

MADAME DE POMPADOUR

BY

H. NOEL WILLIAMS

AUTHOR OF "MADAME RÉCAMIER AND HER FRIENDS"

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PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THE life of a left-handed queen is always invested with a certain degree of interest, for it is safe to assume that, in order to arouse something more than an ephemeral passion in the heart of a monarch, a woman must have been the possessor of exceptional qualities. But in all the long roll of *reines de la main gauche* it is open to question whether there is one whose career affords anything approaching the attraction for the student of history or for the general reader as does that of the subject of the present volume.

For Madame de Pompadour was no ordinary king's mistress; she was a great political force. She made and unmade Ministers, she selected Ambassadors, she appointed generals, she conferred pensions and places. Upon her rests the responsibility for that sudden change in the traditional policy of France towards the House of Hapsburg which enabled the vindictive Maria Theresa to fan the ashes of the War of the Austrian Succession into the devouring flame which ravaged Europe for seven long years; and to her influence must be ascribed, in a great measure, the suppression of the Jesuits in France.

Nor was her activity by any means confined to politics.

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It is to her that France is indebted for the world-famous manufactory of Sèvres ; while the establishment of the École Militaire, which in the twenty-seven years of its existence gave to the country so many distinguished officers, Napoleon among the number, was mainly due to her efforts.

Men of letters and artists, too, found in her a generous and appreciative friend. She protected Voltaire and Montesquieu, rescued the elder Crébillon from poverty and neglect, encouraged Diderot and d'Alembert in their herculean labours, and made the fortune of Marmontel ; while it was she who introduced Boucher and his work to the Court of Louis XV., placed his *Forges de Vulcain* in the monarch's private apartments at Marly, purchased the famous *Lever du Soleil* and *Coucher du Soleil* (now in the Wallace Collection in London), and promoted his interests and those of his fellow-artists in every way.

In short, almost from the day on which she was installed at Versailles as *maîtresse déclarée* till her death in 1764, the influence of Madame de Pompadour was paramount in all matters, from politics to porcelain, and it is not too much to say that, during that period, it was she, rather than Louis XV., who was the real ruler of France and the fountain of honour.

For a woman of middle-class origin, the daughter of a man who had once been compelled to fly the country to escape being broken on the wheel, to attain to a post which had hitherto been regarded as the peculiar appanage of the nobility was, as may be imagined, no easy task ; to retain it for nineteen years was one which taxed

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her resources to the utmost. Her elevation, indeed, was the signal for an outburst of hostility before which a less resolute woman must inevitably have succumbed. She was called upon to face the enmity of the Royal Family, of powerful Ministers, of the ladies of the Court—most bitter antagonists of all—of the Jesuits, and of the rabble of Paris, who, strange as it may seem, resented their sovereign's departure from the custom observed by his predecessors almost as much as the *noblesse*. But never for a moment did she flinch. With an unrivalled skill, which compels the reluctant admiration even of those who find in her life but scant cause for eulogy, she contrived to make herself absolutely indispensable to the happiness of her royal lover, and that accomplished, proceeded to crush her enemies. One by one they were met, out-manœuvred, and driven from the field or forced to sue for quarter ; and though on more than one occasion, notably at the time of Damiens's attempt upon the life of Louis XV., her fall seemed inevitable, the only result of the machinations of her foes was to leave her more powerful than ever.

She died at the early age of forty-two, worn out by the storm and stress of a life which she once described as "like that of a Christian, a perpetual combat," a prey to wounded vanity and disappointed ambition. Wearying of the petty triumphs of Versailles, she had sought to associate her name with triumphs of another kind, and did not long survive the humiliating termination of the war into which she had so recklessly dragged her country.

Although, of course, an indispensable figure in all

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contemporary memoirs, Madame de Pompadour has been very far from receiving from modern writers that amount of attention which one would naturally expect ; and it is not a little surprising to find that, though our language contains excellent "Lives" of Madame de Maintenon and Madame du Barry, no attempt should have been made to give even a brief outline of the career of their more celebrated countrywoman.

That such should be the case is a matter for regret, as, since the admirable monographs of Campardon and the brothers De Goncourt are known to comparatively few English readers, the popular conception of Madame de Pompadour is necessarily derived from the writings of historians, who, while unsparing in their condemnation of her interference in affairs of State, for the most part entirely ignore the beneficial results of her influence in other directions.

To supply this deficiency, and to give an adequate, and, at the same time, a strictly impartial, account of the life of this most remarkable woman, has been my task ; and, with this object in view, my researches have covered a very wide field, and I have been at considerable pains to check the statements of one chronicler by those of others on all debatable points. Thus, the reader will find that I have given equal prominence to the opinions of Madame de Pompadour's devoted *femme-de-chambre*, Madame du Hausset, and to those of her enemy, d'Argenson ; to the Court diarist, the Duc de Luynes, and to the recorder of Parisian gossip, Barbier ; to the spiteful Richelieu and to the well-meaning Bernis ;

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seeking neither to exonerate nor to condemn, neither to praise nor to blame, but only to arrive at the truth.

In conclusion, I must take this opportunity of acknowledging my indebtedness to the admirable monographs by M. Campardon and the brothers De Goncourt, mentioned above, to the volumes of the marchioness's correspondence edited respectively by M. Malassis and M. Bonhomme, to M. Le Roi's *Curiosités historiques*, to M. Adolphe Jullien's *Histoire du Théâtre de Madame de Pompadour*, to M. Funck-Brentano's *Légendes et Archives de la Bastille*, and to the interesting essay by M. Frédéric Masson, prefaced to his edition of the *Mémoires et Lettres du Cardinal de Bernis*.

H. NOEL WILLIAMS.

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CHAPTER I

Louis XV.'s feeble character the result of his effeminate education—His marriage with Maria Leczinska—Conspiracy at Court to *awaken* the King—Louis's intrigue with Madame de Mailly—Amiable character of this lady—Rupture between the King and Queen—Madame de Mailly becomes *maîtresse déclaréé*—Pauline de Nesle endeavours to supplant her sister—Her marriage and premature death—Louis's remorse—Madame de Lauragais—Madame de la Tournelle—*L'affaire* d'Agénois—Dismissal of Madame de Mailly—Who seeks consolation in religion—Madame de la Tournelle becomes *maîtresse déclarée*—And Duchesse de Châteauroux—Her imperious character—"We must have the resurrection of a king!"—She persuades Louis to take command of the army in Flanders—The King falls dangerously ill at Metz—Grief of the Parisians—Fitz-James, Bishop of Soissons, compels Louis to dismiss Madame de Châteauroux—Flight of the duchess from Metz—Fury of the populace against her—The King recovers—Frantic rejoicings in Paris—Louis "*le Bien-aimé*"—The King returns to France—His interview with Madame de Châteauroux in the Rue du Bac—Triumph of the lady over her enemies—Her sudden death.

