the courtiers of that Court, and, I may say, the great personages of all France, as well as the Ministers and all foreigners of distinction, held there their usual rendezvous; consequently, there was nothing wanting but the guards in attendance in the Queen’s apartments to have made it a royal residence suitable for the reception of the illustrious personages that were in the constant habit of visiting these levees, assemblies, balls, routs, picnics, dinner, supper, and card parties.

[I have seen ladies at the Princesse de Lamballe’s come from these card parties with their laps so blackened by the quantities of gold received in them, that they have been obliged to change their dresses to go to supper. Many a chevalier d’industrie and young military spendthrift has made his harvest here. Thousands were won and lost, and the ladies were generally the dupes of all those who were the constant speculative attendants. The Princesse de Lamballe did not like play, but when it was necessary she did play, and won or lost to a limited extent; but the prescribed sum once exhausted or gained she left off. In set parties, such as those of whist, she never played except when one was wanted, often excusing herself on the score of its requiring more attention than it was in her power to give to it and her reluctance to sacrifice her partner; though I have heard Beau Dillon, the Duke of Dorset, Lord Edward Dillon, and many others say that she understood and played the game much better than many who had a higher opinion of their skill in it. Lord Edward Fitzgerald was admitted to the parties at the Duchesse de Polignac’s on his first coming to Paris; but when his connection with the Duc d’Orleans and Madame de Genlis became known he was informed that his society would be dispensed with. The famous, or rather the infamous, Beckford was also excluded.]



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“Much as some of the higher classes of the nobility felt aggrieved at the preference given by the Queen to the Duchesse de Polignac, that which raised against Her Majesty the most implacable resentment was her frequenting the parties of her favourite more than those of any other of the ‘haut ton’. These assemblies, from the situation held by the Duchess, could not always be the most select. Many of the guests who chanced to get access to them from a mere glimpse of the Queen—whose general good-humour, vivacity, and constant wish to please all around her would often make her commit herself unconsciously and unintentionally—would fabricate anecdotes of things they had neither seen nor heard; and which never had existence, except in their own wicked imaginations. The scene of the inventions, circulated against Her Majesty through France, was, in consequence, generally placed at the Duchess’s; but they were usually so distinctly and obviously false that no notice was taken of them, nor was any attempt made to check their promulgation.

“Exemplary as was the friendship between this enthusiastic pair, how much more fortunate for both would it have been had it never happened! I foresaw the results long, long before they took place; but the Queen was not to be thwarted. Fearful she might attribute my anxiety for her general safety to unworthy personal views, I was often silent, even when duty bade me speak. I was, perhaps, too scrupulous about seeming officious or jealous of the predilection shown to the Duchess. Experience had taught me the inutility of representing consequences, and I had no wish to quarrel with the Queen. Indeed, there was a degree of coldness towards me on the part of Her Majesty for having gone so far as I had done. It was not until after the birth of the Duc de Normandie, her third child, in March, 1785, that her friendship resumed its primitive warmth.

“As the children grew, Her Majesty’s attachment for their governess grew with them. All that has been said of Tasso’s Armida was nothing to this luxurious temple of maternal affection. Never was female friendship more strongly cemented, or less disturbed by the nauseous poison of envy, malice, or mean jealousy. The Queen was in the plenitude of every earthly enjoyment, from being able to see and contribute to the education of the children she tenderly loved, unrestrained by the gothic etiquette with which all former royal mothers had been fettered, but which the kind indulgence of the Duchesse de Polignac broke through, as unnatural and unworthy of the enlightened and affectionate. The Duchess was herself an attentive, careful mother. She felt for the Queen, and encouraged her maternal sympathies, so doubly endeared by the long, long disappointment which had preceded their gratification. The sacrifice of all the cold forms of state policy by the new governess, and the free access she gave the royal mother to her children, so unprecedented in the Court of France,



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rendered Marie Antoinette so grateful that it may justly be said she divided her heart between the governess and the governed. Habit soon made it necessary for her existence that she should dedicate the whole of her time, not taken up in public ceremonies or parties, to the cultivation of the minds of her children. Conscious of her own deficiency in this respect, she determined to redeem this error in her offspring. The love of the frivolous amusements of society, for which the want of higher cultivation left room in her mind, was humoured by the gaieties of the Duchesse de Polignac's assemblies; while her nobler dispositions were encouraged by the privileges of the favourite's station. Thus, all her inclinations harmonising with the habits and position of her friend, Marie Antoinette literally passed the greatest part of some years in company with the Duchesse de Polignac,—either amidst the glare and bustle of public recreation, or in the private apartment of the governess and her children, increasing as much as possible the kindness of the one for the benefit and comfort of the others. The attachment of the Duchess to the royal children was returned by the Queen's affection for the offspring of the Duchess. So much was Her Majesty interested in favour of the daughter of the Duchess, that, before that young lady was fifteen years of age, she herself contrived and accomplished her marriage with the Duc de Guiche, then 'maitre de ceremonie' to Her Majesty, and whose interests were essentially, promoted by this alliance.

[The Duc de Guiche, since Duc de Grammont, has proved how much he merited the distinction he received, in consequence of the attachment between the Queen and his mother-in-law, by the devotedness with which he followed the fallen fortunes of the Bourbons till their restoration, since which he has not been forgotten. The Duchess, his wife, who at her marriage was beaming with all the beauties of her age, and adorned by art and nature with every accomplishment, though she came into notice at a time when the Court had scarcely recovered itself from the debauched morals by which it had been so long degraded by a De Pompadour and a Du Barry, has yet preserved her character, by the strictness of her conduct, free from the censorious criticisms of an epoch in which some of the purest could not escape unassailed. I saw her at Pyrmont in 1803; and even then, though the mother of many children, she looked as young and beautiful as ever. She was remarkably well educated and accomplished, a profound musician on the harp and pianoforte, graceful in her conversation, and a most charming dancer. She seemed to bear the vicissitudes of fortune with a philosophical courage and resignation not often to be met with in light-headed French women. She was amiable in her manners, easy of access, always lively and cheerful, and enthusiastically attached to the country whence she was then excluded. She constantly accompanied the wife of the late Louis



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XVIII. during her travels in Germany, as her husband the Duke did His Majesty during his residence at Mittau, in Courland, *etc.* I have had the honour of seeing the Duke twice since the Revolution; once, on my coming from Russia, at General Binkingdroff's, Governor of Mittau, and since, in Portland Place, at the French Ambassador's, on his coming to England in the name of his Sovereign, to congratulate the King of England on his accession to the throne.]

"The great cabals, which agitated the Court in consequence of the favour shown to the De Polignacs, were not slow in declaring themselves. The Comtesse de Noailles was one of the foremost among the discontented. Her resignation, upon the appointment of a superintendent, was a sufficient evidence of her real feeling; but when she now saw a place filled, to which she conceived her family had a claim, her displeasure could not be silent, and her dislike to the Queen began to express itself without reserve.

"Another source of dissatisfaction against the Queen was her extreme partiality for the English. After the peace of Versailles, in 1783, the English flocked into France, and I believe if a poodle dog had come from England it would have met with a good reception from Her Majesty. This was natural enough. The American war had been carried on entirely against her wish; though, from the influence she was supposed to exercise in the Cabinet, it was presumed to have been managed entirely by herself. This odious opinion she wished personally to destroy; and it could only be done by the distinction with which, after the peace, she treated the whole English nation.'

[The daughter of the Duchesse de Polignac (of my meeting with whom I have already spoken in a note), entering with me upon the subject of France and of old times, observed that had the Queen limited her attachment to the person of her mother, she would not have given all the annoyance which she did to the nobility. It was to these partialities to the English, the Duchesse de Guiche Grammont alluded. I do not know the lady's name distinctly, but I am certain I have heard the beautiful Lady Sarah Bunbury mentioned by the Princesse de Lamballe as having received particular attention from the Queen; for the Princess had heard much about this lady and "a certain great personage" in England; but, on discovering her acquaintance with the Duc de Lauzun, Her Majesty withdrew from the intimacy, though not soon enough to prevent its having given food for scandal. "You must remember," added the Duchesse de Guiche Grammont, "how much the Queen was censured for her enthusiasm about Lady Spencer." I replied that I did remember the much-ado about nothing there was regarding some English lady, to whom the Queen took a liking, whose name I could not exactly recall; but I knew well she studied to please the English in general. Of this Lady Spencer it is that the Princess speaks in one of the following pages of this chapter.]



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“Several of the English nobility were on a familiar footing at the parties of the Duchesse de Polignac. This was quite enough for the slanderers. They were all ranked, and that publicly, as lovers of Her Majesty. I recollect when there were no less than five different private commissioners out, to suppress the libels that were in circulation over all France, against the Queen and Lord Edward Dillon, the Duke of Dorset, Lord George Conway, Arthur Dillon, as well as Count Fersen, the Duc de Lauzun, and the Comte d’Artois, who were all not only constant frequenters of Polignac’s but visitors of Marie Antoinette.

“By the false policy of Her Majesty’s advisers, these enemies and libellers, instead of being brought to the condign punishment their infamy deserved, were privately hushed into silence, out of delicacy to the Queen’s feelings, by large sums of money and pensions, which encouraged numbers to commit the same enormity in the hope of obtaining the same recompense.

“But these were mercenary wretches, from whom no better could have been expected. A legitimate mode of robbery had been pressed upon their notice by the Government itself, and they thought it only a matter of fair speculation to make the best of it. There were some libellers, however, of a higher order, in comparison with whose motives for slander, those of the mere scandal-jobbers were white as the driven snow. Of these, one of the worst was the Duc de Lauzun.

“The first motive of the Queen’s strong dislike to the Duc de Lauzun sprang from Her Majesty’s attachment to the Duchesse d’Orleans, whom she really loved. She was greatly displeased at the injury inflicted upon her valued friend by De Lauzun, in estranging the affection of the Duc d’Orleans from his wife by introducing him to depraved society. Among the associates to which this connection led the Duc d’Orleans were a certain Madame Duthee and Madame Buffon.

“When De Lauzun, after having been expelled from the drawing-room of the Queen for his insolent presumption,—[The allusion here is to the affair of the heron plume.]—meeting with coolness at the King’s levee, sought to cover his disgrace by appearing at the assemblies of the Duchesse de Polignac, Her Grace was too sincerely the friend of her Sovereign and benefactress not to perceive the drift of his conduct. She consequently signified to the self-sufficient coxcomb that her assemblies were not open to the public. Being thus shut out from Their Majesties, and, as a natural result, excluded from the most brilliant societies of Paris, De Lauzun, from a most diabolical spirit of revenge, joined the nefarious party which had succeeded in poisoning the mind of the Duc d’Orleans, and from the hordes of which, like the burning lava from Etna, issued calumnies which swept the most virtuous and innocent victims that ever breathed to their destruction!