LOUIS XV., endowed with a handsome face, a fine presence, and so many apparent good qualities, showed himself from his youth the most feeble, the most indolent, and the most irresolute of kings. A sickly child, whose life for a long time seemed to hang by a thread, he was brought up with the most extraordinary care, his physicians declaring that it was imperative that he should be spared every kind of mental exertion. Old Cardinal

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de Fleury, to whom his education was entrusted, had carried out these instructions to the very letter, rigidly discountenancing in his royal pupil everything that savoured of originality, of independence, or of ambition, with the inevitable result that the boy, naturally of a selfish and indolent temperament, grew up destitute alike of energy, of self-reliance, and of manly dignity, with no thought beyond the gratification of his own pleasure, with no desire save that of discharging the duties of sovereignty with as little trouble to himself as was possible in a country where the monarch was still the actual as well as the nominal ruler.

If Louis had received a less effeminate education ; if he had found himself in a position which would have obliged him to employ with some degree of activity the faculties which nature had bestowed upon him, it is probable that few princes of his time would have deserved better of their subjects, for he had a quick perception, a sound judgment, a wonderfully retentive memory, and a kindly and humane disposition.¹ As matters stood, his *ennui*—a malady from which most of his house suffered to a greater or less degree—placed him at the mercy of any worthless courtier who could contrive to amuse him, and his idleness at that of any incompetent Minister who was willing to relieve him of responsibility. Indeed, such amazing indifference did he exhibit, even in affairs of the gravest importance, that he would agree to almost anything that was proposed to him, and though his judgment must have frequently condemned the measures of his Ministers, he never seemed able to summon up sufficient resolution to withhold his consent.

¹ Georges Le Roy's *Louis XV. et Madame de Pompadour peints et jugés*, p. 2.

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“What my brother¹ has been able to say to him,” writes Madame de Tencin to the Duc de Richelieu, “has been useless; one might as well talk to the rocks. I cannot conceive a man who is able to be everything and who prefers to remain a cypher. Any one but yourself would refuse to credit the length to which matters have gone. He pays not the least attention to what is passing in his kingdom; nothing seems to interest him; in the Council he shows the most absolute indifference; he signs everything that is put before him. In truth, to have anything to do with such a person is enough to drive one to despair. It is remarked that in every case he inclines to the course which promises the least amount of trouble, and that is generally the worst one.”²

When, at the age of fifteen, Louis was married to Marie Leczinska, the daughter of Stanislas Leczinska, the de-throned King of Poland, the courtiers with one accord wagged their heads and predicted that the young monarch would very soon weary of a consort who was seven years his senior, and who, though virtuous and amiable, possessed neither beauty nor wit.

For a time, however, it certainly seemed as if these wiseacres were destined to prove false prophets. The religious principles with which the old cardinal had endeavoured to inculcate the King had produced no impression upon the mind of his pupil beyond inspiring him with a veneration for the forms and ceremonies of the Church, and a certain morbid dread of the consequences of sin, which, however, was in a great measure removed by the readiness with which his accommodating confessors were prepared to grant him

¹ Cardinal de Tencin, one of Louis XV.'s Ministers of State.

² Quoted in Sainte-Beuve's *Causeries du Lundi*, ii. 382.

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absolution.¹ Nevertheless, in early life, they served as a restraining influence, and Louis appears to have been materially faithful to the Queen for some years—a period which was marked by the birth of two sons and several daughters.

But the young King had never felt any real tenderness for his wife. Fleury, for that matter, had himself contributed to prejudice him against her, through fear of her acquiring an influence which might clash with his own; and, as time went on, the Queen's natural coldness of temperament, which increased with age, her excessive and often inopportune piety, and, above all, her entire lack of sympathy with the tastes and pursuits of her husband began slowly but surely to alienate his affection.

The intriguing and dissolute courtiers, who had long sneered at what they were pleased to call the King's "bourgeois life," watched the growing estrangement between the royal pair with unconcealed delight. There had for some time been a conspiracy among them, headed by that most scandalous Lovelace of a scandalous age, the Duc de Richelieu, to *awaken* the King. Louis was at first encouraged to drink a great deal more freely than had been his wont; to the taste for wine was joined the excitement of high play; then came some passing gallantries; finally, a regular liaison was established with the Comtesse de Mailly, the eldest of the five attractive daughters of the Marquis de Nesle.

This lady, though she had no pretensions to be considered a beauty, was charming and accomplished, and noted for her exquisite taste in dress, which her rivals in

¹ As a boy he confessed in writing to the Jesuit Linières, and the priest was forbidden to ask him any questions.

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vain attempted to imitate. Moreover, she was charitable, sweet-tempered, and entirely unaffected, qualities which, in the eyes of all but the most rigid moralists, went a long way towards redeeming her lapse from the path of virtue. Her regard for Louis appears to have been quite disinterested, and, so far from desiring to enrich herself at her lover's expense, it was only with difficulty that she could be persuaded to accept the presents which the King made her from time to time.¹ She never attempted to interfere in affairs of State; and, indeed, was so little in Fleury's way, that it was rumoured that the cardinal, foreseeing that his former pupil was certain sooner or later to form some extra-conjugal attachment, had himself put her forward, in order to save the young monarch from falling a victim to some greedy or ambitious woman.

For nearly three years this affair continued so quietly as to attract comparatively little attention and no scandal, when a quarrel between the King and Queen, for which the latter's characteristic want of tact seems to have been chiefly to blame, brought about the open rupture so ardently desired by the intriguers of the Court.

The story goes that one evening Louis, who had been indulging rather too freely in his favourite beverage, champagne, entered his wife's apartments. The Queen, who had an intense horror of drunkenness, reproached him bitterly with his condition; declared that to come near her in such a state was an intolerable insult, and finally, requested him to leave the room. He did so, vowing, however, that he would never again subject himself to the risk of such treatment; and he kept his

¹ Richelieu says that Madame de Mailly from first to last cost Louis "less than an opera-girl would cost a banker."

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word. A few days later, Madame de Mailly was openly acknowledged as the King's mistress.¹

Facilis descensus Averni! Once started on the downward path the young King's progress was rapid enough to satisfy the most profligate of his courtiers. Hitherto he had been restrained by his natural timidity and his morbid dread of eternal punishment; but to all delicacy of heart, all innate sentiments of honour he was an entire stranger. He was no more faithful to his mistress than to his wife. Madame de Mailly was, as we have mentioned, the eldest of five sisters, all of whom were distinguished either for their beauty or their accomplishments. The second sister, Pauline by name, a forward minx still in her teens, was being educated in a convent. In 1739 she induced Madame de Mailly to send for her to come to Versailles, where she arrived with the fixed intention of supplanting her elder sister and of exercising that political influence to which the gentle favourite had shown herself indifferent. In this, however, she was only partially successful, for, though she contrived to secure a share of Louis's affections, the countess's influence was as yet too strong to be altogether overthrown; while her ambitious projects were frustrated by the astute Fleury, who defended his authority and his coffers with considerable address.²

In 1740 Mademoiselle de Nesle became *enceinte*, whereupon the King, in order to save appearances, arranged a marriage between her and a complaisant nobleman, the Marquis de Vintimille, a grand-nephew of the Archbishop of Paris, that venerable prelate blessing the nuptials without the least scruple. The unhappy girl died sud-

¹ *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, ii. 21.

² Martin's *Histoire de France jusqu'en 1789*, xv. 208.

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denly a few months later after giving birth to a son—the Comte du Luc—who bore such a striking resemblance to the King that in after years he received the sobriquet of the “*demi-Louis*.”

The monarch, who imagined that he saw in the untimely death of Madame de Vintimille a judgment from Heaven upon his sins, was plunged in the deepest melancholy. “The King is in the most terrible grief,” writes d’Argenson, “he sobs, he chokes. The cardinal (Fleury), who did not dare to speak to him at first, has at last preached him a sermon on the subject of human weakness. It was very badly received.” By way of penance, Louis now returned to Madame de Mailly, and remained faithful to her for some time, with the exception of a brief interval, during which he succumbed to the charms of yet another member of the same family, the Duchesse de Lauraguais.

In the winter of 1742, however, poor Madame de Mailly’s troubled reign came to an end. A fourth sister, the young widow of the Marquis de la Tournelle, appeared upon the scene and at once made a deep impression upon the susceptible monarch. The lady, however, at first rejected the royal addresses. She already had a lover, the young Duc d’Agénois (afterwards the Duc d’Aiguillon), and was indisposed to surrender him even for the King. Louis, therefore, took counsel with Richelieu, who was d’Agénois’s uncle, but was anxious to bring about a liaison between the King and Madame de la Tournelle, as Madame de Mailly regarded him with anything but a friendly eye. The result of their deliberations was that his Most Christian Majesty imitated David and sent his rival to fight the Austrians in Italy. Here, more fortunate than

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the husband of Bathsheba, he was only wounded, and returned covered with glory and more interesting in the lady's eyes than ever.

Louis was in despair, but Richelieu, who was a man of resource, was not one to lightly accept defeat. He sent his nephew to Languedoc, where a damsel of surpassing beauty had been instructed to lay siege to his heart. This she did most effectively; letters of a very passionate nature were exchanged; the lady despatched those which she received to Richelieu, and in due course they were brought to the notice of Madame de la Tournelle, who, furious at her lover's perfidy, professed herself ready to listen to the King.

But Madame de la Tournelle, who was by far the ablest as well as the most attractive of the sisters De Nesle, unlike Madame de Ventimille and Madame de Lauraguais, was by no means disposed to rest content with a divided empire and secret favours. She insisted that Madame de Mailly should be dismissed and she herself acknowledged in her place. Louis, who was already wearying of the tears and reproaches of the elder sister, meanly consented; and the countess's post of *dame du palais* to the Queen was taken away from her, and she was ordered to retire from Court.¹ Fol-

¹ Fleury on this occasion endeavoured to remonstrate with the King, whereupon Louis curtly informed him that when he had given him control of his affairs, he had not intended to include that of his person. *Chronique du règne de Louis XV.* in *Revue rétrospective*, v. 61. The same chronicle relates (p. 72) that the Jesuits, having observed that the King about this time had ceased to communicate, directed his confessor, Father Lemer, to urge him to have recourse to the expedient adopted by Louis XIV. under similar circumstances and communicate *en blanc*—that is to say, with unconsecrated wafers—in order to save appearances. Louis listened to his confessor's arguments without making any remark;

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lowing the example of Mademoiselle de la Vallière, she sought consolation in religion, and, under the influence of Father Renaud, a pupil of the famous Massillon and himself a celebrated preacher, "flung herself into a great and estimable devotion," with the result that on Holy Thursday in the following year a crowd of courtiers flocked to Saint-Roch to witness the ex-mistress of Louis XV., assisted by the young Duchesse de Tremouille, wash the feet of twelve beggars. Henceforth until her death Madame de Mailly devoted her whole time and income to good works, reserving for her own use hardly sufficient to procure the bare necessities of life.¹

Far from being satisfied with the dismissal of her sister and her own recognition, Madame de la Tournelle next demanded an official position at Court, and the title of duchess, together with a settled income sufficient to enable her to maintain that dignity and secure her against any reverse of fortune. All these demands

but when he had concluded, sternly ordered him to retire, and not to approach him again until he was sent for. This Father Lemeris was probably the same priest who, a few years earlier, when the King was believed to be in love with the young widow of the Duc de Bourgogne, promised to grant him absolution if he would dismiss Madame de Mailly and "take the duchess into his service," on the ground that as the latter was a widow, "the sin would be less by half."

¹ The obvious sincerity of Madame de Mailly's conversion and her zeal in the cause of charity did not always suffice to secure her immunity from insult. One day, coming to Saint-Roch to hear Father Renaud, after the preacher had already ascended the pulpit, it occasioned some little disturbance to lead her to the churchwarden's pew, which she usually occupied, whereupon an ill-conditioned fellow muttered, loud enough to reach her ears: "Here's a pretty fuss for a wanton!" "Since you know her, pray to God for her," was the gentle answer. —*Vie privée de Louis XV.*, ii. 100.

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were promptly granted by the infatuated monarch. Madame de la Tournelle was appointed *dame du palais* to the Queen; letters patent were issued creating her Duchesse de Châteauroux,¹ and an income of 80,000 livres assured to her. "This brilliant and audacious woman, full of imperious grace," says Henri Martin, "inspired Louis for the first time with something beyond the intoxication of the senses. She had that natural loftiness of sentiment that sometimes survives the fall of moral principle in energetic minds. Those of his Ministers or courtiers who, either through ambitious or patriotic motives, urged him to vigorous resolution had no more zealous or efficient ally."²

The apathetic monarch, who could be obstinate enough when it was a question of displaying the least degree of activity, held out as long as he could. "You are killing me," he exclaimed plaintively one day, when the lady was striving to arouse in him some sense of the responsibilities of his position. "So much the better," was the reply; "we must have the resurrection of a king."³ She did resuscitate him, in fact, and for a time Louis seemed quite another man. After Fleury's death in January 1743, he determined to take the reins of government into his own hands; appointed regular

¹ "January 17, 1743.—The Parliament was assembled this morning to register letters patent conferring the duchy of Châteauroux on Madame de la Tournelle and heirs male. The preamble set forth the great services rendered to France by the House of De Nesle, the personal attachment of the lady, the services she had rendered the Queen, her virtues, rare qualities of heart and mind. The Chamber listened gravely to all these *fleurettes* told by the monarch about his mistress."—*Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson*.

² Martin's *Histoire de France, jusqu'en 1789*, xv. 265.

³ Sainte-Beuve's *Causeries du Lundi*, ii. 383.