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“Among the Queen's favourites, and those most in request at the De Polignac parties, was the good Lady Spencer, with whom I became most intimately acquainted when I first went to England; and from whom, as well as from her two charming daughters, the Duchess of Devonshire and Lady Duncannon, since Lady Besborough, I received the greatest marks of cordial hospitality. In consequence, when her ladyship came to France, I hastened to present her to the Queen. Her Majesty, taking a great liking to the amiable Englishwoman, and wishing to profit by her private conversations and society, gave orders that Lady Spencer should pass to her private closet whenever she came to Versailles, without the formal ceremony of waiting in the antechamber to be announced.

“One day, Her Majesty, Lady Spencer, and myself were observing the difficulty there was in acquiring a correct pronounciation of the English language, when Lady Spencer remarked that it only required a little attention.

“‘I beg your pardon,’ said the Queen, ‘that’s not all, because there are many things you do not call by their proper names, as they are in the dictionary.’

“‘Pray what are they, please Your Majesty?’

“‘Well, I will give you an instance. For example, ‘les culottes’—what do you call them?’

“‘Small clothes,’ replied her ladyship.

“‘Ma foi! how can they be called small clothes for one large man? Now I do look in the dictionary, and I find, for the word culottes—breeches.’

“‘Oh, please Your Majesty, we never call them by that name in England.’

“‘Voila done, j’ai raison!’

“‘We say “inexpressibles”!’

“‘Ah, c’est mieux! Dat do please me ver much better. Il y a du bon sens la dedans. C’est une autre chose!’

“In the midst of this curious dialogue, in came the Duke of Dorset, Lord Edward Dillon, Count Fersen, and several English gentlemen, who, as they were going to the King’s hunt, were all dressed in new buckskin breeches.

“‘I do not like,’ exclaimed the Queen to them, dem yellow irresistibles!’

“Lady Spencer nearly fainted. ‘Vat make you so frightful, my dear lady?’ said the Queen to her ladyship, who was covering her face with her hands. ‘I am terrified at Your Majesty’s mistake’—‘Comment? did you no tell me just now, dat in England de lady call les culottes “irresistibles”?’—‘Oh, mercy! I never could have made such a mistake, as



to have applied to that part of the male dress such a word. I said, please Your Majesty, inexpressibles.'

"On this the gentlemen all laughed most heartily.

"'Vell, vell,' replied the Queen, 'do, my dear lady, discompose yourself. I will no more call de breeches irresistibles, but say small clothes, if even elles sont upon a giant!'

"At the repetition of the naughty word breeches, poor Lady Spencer's English delicacy quite overcame her. Forgetting where she was, and also the company she was in, she ran from the room with her cross stick in her hand, ready to lay it on the shoulders of any one who should attempt to obstruct her passage, flew into her carriage, and drove off full speed, as if fearful of being contaminated,—all to the no small amusement of the male guests.



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“Her Majesty and I laughed till the very tears ran down our cheeks. The Duke of Dorset, to keep up the joke, said there really were some counties in England where they called ‘culottes irresistibles.

“Now that I am upon the subject of England, and the peace of 1783, which brought such throngs of English over to France, there occurs to me a circumstance, relating to the treaty of commerce signed at that time, which exhibits the Comte de Vergennes to some advantage; and with that let me dismiss the topic.

“The Comte de Vergennes, was one of the most distinguished Ministers of France. I was intimately acquainted with him. His general character for uprightness prompted his Sovereign to govern in a manner congenial to his own goodness of heart, which was certainly most for the advantage of his subjects. Vergennes cautioned Louis against the hypocritical adulations of his privileged courtiers. The Count had been schooled in State policy by the great Venetian senator, Francis Foscari, the subtlest politician of his age, whom he consulted during his life on every important matter; and he was not very easily to be deceived.

“When the treaty of commerce took place, at the period I mention, the experienced Vergennes foresaw—what afterwards really happened—that France would be inundated with British manufactures; but Calonne obstinately maintained the contrary, till he was severely reminded of the consequence of his misguided policy, in the insults inflicted on him by enraged mobs of thousands of French artificers, whenever he appeared in public. But though the mania for British goods had literally caused an entire stagnation of business in the French manufacturing towns, and thrown throngs upon the ‘pave’ for want of employment, yet M. de Calonne either did not see, or pretended not to see, the errors he had committed. Being informed that the Comte de Vergennes had attributed the public disorders to his fallacious policy, M. de Calonne sent a friend to the Count demanding satisfaction for the charge of having caused the riots. The Count calmly replied that he was too much of a man of honour to take so great an advantage, as to avail himself of the opportunity offered, by killing a man who had only one life to dispose of, when there were so many with a prior claim, who were anxious to destroy him ‘en societe’. I Bid M. de Calonne,’ continued the Count, ‘first get out of that scrape, as the English boxers do when their eyes are closed up after a pitched battle. He has been playing at blind man’s buff, but the poverty to which he has reduced so many of our tradespeople has torn the English bandage from his eyes!’ For three or four days the Comte de Vergennes visited publicly, and showed himself everywhere in and about Paris; but M. de Calonne was so well convinced of the truth of the old fox’s satire that he pocketed his annoyance, and no more was said about fighting. Indeed, the Comte de Vergennes gave hints of being able to show that M. de Calonne had been bribed into the treaty.”



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[The Princesse de Lamballe has alluded in a former page to the happiness which the Queen enjoyed during the visits of the foreign Princes to the Court of France. Her papers contain a few passages upon the opinions Her Majesty entertained of the royal travellers; which, although in the order of time they should have been mentioned before the peace with England, yet, not to disturb the chain of the narrative, respecting the connection with the Princesse de Lamballe, of the prevailing libels, and the partiality shown towards the English, I have reserved them for the conclusion of the present chapter. The timidity of the Queen in the presence of the illustrious strangers, and her agitation when about to receive them, have, I think, been already spoken of. Upon the subject of the royal travellers themselves, and other personages, the Princess expresses herself thus:]

“The Queen had never been an admirer of Catharine II. Notwithstanding her studied policy for the advancement of civilization in her internal empire, the means which, aided by the Princess Dashkoff, she made use of to seat herself on the imperial throne of her weak husband, Peter the Third, had made her more understood than esteemed. Yet when her son, the Grand Duke of the North,—[Afterwards the unhappy Emperor Paul.]—and the Grand Duchess, his wife, came to France, their description of Catharine’s real character so shocked the maternal sensibility of Marie Antoinette that she could scarcely hear the name of the Empress without shuddering. The Grand Duke spoke of Catharine without the least disguise. He said he travelled merely for the security of his life from his mother, who had surrounded him with creatures that were his sworn enemies, her own spies and infamous favourites, to whose caprices they were utterly subordinate. He was aware that the dangerous credulity of the Empress might be every hour excited by these wretches to the destruction of himself and his Duchess, and, therefore, he had in absence sought the only refuge. He had no wish, he said, ever to return to his native country, till Heaven should check his mother’s doubts respecting his dutiful filial affection towards her, or till God should be pleased to take her into His sacred keeping.

“The King was petrified at the Duke’s description of his situation, and the Queen could not refrain from tears when the Duchess, his wife, confirmed all her husband had uttered on the subject. The Duchess said she had been warned by the untimely fate of the Princess d’Armstadt, her predecessor, the first wife of the Grand Duke, to elude similar jealousy and suspicion on the part of her mother-in-law, by seclusion from the Court, in a country residence with her husband; indeed, that she had made it a point never to visit Petersburg, except on the express invitation of the Empress, as if she had been a foreigner.

“In this system the Grand Duchess persevered, even after her return from her travels. When she became pregnant, and drew near her accouchement, the Empress-mother permitted her to come to Petersburg for that purpose; but, as soon as the ceremony required by the etiquette of the Imperial Court on those occasions ended, the Duchess immediately returned to her hermitage.



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“This Princess was remarkably well-educated; she possessed a great deal of good, sound sense, and had profited by the instructions of some of the best German tutors during her very early years. It was the policy of her father, the Duke of Wirtemberg, who had a large family, to educate his children as ‘quietists’ in matters of religion. He foresaw that the natural charms and acquired abilities of his daughters would one day call them to be the ornaments of the most distinguished Courts in Europe, and he thought it prudent not to instil early prejudices in favour of peculiar forms of religion which might afterwards present an obstacle to their aggrandisement.

[The first daughter of the Duke of Wirtemberg was the first wife of the present Emperor of Austria. She embraced the Catholic faith and died very young, two days before the Emperor Joseph the Second, at Vienna. The present Empress Dowager, late wife to Paul, became a proselyte to the Greek religion on her arrival at Petersburg. The son of the Duke of Wirtemberg, who succeeded him in the Dukedom, was a Protestant, it being his interest to profess that religion for the security of his inheritance. Prince Ferdinand, who was in the Austrian service, and a long time Governor of Vienna, was a Catholic, as he could not otherwise have enjoyed that office. He was of a very superior character to the Duke, his brother. Prince Louis, who held a commission under the Prussian Monarch, followed the religion of the country where he served, and the other Princes, who were in the employment of Sweden and other countries, found no difficulty in conforming themselves to the religion of the Sovereigns under whom they served. None of them having any established forms of worship, they naturally embraced that which conduced most to their aggrandisement, emolument, or dignity.]

“The notorious vices of the King of Denmark, and his total neglect both of his young Queen, Carolina Matilda, and of the interest of his distant dominions, while in Paris, created a feeling in the Queen’s mind towards that house which was not a little heightened by her disgust at the King of Sweden, when he visited the Court of Versailles. This King, though much more crafty than his brother-in-law, the King of Denmark, who revelled openly in his depravities, was not less vicious. The deception he made use of in usurping part of the rights of his people, combined with the worthlessness and duplicity, of his private conduct, excited a strong indignation in the mind of Marie Antoinette, of which she was scarcely capable of withholding the expression in his presence.

“It was during the visit of the Duke and Duchess of the North, that the Cardinal de Rohan again appeared upon the scene. For eight or ten years he had never been allowed to show himself at Court, and had been totally shut out of every society where the Queen visited. On the arrival of the illustrious, travellers at Versailles, the Queen, at her own expense, gave them a grand fete at her private palace, in the gardens of Trianon, similar to the one given by the Comte de Provence—[Afterwards Louis XVIII.] —to Her Majesty, in the gardens of Brunoi.



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“On the eve of the fete, the Cardinal waited upon, me to know if he would be permitted to appear there in the character he had the honour to hold at Court, I replied that I had made it a rule never to interfere in the private or public amusements of the Court, and that His Eminence must be the best judge how far he, could obtrude himself upon the Queen’s private parties, to which only a select number had been invited, in consequence of the confined spot where the fete was to be given.

“The Cardinal left me, not much satisfied at his reception. Determined to follow, as usual, his own misguided passion, he immediately went too Trianon, disguised with a large cloak. He saw the porter, and bribed him. He only wished, he said, to be placed in a situation whence he might see the Duke and Duchess of the North without being seen; but no sooner did he perceive the porter engaged at some distance than he left his cloak at the lodge, and went forward in his Cardinal’s dress, as if he had been one of the invited guests, placing himself purposely in the Queen’s path to attract her attention as she rode by in the carriage with the Duke and Duchess.

“The Queen was shocked and thunderstruck at seeing him. But, great as was her annoyance, knowing the Cardinal had not been invited and ought not to have been there, she only discharged the porter who had been seduced to let him in; and, though the King, on being made acquainted with his treachery, would have banished His Eminence a hundred leagues from the capital, yet the Queen, the royal aunts, the Princesse Elizabeth, and myself, not to make the affair public, and thereby disgrace the high order of his ecclesiastical dignity, prevented the King from exercising his authority by commanding instant exile.

“Indeed, the Queen could never get the better of her fears of being some day, or in some way or other, betrayed by the Cardinal, for having made him the confidant of the mortification she would have suffered if the projected marriage of Louis XV. and her sister had been solemnized. On this account she uniformly opposed whatever harshness the King at any time intended against the Cardinal.

“Thus was this wicked prelate left at leisure to premeditate the horrid plot of the famous necklace, the ever memorable fraud, which so fatally verified the presentiments of the Queen.”

## SECTION II.

[The production of ‘Le Mariage de Figaro’, by Beaumarchais, upon the stage at Paris, so replete with indecorous and slanderous allusions to the Royal Family, had spread the prejudices against the Queen through the whole kingdom and every rank of France, just in time to prepare all minds for the deadly blow which Her Majesty received from the infamous plot of the diamond necklace. From this year, crimes and misfortunes trod

closely on each others' heels in the history of the ill-starred Queen; and one calamity only disappeared to make way for a greater.



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The destruction of the papers which would have thoroughly explained the transaction has still left all its essential particulars in some degree of mystery; and the interest of the clergy, who supported one of their own body, coupled with the arts and bribes of the high houses connected with the plotting prelate, must, of course, have discoloured greatly even what was well known.

It will be recollected that before the accession of Louis XVI. the Cardinal de Rohan was disgraced in consequence of his intrigues; that all his ingenuity was afterwards unremittingly exerted to obtain renewed favour; that he once obtruded himself upon the notice of the Queen in the gardens of Trianon, and that his conduct in so doing excited the indignation it deserved, but was left unpunished owing to the entreaties of the best friends of the Queen, and her own secret horror of a man who had already caused her so much anguish.

With the histories of the fraud every one is acquainted. That of Madame Campan, as far as it goes, is sufficiently detailed and correct to spare me the necessity of expatiating upon this theme of villany. Yet, to assist the reader's memory, before returning to the Journal of the Princesse de Lamballe, I shall recapitulate the leading particulars.

The Cardinal had become connected with a young, but artful and necessitous, woman, of the name of Lamotte. It was known that the darling ambition of the Cardinal was to regain the favour of the Queen.

The necklace, which has been already spoken of, and which was originally destined by Louis XV. for Marie Antoinette—had her hand, by divorce, been transferred to him—but which, though afterwards intended by Louis XV. for his mistress, Du Barry, never came to her in consequence of his death—this fatal necklace was still in existence, and in the possession of the crown jewellers, Boehmer and Bassange. It was valued at eighteen hundred thousand livres. The jewellers had often pressed it upon the Queen, and even the King himself had enforced its acceptance. But the Queen dreaded the expense, especially at an epoch of pecuniary difficulty in the State, much more than she coveted the jewels, and uniformly and resolutely declined them, although they had been proposed to her on very easy terms of payment, as she really did not like ornaments.

It was made to appear at the parliamentary investigation that the artful Lamotte had impelled the Cardinal to believe that she herself was in communication with the Queen; that she had interested Her Majesty in favour of the long slighted Cardinal; that she had fabricated a correspondence, in which professions of penitence on the part of De Rohan were answered by assurances of forgiveness from the Queen. The result of this correspondence was represented to be the engagement of the Cardinal to negotiate the purchase of the necklace secretly, by a contract for periodical payments. To the forgery of papers



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was added, it was declared, the substitution of the Queen's person, by dressing up a girl of the Palais Royal to represent Her Majesty, whom she in some degree resembled, in a secret and rapid interview with Rohan in a dark grove of the gardens of Versailles, where she was to give the Cardinal a rose, in token of her royal approbation, and then hastily disappear. The importunity of the jewellers, on the failure of the stipulated payment, disclosed the plot. A direct appeal of theirs to the Queen, to save them from ruin, was the immediate source of detection. The Cardinal was arrested, and all the parties tried. But the Cardinal was acquitted, and Lamotte and a subordinate agent alone punished. The quack Cagliostro was also in the plot, but he, too, escaped, like his confederate, the Cardinal, who was made to appear as the dupe of Lamotte.

The Queen never got over the effect of this affair. Her friends well knew the danger of severe measures towards one capable of collecting around him strong support against a power already so much weakened by faction and discord. But the indignation of conscious innocence insulted, prevailed, though to its ruin!

But it is time to let the Princesse de Lamballe give her own impressions upon this fatal subject, and in her own words.]

“How could Messieurs Boehmer and Bassange presume that the Queen would have employed any third person to obtain an article of such value, without enabling them to produce an unequivocal document signed by her own hand and countersigned by mine, as had ever been the rule during my superintendence of the household, whenever anything was ordered from the jewellers by Her Majesty? Why did not Messieurs Boehmer and Bassange wait on me, when they saw a document unauthorised by me, and so widely departing from the established forms? I must still think, as I have often said to the King, that Boehmer and Bassange wished to get rid of this dead weight of diamonds in any way; and the Queen having unfortunately been led by me to hush up many foul libels against her reputation, as I then thought it prudent she should do, rather than compromise her character with wretches capable of doing anything to injure her, these jewellers, judging from this erroneous policy of the past, imagined that in this instance, also, rather than hazard exposure, Her Majesty would pay them for the necklace. This was a compromise which I myself resisted, though so decidedly adverse to bringing the affair before the nation by a public trial. Of such an explosion, I foresaw the consequences, and I ardently entreated the King and Queen to take other measures. But, though till now so hostile to severity with the Cardinal, the Queen felt herself so insulted by the proceeding that she gave up every other consideration to make manifest her innocence.



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“The wary Comte de Vergennes did all he could to prevent the affair from getting before the public. Against the opinion of the King and the whole council of Ministers, he opposed judicial proceedings. Not that he conceived the Cardinal altogether guiltless; but he foresaw the fatal consequences that must result to Her Majesty, from bringing to trial an ecclesiastic of such rank; for he well knew that the host of the higher orders of the nobility, to whom the prelate was allied, would naturally strain every point to blacken the character of the King and Queen, as the only means of exonerating their kinsman in the eyes of the world from the criminal mystery attached to that most diabolical intrigue against the fair fame of Marie Antoinette. The Count could not bear the idea of the Queen’s name being coupled with those of the vile wretches, Lamotte and the mountebank Cagliostro, and therefore wished the King to chastise the Cardinal by a partial exile, which might have been removed at pleasure. But the Queen’s party too fatally seconded her feelings, and prevailed.

“I sat by Her Majesty’s bedside the whole of the night, after I heard what had been determined against the Cardinal by the council of Ministers, to beg her to use all her interest with the King to persuade him to revoke the order of the warrant for the prelate’s arrest. To this the Queen replied, ‘Then the King, the Ministers, and the people, will all deem me guilty.’

“Her Majesty’s remark stopped all farther argument upon the subject, and I had the inconsolable grief to see my royal mistress rushing upon dangers which I had no power of preventing her from bringing upon herself.

“The slanderers who had imputed such unbounded influence to the Queen over the mind of Louis XVI. should have been consistent enough to consider that, with but a twentieth part of the tithe of her imputed power, uncontrolled as she then was by national authority, she might, without any exposure to third persons, have at once sent one of her pages to the garde-meuble and other royal depositaries, replete with hidden treasures of precious stones which never saw the light, and thence have supplied herself with more than enough to form ten necklaces, or to have fully satisfied, in any way she liked, the most unbounded passion for diamonds, for the use of which she would never have been called to account.

“But the truth is, the Queen had no love of ornaments. A proof occurred very soon after I had the honour to be nominated Her Majesty’s superintendent. On the day of the great fete of the Cordon Bleu, when it was the etiquette to wear diamonds and pearls, the Queen had omitted putting them on. As there had been a greater affluence of visitors than usual that morning, and Her Majesty’s toilet was overthronged by Princes and Princesses, I fancied in the bustle that the omission proceeded from forgetfulness. Consequently, I sent the tirewoman, in the Queen’s hearing, to order the jewels to be brought in. Smilingly, Her Majesty replied, ‘No, no! I have not forgotten these gaudy things; but I do not intend that the lustre of my eyes should be outshone by the one, or

the whiteness of my teeth by the other; however, as you wish art to eclipse nature, I'll wear them to satisfy you, ma belle dame!



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“The King was always so thoroughly indulgent to Her Majesty, with regard both to her public and private conduct, that she never had any pretext for those reserves which sometimes tempt Queens as well as the wives of private individuals to commit themselves to third persons for articles of high value, which their caprice indiscreetly impels them to procure unknown to their natural guardians. Marie Antoinette had no reproach or censure for plunging into excesses beyond her means to apprehend from her royal husband. On the contrary, the King himself had spontaneously offered to purchase the necklace from the jewellers, who had urged it on him without limiting any time for payment. It was the intention of His Majesty to have liquidated it out of his private purse. But Marie Antoinette declined the gift. Twice in my presence was the refusal repeated before Messieurs Boehmer and Bassange. Who, then, can for a moment presume, after all these circumstances, that the Queen of France, with a nation’s wealth at her feet and thousands of individuals offering her millions, which she never accepted, would have so far degraded herself and the honour of the nation, of which she was born to be the ornament, as to place herself gratuitously in the power of a knot of wretches, headed by a man whose general bad character for years had excluded him from Court and every respectable society, and had made the Queen herself mark him as an object of the utmost aversion.