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hours for his Ministers to confer with him, and actually tried the experiment of being his own Secretary for Foreign Affairs, a post which he was soon, however, glad to relinquish to the old Duc de Noailles, who, though he was not wanting in energy, was as irresolute as his master. Finally, the duchess succeeded in inspiring him with a desire for military glory; and on May 3, 1744, amid the acclamations of the people, Louis left Paris to take the nominal command of the army operating in Flanders, followed, after a discreet interval, by the favourite and her sister, Madame de Lauraguais.¹

For a time everything went merrily as marriage bells. Courtrai, Menin, Ypres, Furnes, and the Fort of Kenoque opened their gates in quick succession to the invaders, old Marshal Wade, the English commander in the Netherlands, being powerless to intervene, owing to the non-arrival of the promised reinforcements from England. Then, however, news was brought that the Austrians had crossed the Rhine and were overrunning Alsace, and Louis, leaving Maréchal Saxe with 45,000 men to secure their recent conquests and hold Wade in check, marched southwards with the remainder of the army—and Madame de Châteauroux—to oppose them. He reached Metz on August 4, but four days later was taken ill with a malignant fever, the result of the fatigues

¹ "To avoid scandal, the duchess did not occupy the same house as the King in the different towns in which he stayed; but secret orders were sent to all the municipal bodies to prepare a residence for her reception adjoining that of the King, and to open free communication between them. The workmen were seen piercing the walls, and every one knew for what purpose."—*Vie privée de Louis XV.*, ii. 138. D'Argenson tells us that two hours after Madame de Châteauroux arrived at Lille the barracks caught fire, an accident which the inhabitants, who were superstitious, attributed to celestial anger.

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of the campaign and high living, which increased so rapidly that on the twelfth his life was despaired of.

"The news of the King's danger," says Voltaire, "reached Paris in the middle of the night. The inhabitants rose from their beds and ran about in their excitement, without knowing whither they went. The churches were opened, although it was midnight; nor did people any longer pay any regard to the hours of sleeping, waking, or taking their meals. All Paris seemed to have gone mad, and the houses of persons of condition were surrounded by crowds. The public squares were also thronged with people, who all kept crying out: 'If he dies it will be for having marched to our relief.' Even strangers who met in the churches accosted and questioned one another on a subject in which every one was so deeply interested. In many churches the priests who read prayers for the King's recovery were forced to pause through emotion, the people responding with sobs and cries."¹

Meanwhile around the sick bed at Metz a most unseemly wrangle was going on between Madame de Châteauroux, who, since the beginning of her lover's illness, had scarcely quitted his side, and the Duc de Richelieu² on the one hand, and the Duc de Chartres and Fitz-James,³ Bishop of Soissons, on the other. The austere young prelate, supported by Chartres, whose

¹ Voltaire's *Siècle de Louis XV.*, ch. xii.

² Richelieu had lately been appointed First Gentleman of the Bed-chamber to the King. D'Angerville, in his *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, relates that an enemy of the duke's, on hearing of the appointment, exclaimed, "I wish you joy, Monsieur le Duc, you have at last become a gentleman."

³ He was the son of the famous soldier, James Fitz-James, Duke of Berwick, a natural son of James II. by Arabella Churchill, a lady whom

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father, the Duc d'Orléans, stood next to the Dauphin in the line of succession, and who had forced his way into the room, in spite of Richelieu's efforts to prevent him, imperiously refused to grant the sick man the consolations of religion, unless he would first consent to the dismissal of Madame de Châteauroux and afterwards repair the scandal he had caused by a confession, made in the presence of the princes of the blood and any other noblemen who cared to assist at so edifying a spectacle.

Louis at first demurred, in the hope that his Jesuit confessor, Father Pérusseau, might prove less exacting; but the latter dared not openly defy his ecclesiastical superior, and eventually the pusillanimous monarch, stricken with religious terrors, complied literally with everything that the bishop demanded of him.

Madame de Châteauroux, seeing the day going against her, withdrew into an adjoining room, with her sister, the Duchesse de Lauraguais, and Richelieu, to take counsel as to the best course to pursue. Presently the door was flung violently open, and the Bishop of Soissons appeared on the threshold, and, "in a voice of thunder," cried out, "Ladies, the King commands you to leave this house immediately."

Madame de Châteauroux, far greater in her disgrace than she had ever been in her prosperity, bowed haughtily,

the Comte de Grammont ungallantly describes in his *Mémoires* as "an ugly bag of bones," and was born at Saint-Germain-en-Laye in 1709. He renounced most of the dignities of his father in order to enter the priesthood, but, as head of his family, retained the title of Duc de Fitz-James. In 1739 he was made Bishop of Soissons and Grand Almoner to the King. He was a rigid Jansenist and author of several able theological works.

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and then, with an unmoved countenance, left the room and the palace, followed by her sister and Richelieu, who admits that, for once in his life, he felt "a trifle crestfallen." He soon, however, recovered his habitual *sang-froid* and advised the dismissed favourite not to leave Metz, but merely to retire to the house where she was staying and there await developments.

But they had reckoned without the bishop. Scarcely had Madame de Châteauroux reached her apartments, when she received a message from the implacable Fitz-James, informing her that "he had sent to advise the clergy of the parish not to allow the consecrated Host to leave their churches, until the cause of so much scandal had ceased to profane the palace and the town." This, of course, meant nothing less than that the bishop had enlisted on the side of morality the passions of the populace, already inflamed against the favourite, and, going to the window, she saw to her consternation that a threatening crowd was beginning to gather opposite the house. Such being the case, it was clearly impossible for her to remain a moment longer than was absolutely necessary; and, accordingly, Richelieu having induced Belle-Isle, the governor of Metz, to lend her a travelling-carriage and an escort of musketeers, she and her sister started for Paris.

Every precaution was taken to avoid recognition. The armorial bearings were removed from the vehicle, the windows closed, and the blinds drawn down, while the musketeers discarded their uniforms for plain clothes. But, unfortunately, the ladies were seen leaving the house; and all through the streets and far into the country the carriage was followed by an infuriated mob, who heaped the grossest insults upon the woman

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to whom the monarch, whose peril they were deploring, was indebted for the one flash of manly activity he had shown throughout his worthless reign. In almost every village through which they passed the same scenes were enacted, the peasants in one following as far as they were able, and transferring to those in the next the business of cursing and reviling her; indeed, but for the resolute attitude of the soldiers who guarded the carriage, both she and her sister must inevitably have been torn to pieces. At last, more dead than alive, she reached Paris, where, fortunately for her, the people were too much absorbed in their own grief to notice the disgraced favourite, and shut herself up in her house to wait for news from Metz.

The day following the flight of Madame de Châteauroux, the King's physician-in-ordinary declared that the case was hopeless, and extreme unction was, accordingly, administered, after which the Bishop of Soissons stepped forward and made the following announcement:—

“Princes of the blood and nobles of the realm, the King charges his lordship, the Bishop of Metz, and myself to assure you, on his behalf, of his sincere penitence for the scandal which he has caused by living as he has done with Madame de Châteauroux, for which he now asks pardon of God and man. He is informed that the lady is now some leagues from here, and he commands that in future she shall remain at a distance of fifty leagues from the Court.”

“And her sister, the Duchesse de Lauraguais, as well,” murmured the sick man, raising his head from the pillow.¹

¹ *Nouveaux Mémoires du Duc de Richelieu*, iii. 191.