“If these circumstances be not sufficient adequately to open the eyes of those whom prejudice has blinded, and whose ears have been deafened against truth, by the clamours of sinister conspirators against the monarchy instead of the monarchs; if all these circumstances, I repeat, do not completely acquit the Queen, argument, or even ocular demonstration itself, would be thrown away. Posterity will judge impartially, and with impartial judges the integrity of Marie Antoinette needs no defender.

“When the natural tendency of the character of De Rohan to romantic and extraordinary intrigue is considered in connection with the associates he had gathered around him, the plot of the necklace ceases to be a source of wonder. At the time the Cardinal was most at a loss for means to meet the necessities of his extravagance, and to obtain some means of access to the Queen, the mountebank quack, Cagliostro, made his appearance in France. His fame had soon flown from Strasburg to Paris, the magnet of vices and the seat of criminals. The Prince-Cardinal, known of old as a seeker after everything of notoriety, soon became the intimate of one who flattered him with the accomplishment of all his dreams in the realization of the philosopher’s stone; converting puffs and French paste into brilliants; Roman pearls into Oriental ones; and turning earth to gold. The Cardinal, always in want of means to supply the insatiable exigencies of his ungovernable vices, had been the dupe through life of his own credulity—a



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drowning man catching at a straw! But instead of making gold of base materials, Cagliostro's brass soon relieved his blind adherent of all his sterling metal. As many needy persons enlisted under the banners of this nostrum speculator, it is not to be wondered at that the infamous name of the Comtesse de Lamotte, and others of the same stamp, should have thus fallen into an association of the Prince-Cardinal or that her libellous stories of the Queen of France should have found eager promulgators, where the real diamonds of the famous necklace being taken apart were divided piecemeal among a horde of the most depraved sharpers that ever existed to make human nature blush at its own degradation!

[Cagliostro, when he came to Rome, for I know not whether there had been any previous intimacy, got acquainted with a certain Marchese Vivaldi, a Roman, whose wife had been for years the chere amie of the last Venetian Ambassador, Peter Pesaro, a noble patrician, and who has ever since his embassy at Rome been his constant companion and now resides with him in England. No men in Europe are more constant in their attachments than the Venetians. Pesaro is the sole proprietor of one of the most beautiful and magnificent palaces on the Grand Canal at Venice, though he now lives in the outskirts of London, in a small house, not so large as one of the offices of his immense noble palace, where his agent transacts his business. The husband of Pesaro's chere amie, the Marchese Vivaldi, when Cagliostro was arrested and sent to the Castello Santo Angelo at Rome, was obliged to fly his country, and went to Venice, where he was kept secreted and maintained by the Marquis Solari, and it was only through his means and those of the Cardinal Consalvi, then known only as the musical Abbe Consalvi, from his great attachment to the immortal Cimarosa, that Vivaldi was ever allowed to return to his native country; but Consalvi, who was the friend of Vivaldi, feeling with the Marquis Solari much interested for his situation, they together contrived to convince Pius VI. that he was more to be pitied than blamed, and thus obtained his recall. I have merely given this note as a further warning to be drawn from the connections of the Cardinal de Rohan, to deter hunters after novelty from forming ties with innovators and impostors. Cagliostro was ultimately condemned, by the Roman laws under Pope Pius VI., for life, to the galleys, where he died.

Proverbs ought to be respected; for it is said that no phrase becomes a proverb until after a century's experience of its truth. In England it is proverbial to judge of men by the company they keep. Judge of the Cardinal de Rohan from his most intimate friend, the galley-slave.]



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“Eight or ten years had elapsed from the time Her Majesty had last seen the Cardinal to speak to him, with the exception of the casual glance as she drove by when he furtively introduced himself into the garden at the fete at Trianon, till he was brought to the King’s cabinet when arrested, and interrogated, and confronted with her face to face. The Prince started when he saw her. The comparison of her features with those of the guilty wretch who had dared to personate her in the garden at Versailles completely destroyed his self-possession. Her Majesty’s person was become fuller, and her face was much longer than that of the infamous D’Oliva. He could neither speak nor write an intelligible reply to the questions put to him. All he could utter, and that only in broken accents, was, ‘I’ll pay! I’ll pay Messieurs Bassange.’

“Had he not speedily recovered himself, all the mystery in which this affair has been left, so injuriously to the Queen, might have been prevented. His papers would have declared the history of every particular, and distinctly established the extent of his crime and the thorough innocence of Marie Antoinette of any connivance at the fraud, or any knowledge of the necklace. But when the Cardinal was ordered by the King’s Council to be put under arrest, his self-possession returned. He was given in charge to an officer totally unacquainted with the nature of the accusation. Considering only the character of his prisoner as one of the highest dignitaries of the Church, from ignorance and inexperience, he left the Cardinal an opportunity to write a German note to his factotum, the Abbe Georgel. In this note the trusty secretary was ordered to destroy all the letters of Cagliostro, Madame de Lamotte, and the other wretched associates of the infamous conspiracy; and the traitor was scarcely in custody when every evidence of his treason had disappeared. The note to Georgel saved his master from expiating his offence at the Place de Grave.

“The consequences of the affair would have been less injurious, however, had it been managed, even as it stood, with better judgment and temper. But it was improperly entrusted to the Baron de Breteuil and the Abbe Vermond, both sworn enemies of the Cardinal. Their main object was the ruin of him they hated, and they listened only to their resentments. They never weighed the danger of publicly prosecuting an individual whose condemnation would involve the first families in France, for he was allied even to many of the Princes of the blood. They should have considered that exalted personages, naturally feeling as if any crime proved against their kinsman would be a stain upon themselves, would of course resort to every artifice to exonerate the accused. To criminate the Queen was the only and the obvious method. Few are those nearest the Crown who are not most jealous of its wearers! Look at the long civil wars of York and Lancaster, and the short reign of Richard. The downfall of Kings meets less resistance than that of their inferiors.



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“Still, notwithstanding all the deplorable blunders committed in this business of De Rohan, justice was not smothered without great difficulty. His acquittal cost the families of De Rohan and De Conde more than a million of livres, distributed among all ranks of the clergy; besides immense sums sent to the Court of Rome to make it invalidate the judgment of the civil authority of France upon so high a member of the Church, and to induce it to order the Cardinal’s being sent to Rome by way of screening him from the prosecution, under the plausible pretext of more rigid justice.

“Considerable sums in money and jewels were also lavished on all the female relatives of the peers of France, who were destined to sit on the trial. The Abbe Georgel bribed the press, and extravagantly paid all the literary pens in France to produce the most Jesuitical and sophisticated arguments in his patron’s justification. Though these writers dared not accuse or in any way criminate the Queen, yet the respectful doubts, with which their defence of her were seasoned, did indefinitely more mischief than any direct attack, which could have been directly answered.

“The long cherished, but till now smothered, resentment of the Comtesse de Noailles, the scrupulous Madame Etiquette, burst forth on this occasion. Openly joining the Cardinal’s party against her former mistress and Sovereign, she recruited and armed all in favour of her protegee; for it was by her intrigues De Rohan had been nominated Ambassador to Vienna. Mesdames de Guemenee and Marsan, rival pretenders to favours of His Eminence, were equally earnest to support him against the Queen. In short, there was scarcely a family of distinction in France that, from the libels which then inundated the kingdom, did not consider the King as having infringed on their prerogatives and privileges in accusing the Cardinal.

“Shortly after the acquittal of this most artful, and, in the present instance, certainly too fortunate prelate, the Princesse de Conde came to congratulate me on the Queen’s innocence, and her kinsman’s liberation from the Bastille.

“Without the slightest observation, I produced to the Princess documents in proof of the immense sums she alone had expended in bribing the judges and other persons, to save her relation, the Cardinal, by criminating Her Majesty.

“The Princesse de Conde instantly fell into violent hysterics, and was carried home apparently, lifeless.

“I have often reproached myself for having given that sudden shock and poignant anguish to Her Highness, but I could not have supposed that one who came so barefacedly to impress me with the Cardinal’s innocence, could have been less firm in refuting her own guilt.

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“I never mentioned the circumstance to the Queen. Had I done so, Her Highness would have been forever excluded from the Court and the royal presence. This was no time to increase the enemies of Her Majesty, and, the affair of the trial being ended, I thought it best to prevent any further breach from a discord between the Court and the house of Conde. However, from a coldness subsisting ever after between the Princess and myself, I doubt not that the Queen had her suspicions that all was not as it should be in that quarter. Indeed, though Her Majesty never confessed it, I think she herself had discovered something at that very time not altogether to the credit of the Princesse de Conde, for she ceased going, from that period, to any of the fetes given at Chantilly.

“These were but a small portion of the various instruments successfully levelled by parties, even the least suspected, to blacken and destroy the fair fame of Marie Antoinette.

“The document which so justly alarmed the Princesse de Conde, when I showed it to her came into my hands in the following manner:

“Whenever a distressed family, or any particular individual, applied to me for relief, or was otherwise recommended for charitable purposes, I generally sent my little English protegee—whose veracity, well knowing the goodness of her heart, I could rely—to ascertain whether their claims were really well grounded.

[Indeed, I never deceived the Princess on these occasions. She was so generously charitable that I should have conceived it a crime. When I could get no satisfactory information, I said I could not trace anything undeserving her charity, and left Her Highness to exercise her own discretion.]

“One day I received an earnest memorial from a family, desiring to make some private communications of peculiar delicacy. I sent my usual ambassadress to inquire into its import. On making her mission known, she found no difficulty in ascertaining the object of the application. It proceeded from conscientious distress of mind. A relation of this family had been the regular confessor of a convent. With the Lady Abbess of this convent and her trusty nuns, the Princesse de Conde had deposited considerable sums of money, to be bestowed in creating influence in favour of the Cardinal de Rohan. The confessor, being a man of some consideration among the clergy, was applied to, to use his influence with the needier members of the Church more immediately about him, as well as those of higher station, to whom he had access, in furthering the purposes of the Princesse de Conde. The bribes were applied as intended. But, at the near approach of death, the confessor was struck with remorse. He begged his family, without mentioning his name, to send the accounts and vouchers of the sums he had so distributed, to me, as a proof of his contrition, that I might make what use of them I should think proper. The papers were handed to my messenger, who pledged her word of honour that I would certainly adhere to the dying man’s last injunctions. She desired they might be sealed up by the family, and by them directed to me.—[To this day, I



neither know the name of the convent or the confessor.]—She then hastened back to our place of rendezvous, where I waited for her, and where she consigned the packet into my own hands.

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“That part of the papers which compromised only the Princesse de Conde was shown by me to the Princess on the occasion I have mentioned. It was natural enough that she should have been shocked at the detection of having suborned the clergy and others with heavy bribes to avert the deserved fate of the Cardinal. I kept this part of the packet secret till the King’s two aunts, who had also been warm advocates in favour of the prelate, left Paris for Rome. Then, as Pius VI. had interested himself as head of the Church for the honour of one of its members, I gave them these very papers to deliver to His Holiness for his private perusal. I was desirous of enabling this truly charitable and Christian head of our sacred religion to judge how far his interference was justified by facts. I am thoroughly convinced that, had he been sooner furnished with these evidences, instead of blaming the royal proceeding, he would have urged it on, nay, would himself have been the first to advise that the foul conspiracy should be dragged into open day.

“The Comte de Vergennes told me that the King displayed the greatest impartiality throughout the whole investigation for the exculpation of the Queen, and made good his title on this, as he did on every occasion where his own unbiassed feelings and opinions were called into action, to great esteem for much higher qualities than the world has usually given him credit for.

“I have been accused of having opened the prison doors of the culprit Lamotte for her escape; but the charge is false. I interested myself, as was my duty, to shield the Queen from public reproach by having Lamotte sent to a place of penitence; but I never interfered, except to lessen her punishment, after the judicial proceedings. The diamonds, in the hands of her vile associates at Paris, procured her ample means to escape. I should have been the Queen’s greatest enemy had I been the cause of giving liberty to one who acted, and might naturally have been expected to act, as this depraved woman did.

“Through the private correspondence which was carried on between this country and England, after I had left it, I was informed that M. de Calonne, whom the Queen never liked, and who was called to the administration against her will—which he knew, and consequently became one of her secret enemies in the affair of the necklace—was discovered to have been actively employed against Her Majesty in the work published in London by Lamotte.

“Mr. Sheridan was the gentleman who first gave me this information.

“I immediately sent a trusty person by the Queen’s orders to London, to buy up the whole work. It was too late. It had been already so widely circulated that its consequences could no longer be prevented. I was lucky enough, however, for a considerable sum, to get a copy from a person intimate with the author, the margin of which, in the handwriting of M. de Calonne, actually contained numerous additional

circumstances which were to have been published in a second edition! This publication my agent, aided by some English gentlemen, arrived in time to suppress.



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“The copy I allude to was brought to Paris and shown to the Queen. She instantly flew with it in her hands to the King’s cabinet.

“Now, Sire,’ exclaimed she, ‘I hope you will be convinced that my enemies are those whom I have long considered as the most pernicious of Your Majesty’s Councillors—your own Cabinet Ministers—your M. de Calonne!—respecting whom I have often given you my opinion, which, unfortunately, has always been attributed to mere female caprice, or as having been biassed by the intrigues of Court favourites! This, I hope, Your Majesty will now be able to contradict!’

“The King all this time was looking over the different pages containing M. de Calonne’s additions on their margins. On recognising the hand-writing, His Majesty was so affected by this discovered treachery of his Minister and the agitation of his calumniated Queen that he could scarcely articulate.

“Where,’ said he, I did you procure this?’

“Through the means, Sire, of some of the worthy members of that nation your treacherous Ministers made our enemy—from England! where your unfortunate Queen, your injured wife, is compassionated!’

“Who got it for you?’

“My dearest, my real, and my only sincere friend, the Princesse de Lamballe!’

“The King requested I should be sent for. I came. As may be imagined, I was received with the warmest sentiments of affection by both Their Majesties. I then laid before the King the letter of Mr. Sheridan, which was, in substance, as follows:

“*Madame,*

“A work of mine, which I did not choose should be printed, was published in Dublin and transmitted to be sold in London. As soon as I was informed of it, and had procured a spurious copy, I went to the bookseller to put a stop to its circulation. I there met with a copy of the work of Madame de Lamotte, which has been corrected by some one at Paris and sent back to the bookseller for a second edition. Though not in time to suppress the first edition, owing to its rapid circulation, I have had interest enough, through the means of the bookseller of whom I speak, to remit you the copy which has been sent as the basis of a new one. The corrections, I am told, are by one of the King’s Ministers. If true, I should imagine the writer will be easily traced.

“I am happy that it has been in my power to make this discovery, and I hope it will be the means of putting a stop to this most scandalous publication. I feel myself honoured in having contributed thus far to the wishes of Her Majesty, which I hope I have fulfilled to the entire satisfaction of Your Highness.



“Should anything further transpire on this subject, I will give you the earliest information.

“I remain, madame, with profound respect, Your Highness’ most devoted,

“very humble servant,

“*Richard BRINSLEY Sheridan.*’

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[Madame Campan mentions in her work that the Queen had informed her of the treachery of the Minister, but did not enter into particulars, nor explain the mode or source of its detection. Notwithstanding the parties had bound themselves for the sums they received not to reprint the work, a second edition appeared a short time afterwards in London. This, which was again bought up by the French Ambassador, was the same which was to have been burned by the King's command at the china manufactory at Sevres.]

“M. de Calonne immediately received the King's mandate to resign the portfolio. The Minister desired that he might be allowed to give his resignation to the King himself. His request was granted. The Queen was present at the interview. The work in question was produced. On beholding it, the Minister nearly fainted. The King got up and left the room. The Queen, who remained, told M. de Calonne that His Majesty had no further occasion for his services. He fell on his knees. He was not allowed to speak, but was desired to leave Paris.

“The dismissal and disgrace of M. de Calonne were scarcely known before all Paris vociferated that they were owing to the intrigues of the favourite De Polignac, in consequence of his having refused to administer to her own superfluous extravagance and the Queen's repeated demands on the Treasury to satisfy the numerous dependants of the Duchess.

“This, however, was soon officially disproved by the exhibition of a written proposition of Calonne's to the Queen, to supply an additional hundred thousand francs that year to her annual revenue, which Her Majesty refused. As for the Duchesse de Polignac, so far from having caused the disgrace, she was not even aware of the circumstance from which it arose; nor did the Minister himself ever know how, or by what agency, his falsehood was so thoroughly unmasked.”

*Note:*

[The work which is here spoken of, the Queen kept, as a proof of the treachery of Calonne towards her and his Sovereign, till the storming of the Tuileries on the 10th of August, 1792, when, with the rest of the papers and property plundered on that memorable occasion, it fell into the hands of the ferocious mob.

M. de Calonne soon after left France for Italy. There he lived for some time in the palace of a particular friend of mine and the Marquis, my husband, the Countess Francese Tressino, at Vicenza.

In consequence of our going every season to take the mineral waters and use the baths at Valdagno, we had often occasion to be in company with M. de Calonne, both at Vicenza and Valdagno, where I must do him the justice to say he conducted himself with the greatest circumspection in speaking of the Revolution.



Though he evidently avoided the topic which terminates this chapter, yet one day, being closely pressed upon the subject, he said forgeries were daily committed on Ministers, and were most particularly so in France at the period in question; that he had borne the blame of various imprudencies neither authorized nor executed by him; that much had been done and supposed to have been done with his sanction, of which he had not the slightest knowledge. This he observed generally, without specifying any express instance.



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He was then asked whether he did not consider himself responsible for the mischief he occasioned by declaring the nation in a state of bankruptcy. He said, "No, not in the least. There was no other way of preventing enormous sums from being daily lavished, as they then were, on herds of worthless beings; that the Queen had sought to cultivate a state of private domestic society, but that, in the attempt, she only warmed in her bosom domestic vipers, who fed on the vital spirit of her generosity." He mentioned no names.

I then took the liberty of asking him his opinion of the Princesse de Lamballe.

"Oh, madame! had the rest of Her Majesty's numerous attendants possessed the tenth part of that unfortunate Victim's virtues, Her Majesty would never have been led into the errors which all France must deplore!

"I shall never forget her," continued he, "the day I went to take leave of her. She was sitting on a sofa when I entered. On seeing me, she rose immediately. Before I could utter a syllable, 'Monsieur,' said the Princess, 'you are accused of being the Queen's enemy. Acquit yourself of the foul deed imputed to you, and I shall be happy to serve you as far as lies in my power. Till then, I must decline holding any communication with an individual thus situated. I am her friend, and cannot receive any one known to be otherwise.'

"There was something," added he, "so sublime, so dignified, and altogether so firm, though mild in her manner, that she appeared not to belong to a race of earthly beings!"

Seeing the tears fall from his eyes, while he was thus eulogising her whose memory I shall ever venerate, I almost forgave him the mischief of his imprudence, which led to her untimely end. I therefore carefully avoided wounding his few gray hairs and latter days, and left him still untold that it was by her, of whom he thought so highly, that his uncontradicted treachery had been discovered.

### SECTION III.

"Of the many instances in which the Queen's exertions to serve those whom she conceived likely to benefit and relieve the nation, turned to the injury, not only of herself, but those whom she patronised and the cause she would strengthen, one of the most unpopular was that of the promotion of Brienne, Archbishop of Sens, to the Ministry. Her interest in his favour was entirely created by the Abbe Vermond, himself too superficial to pronounce upon any qualities, and especially such as were requisite for so high a station. By many, the partiality which prompted Vermond to espouse the interests of the Archbishop was ascribed to the amiable sentiment of gratitude for the recommendation of that dignitary, by which Vermond himself first obtained his situation at Court; but there were others, who have been deemed deeper in the secret, who



impute it to the less honourable source of self-interest, to the mere spirit of ostentation, to the hope of its enabling him to bring about the destruction of the De Polignacs. Be this as it may, the Abbe well knew that a Minister indebted for his elevation solely to the Queen would be supported by her to the last.



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“This, unluckily, proved the case. Marie Antoinette persisted in upholding every act of Brienne, till his ignorance and unpardonable blunders drew down the general indignation of the people against Her Majesty and her protege, with whom she was identified. The King had assented to the appointment with no other view than that of not being utterly isolated and to show a respect for his consort’s choice. But the incapable Minister was presently compelled to retire not only from office, but from Paris. Never was a Minister more detested while in power, or a people more enthusiastically satisfied at his going out. His effigy was burnt in every town of France, and the general illuminations and bonfires in the capital were accompanied by hooting and hissing the deposed statesman to the barriers.