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Next morning at six o'clock the princes of the blood were summoned to the King's bedside to take part in the prayers for the dying, as every moment was expected to be his last. D'Argenson, the War Minister, had begun to put his papers together, and the Duc de Chartres had given orders for his carriage to be in readiness to take him to the army, when word was brought that a retired army-surgeon, named Moncerveau, who had formerly served in the Alsace Regiment and was now living on his pension at Metz, had come to ask permission to examine the King. His request was granted, and, after a brief examination, he entreated to be allowed to administer an emetic, which he declared that he had tried in several very similar cases, and always with success.

As it was obvious that nothing could possibly make Louis's condition more desperate than it already was, he was permitted to have his way. To the unbounded astonishment of every one present, the treatment was attended with the happiest results, and in a few days the King was convalescent.¹

When on August 19th it was known that Louis was out of danger, the delight of the Parisians was as frantic as their grief had been; in fact, says a contemporary writer, "the city for many hours was nothing but a vast enclosure full of madmen."² The courier who brought the glad tidings was embraced and almost stifled by the people, who covered his horse and even his travel-stained boots with kisses, and escorted him in triumph through the streets, which resounded with cries of "The King has recovered." There was not a company

¹ *Nouveaux Mémoires du Duc de Richelieu*, iii. 192.

² *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, ii. 149.

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of artisans which did not order a *Te Deum* to be sung; there was not a family, however poor, which did not illuminate its windows. A street poet, one Vadé by name, the ballad-monger of the fishwomen, conceived the idea of naming the King Louis "*le Bien-aimé*," and all France adopted the surname, without troubling about its origin. The Well-beloved rendered himself justice, when he heard of the transports of joy which his recovery had aroused, by his astonished ejaculation, "What have I done to deserve it?" What indeed!¹

The Queen arrived at Metz a few days after Moncerveau's fortunate experiment—the poor woman had been forced to borrow the money she required for the journey from Orry, the Comptroller-General, for Louis, while denying his mistress nothing, habitually stinted his wife²—and a most edifying reconciliation took place between the royal pair, the King, who, it may be mentioned, had a rather alarming relapse about this time, vowing that henceforth she alone should possess his heart.

But, alas! these virtuous resolutions lasted little longer than the fear of death. With the restoration of health, Louis's vows of amendment, like those of the Devil in the old proverb, were speedily forgotten. No sooner did he return to Versailles, than the desire to see his former mistress once again became too strong for him to resist. His evil genius, Richelieu, ever at

¹ Voltaire's *Siècle de Louis XV.*, ch. xii.; Martin's *Histoire de France*, xv. 272.

² During one whole summer the Queen was forced to play cards with borrowed money, and wrote to one of her friends that "the most innocent pleasures were beyond her reach."

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his elbow, arranged a secret interview between him and the lady at the latter's house in the Rue du Bac, in which the duchess speedily reasserted her empire over the royal heart and exacted a brilliant reparation for what she called the "affront of Metz" by the exile or disgrace of the Bishop of Soissons, Father Pérusseau, the Duc de Bouillon, the Duc de La Rochefoucauld, and several other ecclesiastics and courtiers who had shown themselves hostile to her in her hour of trial, and the promise of the post of Superintendent of the Household of the Dauphiness elect (the Dauphin was betrothed to the Infanta Maria Theresa, and the nuptials were to be celebrated in the following February), an honour invariably reserved for a lady of the most unblemished virtue. She had planned a return to Versailles which was to partake of the nature of an entry into a conquered city, but she was fated never again to behold the scene of her former triumphs. The trials and humiliations which she had undergone had proved too much for her strength, and when the Comte de Maurepas¹ waited upon her and handed her her formal recall to Court, observing, as he did so, that "the King charged him to inform her that he had no knowledge whatever of the manner in which she was treated during his illness at Metz," the shadow of death was already upon her. Two days later she died, and the post of *maîtresse-en-titre* was vacant.

¹ Maurepas had also incurred the resentment of the lady, who had endeavoured to persuade the King to banish him. This Louis refused to do, as the Minister's wit was accustomed to relieve the tedium of the Council. He consented, however, to entrust him with the letter of recall, a commission which Madame de Châteauroux knew would be most distasteful to Maurepas.

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As soon as Louis's first burst of grief was over, he became the mark for all the light beauties that adorned the Court. But the Court was to be conquered by the city: it was a "*petite bourgeoise*," and not a titled dame, who was to succeed the ill-fated Duchesse de Châteauroux.

CHAPTER II

Monsieur and Madame Poisson—Madame's admirers—Birth of Jeanne Antoinette Poisson—M. Poisson is condemned to the wheel and flies from France—Antoinette's education—Her beauty and accomplishments—Her marriage with M. Lenormant d'Étioles—Her house becomes a rendezvous for men of letters—Madame de Mailly's enthusiasm at her performance on the harpsichord—Président Hénault's opinion of her—Her success as an amateur actress—Her enviable position—Infamous designs of her mother—The prophecy of Madame Lebon, the fortune-teller—" *Un morceau de roi*"—Madame d'Étoiles resolved to become the mistress of Louis XV.

IN the year 1721, when Louis XV., then a little boy of eleven, was yawning over Horace and Virgil and wondering what it would be like to be king in something more than name; when the corridors of the Palais Royal resounded with the drunken laughter and ribald jests of the Regent Orléans and his *roués*; when all Paris was bemoaning the loss of its savings and execrating the Scotch adventurer, Law, who had charmed so much money out of its pockets, there lived in the Rue de Cléry, in the parish of Saint-Eustache, a man and his wife of the name of Poisson.

Of M. Poisson, who occupied a responsible position in the famous banking house of Pâris Brothers, at that time engaged in the task of evolving order out of the financial chaos into which the Mississippi speculations

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had plunged the country, we know comparatively little, which is, perhaps, not altogether a matter for regret, since from all account, he would appear to have been a singularly undesirable acquaintance. He was a tall, burly, loud-voiced, coarse-natured man, with a weakness for the vintages of Burgundy and Champagne, and absolutely untrammelled by any moral scruple. His wife, who was the daughter of one Jean de la Motte, contractor for the supply of provisions to the Hôtel des Invalides, was a lady of very considerable personal attractions, but of medium virtue. She had had, so ran the gossip of the day, relations which were rather more than friendly with Le Blanc, the Minister for War, "an Ambassador"—contemporary chroniclers have decided to withhold his name—and a M. Lenormant de Tournhem, a rich farmer-general,¹ and when on December 29, 1721, she gave birth to a daughter, it was to this last-named gentleman that the child's paternity was universally ascribed.²

When Jeanne Antoinette—for so the little girl was baptized—was about five years old, some rather serious defalcations were discovered in the accounts of Pâris Brothers, and, about the same time, M. Poisson suddenly came to the conclusion that the air of the French

¹ The farmers-general (*fermiers-généraux*) were a privileged association who farmed or leased the public revenues. This system of collecting the taxes was inaugurated by Francis I., who in 1546 farmed out the *gabelle* or salt-tax. The powers of these functionaries were very strictly defined by law, but during the latter part of the eighteenth century abuses of the most flagrant description appear to have crept into the system, and the farmers-general by their arrogance and exactions rendered themselves so odious to all classes of the people that, when the Revolution broke out, very few of them escaped the guillotine.

² *Journal de Barbier*, iv. 32.

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capital no longer suited his health, and, accordingly, departed on a course of foreign travel, thereby avoiding the necessity of assisting at an interesting little *matinée* on the Place de Grève in which he had been cast for the principal rôle.

M. Poisson remained in exile for more than fifteen years, at the end of which period, "thanks to the tears and smiles of a daughter whom no one could refuse, and of a wife who could refuse no one,"—as the cynical Duc de Richelieu expresses it—the sentence passed upon him was reversed, and he was permitted to return to Paris.

Madame Poisson and her children—a son, the future Marquis de Marigny, had been born just before M. Poisson set out upon his travels—do not appear to have suffered any inconvenience from the absence of the head of the family, as M. de Tournehem, who was as generous as he was wealthy, provided for their wants and charged himself with the entire cost of Antoinette's education.

This was conducted on a most liberal scale. The services of the very best masters that money could procure were engaged: the celebrated Jeliotte taught her singing and the harp, Guibaudet dancing, the elder Crébillon and Lanoue elocution. Never had masters a more apt pupil. At eighteen Mademoiselle Poisson bade fair to be one of the most accomplished women of her time. No young girl in Paris could dance, or draw, or play, or sing like her; no one had such a perfect seat on horseback, such exquisite taste in dress, such a pretty wit. With these varied accomplishments was combined beauty of no ordinary kind. "She was," says Diderot's friend, Georges Le Roy, "rather above the

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middle height, slender, supple, and graceful. Her hair was luxuriant, of a light chestnut shade rather than fair, and the eyebrows which crowned her magnificent eyes were of the same hue. She had a perfectly-formed nose, a charming mouth, lovely teeth, and a ravishing smile, while the most exquisite skin one could wish to behold put the finishing touch to all her beauty. Her eyes had a singular fascination, which they owed perhaps to the uncertainty of their colour. They possessed neither the dazzling splendour of black eyes, the tender languor of blue, nor yet the peculiar keenness of grey: their undecided colour seemed to lend to them every kind of charm, and to express in turn all the feelings of an intensely mobile nature.”¹

When Antoinette was in her twentieth year, a suitor for her hand presented himself in the person of the farmer-general's nephew, M. Lenormant d'Étioles.² M. d'Étioles was hardly the kind of lover to appeal to the fancy of a beautiful young girl, being undersized, plain, and red-haired. On the other hand, he was amply endowed with this world's goods, was a well-meaning youth, and very genuinely in love. Madame Poisson, for reasons which we shall presently relate, was very anxious for the match; M. Poisson, but lately returned from exile and seeing in his prospective son-in-law's wealth a chance of replenishing his wine-cellar, was graciously pleased to signify his approval; Antoinette, like a dutiful daughter, raised no objection. There

¹ Georges Le Roy's *Louis XV. et Madame de Pompadour peints et jugés*, p. 25.

² D'Étioles was the name of an estate belonging to the Lenormants. It was the custom among the wealthy *bourgeoisie* to distinguish each of their sons by the name of an estate.

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remained, therefore, only M. Lenormant *père* to be consulted, and his reply was an abrupt refusal. Mademoiselle Poisson, he was quite ready to admit, was everything that was charming, but her parents—a father who had only escaped the wheel by prompt flight, and a mother whose gallantry was proverbial—were not persons with whom he desired to be connected. Besides, the lady had no fortune, an even more fatal disadvantage in the eyes of a self-respecting French citizen than any amount of parental delinquencies. No; his son must look elsewhere for a wife.

At this stage of the affair M. de Tournehem interposed with a very handsome offer. If his brother would waive his objections to the match, he would settle half his fortune on the young couple, and at his death they should inherit the remainder. Thereupon M. Lenormant agreed to reconsider the matter, and, in the course of a few days, having very wisely come to the conclusion that M. Poisson was a very ill-used man and his consort a much maligned lady, gave his consent, and on March 9, 1741, Antoinette Poisson became Madame Lenormant d'Étioles.

M. d'Étioles hastened to surround his beautiful young wife with every imaginable luxury. She had a town house in Paris, Rue Croix des Petits Champs, and a country seat at Étioles, situated on the borders of the forest of Sénart, on the right bank of the Seine, and close to the royal château of Choisy, where she dispensed princely hospitality to all the leading people in the commercial world of Paris, together with a sprinkling of courtiers and foreign diplomats, and many of the most famous literary men of the day. Her house, indeed, soon became celebrated as a rendezvous

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for wits and men of letters. Here might be found Voltaire and—the object in later years of the great writer's most biting satire—Maupertuis; the evergreen Fontenelle, the last remaining link between the age of Molière and Boileau and that of Voltaire and Diderot; Montesquieu, the author of *Les Lettres Persanes* and *L'Esprit des Lois*; the two Crébillons and Cahusac, the dramatist.

Nor was it long before the fame of Madame d'Étioles's beauty and talents began to penetrate into more exclusive circles. One day, at the house of Madame d'Angervilliers, Madame de Mailly, the then owner—or part owner—of the heart of his Most Christian Majesty, was so carried away by Antoinette's exquisite rendering of a difficult piece upon the harpsichord, that, in a transport of delight, she threw herself into the player's arms and carried her enthusiasm to the Court, who then heard for the first time the name of the woman who was soon to be its ruler.

The Queen's confidant, too, President Hénault, "that well-frilled, accurately-powdered, most correct old legal gentleman"—as Carlyle calls him—met her at a supper-party, and, the next day, we find him writing to his friend, Madame du Deffand, as follows:—

"I met there (at M. de Ponteveye's) one of the prettiest women I have ever seen—Madame d'Étioles. She is a perfect musician, sings divinely, knows a hundred songs, and acts comedy at Étioles in a theatre as charming as the Opera."¹

This theatre was one that had been built for Antoinette's amusement by her uncle, M. de Tournhem, and there she scored several notable successes,

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, vi. 354.

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for she was a born actress. On one occasion, when she was taking part in some private theatricals at her friend, Madame de Villemur's, at Chantemerle, the Duc de Richelieu, the Duc de Nivernois, and the Duc de Duras came over from Versailles on purpose to witness her performance, and returned to the Court full of her praises.

To all appearance, Madame d'Étioles's lot was now an enviable one. She was young, beautiful, rich, and admired. She had a husband who worshipped her, and who, at the same time, had the good taste not to be jealous. Moreover, she had a charming little daughter, Alexandrine, of whom we shall have occasion to speak later on.¹ An ordinary woman would have found little enough cause to feel dissatisfied, but Madame d'Étioles was not an ordinary woman. With her, marriage had been but the first step towards the accomplishment of a long-cherished ambition—an ambition which had dazzled her imagination as a child, filled her dreams as a young girl, and now that she had attained to womanhood, had become the one object of her life. This was nothing less than the conquest of the heart of Louis XV.