“The Queen, prompted by the Abbe Vermond, even after Brienne’s dismissal, gave him tokens of her royal munificence. Her Majesty feared that her acting otherwise to a Minister, who had been honoured by her confidence, would operate as a check to prevent all men of celebrity from exposing their fortunes to so ungracious a return for lending their best services to the State, which now stood in need of the most skilful pilots. Such were the motives assigned by Her Majesty herself to me, when I took the liberty, of expostulating with her respecting the dangers which threatened herself and family, from this continued devotedness to a Minister against whom the nation had pronounced so strongly. I could not but applaud the delicacy of the feeling upon which her conduct had been grounded; nor could I blame her, in my heart, for the uprightness of her principle, in showing that what she had once undertaken should not be abandoned through female caprice. I told Her Majesty that the system upon which she acted was praiseworthy; and that its application in the present instance would have been so had the Archbishop possessed as much talent as he lacked; but, that now it was quite requisite for her to stop the public clamour by renouncing her protection of a man who had so seriously endangered the public tranquillity and her own reputation.

“As a proof how far my caution was well founded, there was an immense riotous mob raised about this time against the Queen, in consequence of her having, appointed the dismissed Minister’s niece, Madame de Canisy, to a place at Court, and having given her picture, set in diamonds, to the Archbishop himself.

“The Queen, in many cases, was by far too communicative to some of her household, who immediately divulged all they gathered from her unreserve. How could these circumstances have transpired to the people but from those nearest the person of Her Majesty, who, knowing the public feeling better than their royal mistress could be supposed to know it, did their own feeling little credit by the mischievous exposure? The people were exasperated beyond all conception. The Abbe Vermond placed before Her Majesty the consequences



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of her communicativeness, and from this time forward she never repeated the error. After the lesson she had received, none of her female attendants, not even the Duchesse de Polignac, to whom she would have confided her very existence, could, had they been ever so much disposed, have drawn anything upon public matters from her. With me, as her superintendent and entitled by my situation to interrogate and give her counsel, she was not, of course, under the same restriction. To his other representations of the consequences of the Queen's indiscreet openness, the Abbe Vermond added that, being obliged to write all the letters, private and public, he often found himself greatly embarrassed by affairs having gone forth to the world beforehand. One misfortune of putting this seal upon the lips of Her Majesty was that it placed her more thoroughly in the Abbe's power. She was, of course, obliged to rely implicitly upon him concerning many points, which, had they undergone the discussion necessarily resulting from free conversation, would have been shown to her under very different aspects. A man with a better heart, less Jesuitical, and not so much interested as Vermond was to keep his place, would have been a safer monitor.

“Though the Archbishop of Sens was so much hated and despised, much may be said in apology for his disasters. His unpopularity, and the Queen's support of him against the people, was certainly a vital blow to the monarchy. There is no doubt of his having been a poor substitute for the great men who had so gloriously beaten the political paths of administration, particularly the Comte de Vergennes and Necker. But at that time, when France was threatened by its great convulsion, where is the genius which might not have committed itself? And here is a man coming to rule amidst revolutionary feelings, with no knowledge whatever of revolutionary principles—a pilot steering into one harbour by the chart of another. I am by no means a vindicator of the Archbishop's obstinacy in offering himself a candidate for a situation entirely foreign to the occupations, habits, and studies of his whole life; but his intentions may have been good enough, and we must not charge the physician with murder who has only mistaken the disease, and, though wrong in his judgment, has been zealous and conscientious; nor must we blame the comedians for the faults of the comedy. The errors were not so much in the men who did not succeed as in the manners of the times.

“The part which the Queen was now openly compelled to bear, in the management of public affairs, increased the public feeling against her from dislike to hatred. Her Majesty was unhappy, not only from the necessity which called her out of the sphere to which she thought her sex ought to be confined, but from the divisions which existed in the Royal Family upon points in which their common safety required a common scheme of action. Her favourite brother-in-law, D'Artois, had espoused the side of D'ORLEANS, and the popular party seemed to prevail against her, even with the King.



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“The various parliamentary assemblies, which had swept on their course, under various denominations, in rapid and stormy succession, were now followed by one which, like Aaron’s rod, was to swallow up the rest. Its approach was regarded by the Queen with ominous reluctance. At length, however, the moment for the meeting of the States General at Versailles arrived. Necker was once more in favour, and a sort of forlorn hope of better times dawned upon the perplexed monarch, in his anticipations from this assembly.

“The night before the procession of the instalment of the States General was to take place, it being my duty to attend Her Majesty, I received an anonymous letter, cautioning me not to be seen that day by her side. I immediately went to the King’s apartments and showed him the letter. His Majesty humanely enjoined me to abide by its counsels. I told him I hoped he would for once permit me to exercise my own discretion; for if my royal Sovereign were in danger, it was then that her attendants should be most eager to rally round her, in order to watch over her safety and encourage her fortitude.

“While we were thus occupied, the Queen and my sister-in-law, the Duchesse d’Orleans, entered the King’s apartment, to settle some part of the etiquette respecting the procession.

“‘I wish,’ exclaimed the Duchess, ‘that this procession were over; or that it were never to take place; or that none of us had to be there; or else, being obliged, that we had all passed, and were comfortably at home again.’

“‘Its taking place,’ answered the Queen, ‘never had my sanction, especially at Versailles. M. Necker appears to be in its favour, and answers for its success. I wish he may not be deceived; but I much fear that he is guided more by the mistaken hope of maintaining his own popularity by this impolitic meeting, than by any conscientious confidence in its advantage to the King’s authority.’

“The King, having in his hand the letter which I had just brought him, presented it to the Queen.

“‘This, my dear Duchess,’ cried the Queen, ‘comes from the Palais Royal manufactory, [Palais d’ Orleans. D.W.] to poison the very first sentiments of delight at the union expected between the King and his subjects, by innuendoes of the danger which must result from my being present at it. Look at the insidiousness of the thing! Under a pretext of kindness, cautions against the effect of their attachment are given to my most sincere and affectionate attendants, whose fidelity none dare attack openly. I am, however, rejoiced that Lamballe has been cautioned.’

“‘Against what?’ replied I.

“‘Against appearing in the procession,’ answered the Queen.



“It is only,’ I exclaimed, ‘by putting me in the grave they can ever withdraw me from Your Majesty. While I have life and Your Majesty’s sanction, force only will prevent me from doing my duty. Fifty thousand daggers, Madame, were they all raised against me, would have no power to shake the firmness of my character or the earnestness of my attachment. I pity the wretches who have so little penetration. Victim or no victim, nothing shall ever induce me to quit Your Majesty.’



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“The Queen and Duchess, both in tears, embraced me. After the Duchess had taken her leave, the King and Queen hinted their suspicions that she had been apprised of the letter, and had made this visit expressly to observe what effect it had produced, well knowing at the time that some attempt was meditated by the hired mob and purchased deputies already brought over to the D’ORLEANS faction. Not that the slightest suspicion of collusion could ever be attached to the good Duchesse d’Orleans against the Queen. The intentions of the Duchess were known to be as virtuous and pure as those of her husband’s party were criminal and mischievous. But, no doubt, she had intimations of the result intended; and, unable to avert the storm or prevent its cause, had been instigated by her strong attachment to me, as well as the paternal affection her father, the Duc de Penthièvre, bore me, to attempt to lessen the exasperation of the Palais Royal party and the Duke, her husband, against me, by dissuading me from running any risk upon the occasion.

“The next day, May 5, 1789, at the very moment when all the resources of nature and art seemed exhausted to render the Queen a paragon of loveliness beyond anything I had ever before witnessed, even in her; when every impartial eye was eager to behold and feast on that form whose beauty warmed every heart in her favour; at that moment a horde of miscreants, just as she came within sight of the Assembly, thundered in her ears, ‘Orleans forever!’ three or four times, while she and the King were left to pass unheeded. Even the warning of the letter, from which she had reason to expect some commotions, suggested to her imagination nothing like this, and she was dreadfully shaken. I sprang forward to support her. The King’s party, prepared for the attack, shouted ‘Vive le roi! Vive la reine!’ As I turned, I saw some of the members lividly pale, as if fearing their machinations had been discovered; but, as they passed, they said in the hearing of Her Majesty, ‘Remember, you are the daughter of Maria Theresa.’— ‘True,’ answered the Queen. The Duc de Biron, Orleans, La Fayette, Mirabeau, and the Mayor of Paris, seeing Her Majesty’s emotion, came up, and were going to stop the procession. All, in apparent agitation, cried out ‘Halt!’ The Queen, sternly looking at them, made a sign with her head to proceed, recovered herself, and moved forward in the train, with all the dignity and self-possession for which she was so eminently distinguished.

“But this self-command in public proved nearly fatal to Her Majesty on her return to her apartment. There her real feelings broke forth, and their violence was so great as to cause the bracelets on her wrists and the pearls in her necklace to burst from the threads and settings, before her women and the ladies in attendance could have time to take them off. She remained many hours in a most alarming state of strong convulsions. Her clothes were obliged to be cut from her body, to give her ease; but as soon as she was undressed, and tears came to her relief, she flew alternately to the Princesse Elizabeth and to myself; but we were both too much overwhelmed to give her the consolation of which she stood so much in need.



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“Barnave that very evening came to my private apartment, and tendered his services to the Queen. He told me he wished Her Majesty to be convinced that he was a Frenchman; that he only desired his country might be governed by salutary laws, and not by the caprice of weak sovereigns, or a vitiated, corrupt Ministry; that the clergy and nobility ought to contribute to the wants of the State equally with every other class of the King’s subjects; that when this was accomplished, and abuses were removed, by such a national representation as would enable the Minister, Necker, to accomplish his plans for the liquidation of the national debt, I might assure Her Majesty that both the King and herself would find themselves happier in a constitutional government than they had ever yet been; for such a government would set them free from all dependence on the caprice of Ministers, and lessen a responsibility of which they now experienced the misery; that if the King sincerely entered into the spirit of regenerating the French nation, he would find among the present representatives many members of probity, loyal and honourable in their intentions, who would never become the destroyers of a limited legitimate monarchy, or the corrupt regicides of a rump Parliament, such as brought the wayward Charles the First, of England, to the fatal block.

“I attempted to relate the conversation to the Queen. She listened with the greatest attention till I came to the part concerning the constitutional King, when Her Majesty lost her patience, and prevented me from proceeding.

[This and other conversations, which will be found in subsequent pages, will prove that Barnave’s sentiments in favour of the Royal Family long preceded the affair at Varennes, the beginning of which Madame Campan assigns to it. Indeed it must by this time be evident to the reader that Madame Campan, though very correct in relating all she knew, with respect to the history of Marie Antoinette, was not in possession of matters foreign to her occupation about the person of the Queen, and, in particular, that she could communicate little concerning those important intrigues carried on respecting the different deputies of the first Assembly, till in the latter days of the Revolution, when it became necessary, from the pressure of events, that she should be made a sort of confidante, in order to prevent her from compromising the persons of the Queen and the Princesse de Lamballe: a trust, of her claim to which her undoubted fidelity was an ample pledge. Still, however, she was often absent from Court at moments of great importance, and was obliged to take her information, upon much which she has recorded, from hearsay, which has led her, as I have before stated, into frequent mistakes.]

“The expense of the insulting scene, which had so overcome Her Majesty, was five hundred thousand francs! This sum was paid by the agents of the Palais Royal, and its execution entrusted principally to Mirabeau, Bailly, the Mayor of Paris, and another individual, who was afterwards brought over to the Court party.



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“The history of the Assembly itself on the day following, the 6th of May, is too well known. The sudden perturbation of a guilty conscience, which overcame the Duc d’Orleans, seemed like an awful warning. He had scarcely commenced his inflammatory address to the Assembly, when some one, who felt incommoded by the stifling heat of the hall, exclaimed, ‘Throw open the windows!’ The conspirator fancied he heard in this his death sentence. He fainted, and was conducted home in the greatest agitation. Madame de Bouffon was at the Palais Royal when the Duke was taken thither. The Duchesse d’Orleans was at the palace of the Duc de Penthièvre, her father, while the Duke himself was at the Hotel Thoulouse with me, where he was to dine, and where we were waiting for the Duchess to come and join us, by appointment. But Madame de Bouffon was so alarmed by the state in which she saw the Duc d’Orleans that she instantly left the Palais Royal, and despatched his valet express to bring her thither. My sister-in-law sent an excuse to me for not coming to dinner, and an explanation to her father for so abruptly leaving his palace, and hastened home to her husband. It was some days before he recovered; and his father-in-law, his wife, and myself were not without hopes that he would see in this an omen to prevent him from persisting any longer in his opposition to the Royal Family.

“The effects of the recall of the popular Minister, Necker, did not satisfy the King. Necker soon became an object of suspicion to the Court party, and especially to His Majesty and the Queen. He was known to have maintained an understanding with D’ORLEANS. The miscarriage of many plans and the misfortunes which succeeded were the result of this connection, though it was openly disavowed. The first suspicion of the coalition arose thus:

“When the Duke had his bust carried about Paris, after his unworthy schemes against the King had been discovered, it was thrown into the mire. Necker passing, perhaps by mere accident, stopped his carriage, and expressing himself with some resentment for such treatment to a Prince of the blood and a friend of the people, ordered the bust to be taken to the Palais Royal, where it was washed, crowned with laurel, and thence, with Necker’s own bust, carried to Versailles. The King’s aunts, coming from Bellevue as the procession was upon the road, ordered the guards to send the men away who bore the busts, that the King and Queen might not be insulted with the sight. This circumstance caused another riot, which was attributed to Their Majesties. The dismissal of the Minister was the obvious result. It is certain, however, that, in obeying the mandate of exile, Necker had no wish to exercise the advantage he possessed from his great popularity. His retirement was sudden and secret; and, although it was mentioned that very evening by the Baroness de Stael to the Comte de Chinon, so little bustle was made about his withdrawing from France, that it was even stated at the time to have been utterly unknown, even to his daughter.



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“Necker himself ascribed his dismissal to the influence of the De Polignacs; but he was totally mistaken, for the Duchesse de Polignac was the last person to have had any influence in matters of State, whatever might have been the case with those who surrounded her. She was devoid of ambition or capacity to give her weight; and the Queen was not so pliant in points of high import as to allow herself to be governed or overruled, unless her mind was thoroughly convinced. In that respect, she was something like Catharine II., who always distinguished her favourites from her Minister; but in the present case she had no choice, and was under the necessity of yielding to the boisterous voice of a faction.

“From this epoch, I saw all the persons who had any wish to communicate with the Queen on matters relative to the public business, and Her Majesty was generally present when they came, and received them in my apartments. The Duchesse de Polignac never, to my knowledge, entered into any of these State questions; yet there was no promotion in the civil, military, or ministerial department, which she has not been charged with having influenced the Queen to make, though there were few of them who were not nominated by the King and his Ministers, even unknown to the Queen herself.

“The prevailing dissatisfaction against Her Majesty and the favourite De Polignac now began to take so many forms, and produce effects so dreadful, as to wring her own feelings, as well as those of her royal mistress, with the most intense anguish. Let me mention one gross and barbarous instance in proof of what I say.

“After the birth of the Queen’s second son, the Duc de Normandie, who was afterwards Dauphin, the Duke and Duchess of Harcourt, outrageously jealous of the ascendancy of the governess of the Dauphin, excited the young Prince’s hatred toward Madame de Polignac to such a pitch that he would take nothing from her hands, but often, young as he was at the time, order her out of the apartment, and treat her remonstrances with the utmost contempt. The Duchess bitterly complained of the Harcourts to the Queen; for she really sacrificed the whole of her time to the care and attention required by this young Prince, and she did so from sincere attachment, and that he might not be irritated in his declining state of health. The Queen was deeply hurt at these dissensions between the governor and governess. Her Majesty endeavoured to pacify the mind of the young Prince, by literally making herself a slave to his childish caprices, which in all probability would have created the confidence so desired, when a most cruel, unnatural, I may say diabolical, report prevailed to alienate the child’s affections even from his mother, in making him believe that, owing to his deformity and growing ugliness, she had transferred all her tenderness to his younger brother, who certainly was very superior in health and beauty to the puny Dauphin. Making a pretext



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of this calumny, the governor of the heir-apparent was malicious enough to prohibit him from eating or drinking anything but what first passed through the hands of his physicians; and so strong was the interdiction on the mind of the young Dauphin that he never after saw the Queen but with the greatest terror. The feelings of his disconsolate parent may be more readily conceived than described. So may the mortification of his governess, the Duchesse de Polignac, herself so tender, so affectionate a mother. Fortunately for himself, and happily for his wretched parents, this royal youth, whose life, though short, had been so full of suffering, died at Versailles on the 4th of June, 1789, and, though only between seven and eight years of age at the time of his decease, he had given proofs of intellectual precocity, which would probably have made continued life, amidst the scenes of wretchedness, which succeeded, anything to him but a blessing.

“The cabals of the Duke of Harcourt, to which I have just adverted, against the Duchesse de Polignac, were the mere result of foul malice and ambition. Harcourt wished to get his wife, who was the sworn enemy of De Polignac, created governess to the Dauphin, instead of the Queen’s favourite. Most of the criminal stories against the Duchesse de Polignac, and which did equal injury to the Queen, were fabricated by the Harcourts, for the purpose of excluding their rival from her situation.

“Barnave, meanwhile, continued faithful to his liberal principles, but equally faithful to his desire of bringing Their Majesties over to those principles, and making them republican Sovereigns. He lost no opportunity of availing himself of my permission for him to call whenever he chose on public business; and he continued to urge the same points, upon which he had before been so much in earnest, although with no better effect. Both the King and the Queen looked with suspicion upon Barnave, and with still more suspicion upon his politics.

“The next time I received him, ‘Madame,’ exclaimed the deputy to me, ‘since our last interview I have pondered well on the situation of the King; and, as an honest Frenchman, attached to my lawful Sovereign, and anxious for his future prosperous reign, I am decidedly of opinion that his own safety, as well as the dignity of the crown of France, and the happiness of his subjects, can only be secured by his giving his country a Constitution, which will at once place his establishment beyond the caprice and the tyranny of corrupt administrations, and secure hereafter the first monarchy in Europe from the possibility of sinking under weak Princes, by whom the royal splendour of France has too often been debased into the mere tool of vicious and mercenary noblesse, and sycophantic courtiers. A King, protected by a Constitution, can do no wrong. He is unshackled with responsibility. He is empowered with the comfort of exercising the



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executive authority for the benefit of the nation, while all the harsher duties, and all the censures they create, devolve on others. It is, therefore, madame, through your means, and the well-known friendship you have ever evinced for the Royal Family, and the general welfare of the French nation, that I wish to obtain a private audience of Her Majesty, the Queen, in order to induce her to exert the never-failing ascendancy she has ever possessed over the mind of our good King, in persuading him to the sacrifice of a small proportion of his power, for the sake of preserving the monarchy to his heirs; and posterity will record the virtues of a Prince who has been magnanimous enough, of his own free will, to resign the unlawful part of his prerogatives, usurped by his predecessors, for the blessing and pleasure of giving liberty to a beloved people, among whom both the King and Queen will find many Hampdens and Sidneys, but very few Cromwells. Besides, madame, we must make a merit of necessity. The times are pregnant with events, and it is more prudent to support the palladium of the ancient monarchy than risk its total overthrow; and fall it must, if the diseased excrescences, of which the people complain, and which threaten to carry death into the very heart of the tree, be not lopped away in time by the Sovereign himself.'

"I heard the deputy with the greatest attention. I promised to fulfil his commission. The better to execute my task, I retired the moment he left me, and wrote down all I could recollect of his discourse, that it might be thoroughly placed before the Queen the first opportunity.

"When I communicated the conversation to Her Majesty, she listened with the most gracious condescension, till I came to the part wherein Barnave so forcibly impressed the necessity of adopting a constitutional monarchy. Here, as she had done once before, when I repeated some former observations of Barnave to her, Marie Antoinette somewhat lost her equanimity. She rose from her seat, and exclaimed:

"'What! is an absolute Prince, and the hereditary Sovereign of the ancient monarchy of France, to become the tool of a plebeian faction, who will, their point once gained, dethrone him for his imbecile complaisance? Do they wish to imitate the English Revolution of 1648, and reproduce the sanguinary times of the unfortunate and weak Charles the First? To make France a commonwealth! Well! be it so! But before I advise the King to such a step, or give my consent to it, they shall bury me under the ruins of the monarchy.'

"'But what answer,' said I, 'does Your Majesty wish me to return to the deputy's request for a private audience?'



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“What answer?’ exclaimed the Queen. No answer at all is the best answer to such a presumptuous proposition! I tremble for the consequences of the impression their disloyal manoeuvres have made upon the minds of the people, and I have no faith whatever in their proffered services to the King. However, on reflection, it may be expedient to temporise. Continue to see him. Learn, if possible, how far he may be trusted; but do not fix any time, as yet, for the desired audience. I wish to apprise the King, first, of his interview with you, Princess. This conversation does not agree with what he and Mirabeau proposed about the King’s recovering his prerogatives. Are these the prerogatives with which he flattered the King? Binding him hand and foot, and excluding him from every privilege, and then casting him a helpless dependant on the caprice of a volatile plebeian faction! The French nation is very different from the English. The first rules of the established ancient order of the government broken through, they will violate twenty others, and the King will be sacrificed, before this frivolous people again organise themselves with any sort of regular government.’