It is only fair to Madame d'Étioles to observe that this idea did not originate with her, but with the shameless woman who had given her birth. From the very moment that Madame Poisson recognised that Antoinette had inherited her own fatal gift of beauty, she appears to have conceived the infamous design of speculating in her daughter's charms. One day, when the child was nine years old, the mother took her to the house of a certain Madame Lebon, a fortune-teller, who, no doubt, already

¹ She had another child—a boy—who, however, died in infancy.

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instructed as to what she was to say, predicted that Antoinette would one day become the mistress of a king. The woman's words made a deep impression on the little girl, an impression which Madame Poisson took care should not be effaced. Thenceforth she lost no opportunity of reminding her that she was "*un morceau de roi*"; that so much beauty and so many accomplishments would assuredly be wasted on any but a royal lover, and that it behoved her, therefore, to leave no stone unturned that might assist her to a position which she seemed so eminently fitted to adorn, and which would make her at once the admiration and envy of all her sex.

The poison thus artfully instilled into the poor child's mind soon began to do its deadly work, for in the gay and godless society which surrounded the mother there was but small chance of any one attempting to administer an antidote; and so Antoinette came to regard the post of *maîtresse-en-titre* as the perfectly legitimate ideal of feminine ambition.

Both mother and daughter were fully aware that there were many obstacles in the way of the success of their scheme. The kings of France did not choose their favourites from the ranks of the *bourgeoisie*, but from the wives and daughters of the nobility; and if now and again a monarch condescended to one of his humbler subjects, it was merely to gratify a passing fancy and hardly likely to benefit either the object of his attentions or her relatives to any great extent. Again, as long as Antoinette remained unmarried, their task was a well-nigh hopeless one; and it was the knowledge of this fact that had made Madame Poisson so ready to welcome young d'Étioles as a son-in-law; for when once the girl became Madame d'Étioles, and, in virtue of her husband's position,

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had the *entrée* to the salons of the richest financiers in Paris ; when she was spoken of as one of the most beautiful women of the capital ; when even the Court began to sing her praises, the fond mother would be justified in hoping that ere long the fame of her beauty and accomplishments would reach the ears of the King, and, his interest aroused, the rest would be comparatively easy. There would still, of course, be many difficulties to be overcome, but it would be Antoinette's own fault if she did not succeed in surmounting them.

CHAPTER III

Madame d'Étioles opens her campaign—The fair charioteer of the Forest of Sénart—Madame de Châteauroux becomes alarmed—And adopts precautionary measures—Death of Madame de Châteauroux—Madame d'Étioles again takes the field—Her allies—Madame de Tencin—Binet, the *valet-de-chambre*—Marriage of the Dauphin and the Infanta Maria Theresa—Rejoicings in Paris—The ball at the Hôtel de Ville—Madame d'Étioles and Louis XV.—Binet says a word in season—First visit of Madame d'Étioles to Versailles—Suspense.

THE Château d'Étioles was, as we have mentioned, situated on the confines of the Forest of Sénart, which was Louis XV.'s favourite hunting-ground, as it was within easy distance of the royal château of Choisy and abounded both in large and small game. It was thus admirably adapted as a base for Madame d'Étioles's operations.

Now, in the course of the winter of 1743-44, it began to be remarked that almost every day the King went hunting there followed the chase a phaeton, drawn by a pair of magnificent brown horses and driven by a lady coquettishly attired, sometimes in azure, sometimes in pink. The frequent appearance of this lady, her beauty, her effective costumes, and the skill with which she managed her mettlesome steeds soon aroused no small amount of curiosity, and, finally, attracted the notice of

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the King. Louis, however, was at this time completely under the domination of Madame de Châteauroux, and, therefore, contented himself with inquiring the name of the fair charioteer, when he was informed that she was a Madame d'Étioles, the wife of a rich *sous-fermier* whose château was on the borders of the forest.

If Louis XV., absorbed in his passion for another woman, evinced no desire to make Madame d'Étioles's acquaintance, the object of his regard was very far from sharing her royal lover's indifference to the manœuvres of the lady in question. One evening at Choisy when the Duchesse de Chevreuse happened to praise the beauty of "*la petite d'Étioles*" in the hearing of the King, Madame de Châteauroux glided softly up to her, and, with her heel, stamped so furiously upon the duchess's foot, that the poor lady, who, we are told, suffered from corns, swooned with the pain.¹ Nor was this all, for, a few days later, Madame d'Étioles received an intimation from an official quarter that her presence at the King's hunting-parties would no longer be tolerated.

This was, of course, a serious check to Antoinette's plans, but Madame de Châteauroux was then in the zenith of her power, and her wishes, accordingly, were not to be lightly disregarded. So the phaeton and its fair occupant ceased to be a feature of the royal hunting-parties, and the favourite breathed freely once more.

The death of the imperious Châteauroux, however, which occurred a few months later, revived in Madame d'Étioles's bosom the hopes which the prohibition of her forest drives had momentarily shattered; and she recommenced her campaign with redoubled vigour. She had, moreover, in the interval, managed to secure two most

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Richelieu*, vii. 9.

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valuable allies. One of these was that indefatigable intriguer, Madame de Tencin,¹ the sister of Cardinal de Tencin, one of Louis XV.'s Ministers of State, who had derived considerable benefit from her association with the deceased favourite, and was now anxious to ingratiate herself with any one whom she judged likely to replace her. The other ally was a relative of her own, named Binet, who filled the post of first *valet-de-chambre* to the Dauphin, and was in the confidence of the King. While Madame de Tencin constituted herself councillor-in-chief to Madame d'Étioles, a post for which her own wide experience in affairs of the heart—she had numbered

¹ Claude Alexandrine Guérin de Tencin was born at Grenoble in 1681, and began life as a nun at the Augustin convent of Montfleury, near that city. Finding the restraints of a religious life intolerable, she renounced them, and in 1714 came to Paris, where her wit and beauty soon drew around her a crowd of admirers. By one of these, a certain Chevalier Destouches, she had a son, whom the day after his birth was deposited on the steps of St. Jean-le-Rond, where he was found and adopted by a kind-hearted glazier, the father afterwards making him a small allowance, but without acknowledging the paternity. This child was d'Alembert, the Encyclopædist. During the Regency Madame de Tencin, through her connection with Orléans and Dubois, exercised considerable influence, but her political power expired with them. In 1726 one of her lovers, named La Fresnaye, committed suicide at her house, owing apparently to the shock of discovering that he did not possess a monopoly of her favours, in consequence of which she lay for some time in the Bastille. Her later life was more reputable, and her salon, which numbered among its frequenters Fontenelle, Montesquieu, Helvetius, Bernis, Marivaux, and other well-known men of letters, whom she familiarly termed "her beasts," became the most brilliant literary resort in Paris. She herself was the authoress of several romances, the best known of which is *Les Mémoires du Comte de Comminges*, and one of the most witty women of her time. Perhaps the best trait in her character—some say it was the worst—was her affection for her brother the cardinal, "the promotion of whose interests," says Duclos, "was at the root of all her intrigues."