“Agreeably to Her Majesty’s commands, I continued to see Barnave. I communicated with him by letter,’ at his private lodgings at Passy, and at Vitry; but it was long before the Queen could be brought to consent to the audience he solicited.

[Of these letters I was generally the bearer. I recollect that day perfectly. I was copying some letters for the Princesse de Lamballe, when the Prince de Conti came in. The Prince lived not only to see, but to feel the errors of his system. He attained a great age. He outlived the glory of his country. Like many others, the first gleam of political regeneration led him into a system, which drove him out of France, to implore the shelter of a foreign asylum, that he might not fall a victim to his own credulity. I had an opportunity of witnessing in his latter days his sincere repentance; and to this it is fit that I should bear testimony. There were no bounds to the execration with which he expressed himself towards the murderers of those victims, whose death he lamented with a bitterness in which some remorse was mingled, from the impression that his own early errors in favour of the Revolution had unintentionally accelerated their untimely end. This was a source to him of deep and perpetual self-reproach.

There was an eccentricity in the appearance, dress, and manners of the Prince de Conti, which well deserves recording.

He wore to the very last—and it was in Barcelona, so late as 1803, that I last had the honour of conversing with him—a white rich stuff dress frock coat, of the cut and fashion of Louis XIV., which, being without any collar, had buttons and button-holes from the neck to the bottom of the skirt, and was padded and stiffened with buckram. The cuffs were very large, of a different colour,



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and turned up to the elbows. The whole was lined with white satin, which, from its being very much moth-eaten, appeared as if it had been dotted on purpose to show the buckram between the satin lining. His waistcoat was of rich green striped silk, bound with gold lace; the buttons and buttonholes of gold; the flaps very large, and completely covering his small clothes; which happened very apropos, for they scarcely reached his knees, over which he wore large striped silk stockings, that came half-way up his thighs. His shoes had high heels, and reached half up his legs; the buckles were small, and set round with paste. A very narrow stiff stock decorated his neck. He carried a hat, with a white feather on the inside, under his arm. His ruffles were of very handsome point lace. His few gray hairs were gathered in a little round bag. The wig alone was wanting to make him a thorough picture of the polished age of the founder of Versailles and Marly.

He had all that princely politeness of manner which so eminently distinguished the old school of French nobility, previous to the Revolution. He was the thorough gentleman, a character by no means so readily to be met with in these days of refinement as one would imagine. He never addressed the softer sex but with ease and elegance, and admiration of their persons.

Could Louis XIV. have believed, had it been told to him when he placed this branch of the Bourbons on the throne of Iberia, that it would one day refuse to give shelter at the Court of Madrid to one of his family, for fear of offending a Corsican usurper!]

“Indeed, Her Majesty had such an aversion to all who had declared themselves for any innovation upon the existing power of the monarchy, that she was very reluctant to give audience upon the subject to any person, not even excepting the Princes of the blood. The Comte d’Artois himself, leaning as he did to the popular side, had ceased to be welcome. Expressions he had made use of, concerning the necessity for some change, had occasioned the coolness, which was already of considerable standing.

“One day the Prince de Conti came to me, to complain of the Queen’s refusing to receive him, because he had expressed himself to the same effect as had the Comte d’Artois on the subject of the Tiers Etat.

“‘And does Your Highness,’ replied I, ‘imagine that the Queen is less displeased with the conduct of the Comte d’Artois on that head than she is with you, Prince? I can assure Your Highness, that at this moment there subsists a very great degree of coolness between Her Majesty and her royal brother-in-law, whom she loves as if he were her own brother. Though she makes every allowance for his political inexperience, and well knows the goodness of his heart and the rectitude of his intentions, yet policy will not permit her to change her sentiments.’



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“That may be,’ said the Prince, ‘but while Her Majesty continues to honour with her royal presence the Duchesse de Polignac, whose friends, as well as herself, are all enthusiastically mad in favour of the constitutional system, she shows an undue partiality, by countenancing one branch of the party and not the other; particularly so, as the great and notorious leader of the opposition, which the Queen frowns upon, is the sister-in-law of this very Duchesse de Polignac, and the avowed favourite of the Comte d’Artois, by whom, and the councils of the Palais Royal, he is supposed to be totally governed in his political career.’

“The Queen,’ replied I, ‘is certainly her own mistress. She sees, I believe, many persons more from habit than any other motive; to which, Your Highness is aware, many Princes often make sacrifices. Your Highness cannot suppose I can have the temerity to control Her Majesty, in the selection of her friends, or in her sentiments respecting them.’

“No,’ exclaimed the Prince, ‘I imagine not. But she might just as well see any of us; for we are no more enemies of the Crown than the party she is cherishing by constantly appearing among them; which, according to her avowed maxims concerning the not sanctioning any but supporters of the absolute monarchy, is in direct opposition to her own sentiments.

“Who,’ continued His Highness, ‘caused that infernal comedy, ‘Le Mariage de Figaro’, to be brought out, but the party of the Duchesse de Polignac?’

[Note of the Princesse de Lamballe:—The Prince de Conti never could speak of Beaumarchais but with the greatest contempt. There was something personal in this exasperation. Beaumarchais had satirized the Prince. ‘The Spanish Barber’ was founded on a circumstance which happened at a country house between Conti and a young lady, during the reign of Louis XV., when intrigues of every kind were practised and almost sanctioned. The poet has exposed the Prince by making him the Doctor Bartolo of his play. The affair which supplied the story was hushed up at Court, and the Prince was punished only by the loss of his mistress, who became the wife of another.]

The play is a critique on the whole Royal Family, from the drawing up of the curtain to its fall. It burlesques the ways and manners of every individual connected with the Court of Versailles. Not a scene but touches some of their characters. Are not the Queen herself and the Comte d’Artois lampooned and caricatured in the garden scenes, and the most slanderous ridicule cast upon their innocent evening walks on the terrace? Does not Beaumarchais plainly show in it, to every impartial eye, the means which the Comtesse Diane has taken publicly to demonstrate her jealousy of the Queen’s ascendancy over the Comte d’Artois? Is it not from the same sentiment that she roused the jealousy of the Comtesse d’Artois against Her Majesty?’



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“All these circumstances,’ observed I, ‘the King prudently foresaw when he read the manuscript, and caused it to be read to the Queen, to convince her of the nature of its characters and the dangerous tendency likely to arise from its performance. Of this Your Highness is aware. It is not for me to apprise you that, to avert the excitement inevitable from its being brought upon the stage, and under a thorough conviction of the mischief it would produce in turning the minds of the people against the Queen, His Majesty solemnly declared that the comedy should not be performed in Paris; and that he would never sanction its being brought before the public on any stage in France.’

“Bah! bah! madame!’ exclaimed De Conti. The Queen has acted like a child in this affair, as in many others. In defiance of His Majesty’s determination, did not the Queen herself, through the fatal influence of her favourite, whose party wearied her out by continued importunities, cause the King to revoke his express mandate? And what has been the consequence of Her Majesty’s ungovernable partiality for these De Polignacs?’

“You know, Prince,’ said I, ‘better than I do.’

“The proofs of its bad consequences,’ pursued His Highness, ‘are more strongly verified than ever by your own withdrawing from the Queen’s parties since her unreserved acknowledgment of her partiality (fatal partiality!) for those who will be her ruin; for they are her worst enemies.’

“Pardon me, Prince,’ answered I, ‘I have not withdrawn myself from the Queen, but from the new parties, with whose politics I cannot identify myself, besides some exceptions I have taken against those who frequent them.’

“Bah! bah!’ exclaimed De Conti, ‘your sagacity has got the better of your curiosity. All the wit and humour of that traitor Beaumarchais never seduced you to cultivate his society, as all the rest of the Queen’s party have done.’

“I never knew him to be accused of treason.’

“Why, what do you call a fellow who sent arms to the Americans before the war was declared, without his Sovereign’s consent?’

“In that affair, I consider the Ministers as criminal as himself; for the Queen, to this day, believes that Beaumarchais was sanctioned by them and, you know, Her Majesty has ever since had an insuperable dislike to both De Maurepas and De Vergennes. But I have nothing to do with these things.’

“Yes, yes, I understand you, Princess. Let her romp and play with the ‘compate vous’, —[A kind of game of forfeits, introduced for the diversion of the royal children and those of the Duchesse de Polignac.]—but who will ‘compatire’ (make allowance for) her folly?



Bah! bah! bah! She is inconsistent, Princess. Not that I mean by this to insinuate that the Duchess is not the sincere friend and well-wisher of the Queen. Her immediate existence, her interest, and that of her family, are all dependent on the royal bounty. But can the



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Duchess answer for the same sincerity towards the Queen, with respect to her innumerable guests? No! Are not the sentiments of the Duchesses sister-in-law, the Comtesse Diane, in direct opposition to the absolute monarchy? Has she not always been an enthusiastic advocate for all those that have supported the American war? Who was it that crowned, at a public assembly, the democratical straight hairs of Dr. Franklin? Why the same Madame Comtesse Diane! Who was 'capa turpa' in applauding the men who were framing the American Constitution at Paris? Madame Comtesse Diane! Who was it, in like manner, that opposed all the Queen's arguments against the political conduct of France and Spain, relative to the war with England, in favour of the American Independence? The Comtesse Diane! Not for the love of that rising nation, or for the sacred cause of liberty; but from a taste for notoriety, a spirit of envy and jealousy, an apprehension lest the personal charms of the Queen might rob her of a part of those affections, which she herself exclusively hoped to alienate from that abortion, the Comtesse d'Artois, in whose service she is Maid of Honour, and handmaid to the Count. My dear Princess, these are facts proved. Beaumarchais has delineated them all. Why, then, refuse to see me? Why withdraw her former confidence from the Comte d'Artois, when she lives in the society which promulgates antimonarchical principles? These are sad evidences of Her Majesty's inconsistency. She might as well see the Duc d'Orleans'

"Here my feelings overwhelmed me. I could contain myself no longer. The tears gushed from my eyes.

"'Oh, Prince!' exclaimed I, in a bitter agony of grief—'Oh, Prince! touch not that fatal string. For how many years has he not caused these briny tears of mine to flow from my burning eyes! The scalding drops have nearly parched up the spring of life!'"

### **ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:**

Beaumarchais sent arms to the Americans  
Educate his children as quietists in matters of religion  
It is an ill wind that blows no one any good  
Judge of men by the company they keep  
Les culottes—what do you call them?' 'Small clothes'  
My little English protegee  
No phrase becomes a proverb until after a century's experience  
We say "inexpressibles"  
Wish art to eclipse nature