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among her lovers such notable personages as the Regent Orléans, d'Argenson, the originator of the secret police, Fontenelle, Cardinal Dubois, and Lord Bolingbroke—gave her an indisputable title, Binet kept watch and ward over the King, waiting for a favourable opportunity to push the claims of his young kinswoman, and, in the meanwhile, checkmating as far as he could the machinations of the ladies of the Court.

It was the occasion of the public rejoicings which followed the marriage of the young Dauphin to the Infanta Maria Theresa that furnished Madame d'Étioles with the opportunity for which she had been so patiently waiting. This union, which took place at the end of February 1745, and was intended to serve the twofold purpose of providing the heir to the French throne with a consort who, it was hoped, would be the means of keeping the succession in the direct line, as the Dauphin was Louis XV.'s only son, and, at the same time, of making reparation to Spain for the affront offered her by the King of France's rejection of the hand of the bride's elder sister in 1725, was hailed with great satisfaction in both countries. The Duke de Luynes in his *Mémoires* gives an interesting account of the nuptial ceremony, which was celebrated with the utmost pomp and magnificence:—

“The Dauphiness¹ left Sceaux yesterday morning and arrived here (Versailles) at ten o'clock, or half-past ten. She alighted at the Marble Staircase, and passed at once to her apartments. The King and Queen went immediately to visit her, and she made her appearance as soon as her toilette was completed. It was nearly one o'clock

¹ She had been married by proxy at Madrid before setting out for France.

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before her *coiffure* was finished and she was fully dressed. I have not yet spoken of her appearance; she is neither tall nor short, but is well made and has a distinguished air. She is very pale¹ and extremely fair, including her eyebrows and eyelids. Her eyes are bright. What spoils her is her nose, which is large and not at all pleasing. All who know her say that she is intelligent, and very anxious to make a good impression.

"It was about an hour after noon when the Dauphiness was ready: she was attired in silver brocade covered with pearls. The Dauphin, who gave her his hand, wore a suit and cloak of cloth-of-gold studded with diamonds. Immediately afterwards the Queen started for the King's apartments, the Dauphin and Dauphiness preceding her. She was followed by Mesdames (her daughters), the six princesses of the blood, and Madame de Penthièvre. The *coup d'œil* of the gallery was magnificent. There were no raised seats, but only benches, ranged on either side, so as to allow of a free passage between them, behind which stood the open-mouthed spectators who had been admitted by ticket. . . .

"The King came from his apartments by way of the *Œil-du-Bœuf*,² preceded by the Dauphin and Dauphiness, and followed by all the princes in order of precedence.

¹ "It is said that the Duchesse de Brancas, her *dame d'honneur*, wished her to rouge herself, such being the custom in France, and because it would become her. She replied that if the King, the Queen, and the Dauphin ordered her to employ rouge, she would do so, but not otherwise."—*Journal de Barbier*, iv. 14. The quantity of rouge used at this period in France was enormous. Taine tells us that even little girls of six were rouged.

² The *Œil-du-Bœuf*, so called from its oval-shaped window, was the inner of the two ante-chambers leading to the King's apartments. It contained some magnificent paintings.

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The care which had been taken to erect barriers everywhere, with a *garde-du-corps* stationed before each, in addition to the Hundred Swiss Guards, kept the way clear, in spite of the immense concourse of people. The governor of the palace had allotted the places on the staircase, which were all filled and presented a fine sight. The spectacle in the chapel itself was still more imposing. All the bays were occupied by raised seats, with the exception of the three reserved for the orchestra. The King's gallery was full of people, and there were more raised seats in the aisles below.

“The Dauphin and Dauphiness took their places on the first step of the sanctuary. The priedieu of the King and Queen was drawn back to the middle of the chapel. On the right, between the priedieu and the sanctuary, stood the Coadjutor (of the Archbishop of Paris), in virtue of his office as Grand-Almoner, with the Almoners of the King and Queen behind him. All the bishops were on the left, occupying the space between the priedieu and the steps of the choir. Cardinal de Tencin stood on the Queen's side of the priedieu, with the Archbishop of Rouen behind him. All the ecclesiastics were habited according to their several degrees; Cardinal de Tencin in his red robes, the archbishops and bishops in violet, and the abbés and almoners in long cloak and rochet. The Abbé de Pomponne was the only one who wore his ordinary dress; he stood next to the King's Almoner, and behind him were the chaplains and the clergy of the chapel, also in full canonicals, but without rochets. The princes and princesses were placed alternately according to their rank. Behind them were four or five dukes, with their praying cushions. In addition to these, all

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the Spanish dukes and grandees who assisted at the ceremony had their praying cushions behind the seats of the King and Queen. The Bishop of Mirepoix, as First Almoner to the Dauphiness, stood near her in the sanctuary.

“Cardinal Rohan, who officiated, had next him on his right the curé of Versailles in his stole. The cardinal first of all sprinkled the King and Queen with holy water. Then he returned to his place, which was a little way in front of the sanctuary steps and between the Dauphin and Dauphiness, and commenced a discourse, which lasted a quarter of an hour. He addressed himself to the Dauphin, styling him “Monseigneur,” according to the directions he had received from the King. I was too far off to hear this discourse, but he has since repeated it to me. It consisted of a short instruction on the state, duties, and sanctity of matrimony, followed by some appropriate eulogy of the King and Queen of Spain and our own King and Queen. He spoke also of the alliances between France and Spain, going back to the time of Blanche of Castile, and concluded by a declaration of his own loyalty and that of his family. It was an eloquent address and wonderfully well delivered.

“After this discourse he performed the ceremony. The Dauphin made his obeisance to the King and Queen before answering “I will,” and the Dauphiness did the same. Then the cardinal resumed his chasuble and, after the usual obeisance, celebrated mass. After the Gospel, a chaplain carried the book to the King’s priedieu, and presented it to the Coadjutor, who tendered it to the King and Queen to kiss.

“The canopy was of silver brocade, covered all over

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with silver network. It was brought to the Abbé d'Andlau and the Bishop of Mirepoix by two of the chapel clergy. The Abbé d'Andlau supported it on the Dauphin's side, the Bishop of Mirepoix on that of the Dauphiness. After prayers they returned it to the chapel clergy.¹ The whole ceremony lasted about two hours."²

The rejoicings which followed the marriage were conducted on a most sumptuous scale. There were balls, ballets, fireworks, and illuminations at Versailles, fêtes at Compiègne, and hunting parties at Fontainebleau and Rambouillet, all of which involved the King in such vast expense that he was obliged to have recourse to tontines to replenish the royal treasury. Nor was the good city of Paris any less eager than the Court to do honour to the occasion. As it was the month of February, and it was feared that the weather might interfere with the festivities, the municipality caused twelve immense pavilions to be erected in as many different parts of the city, which were filled with tropical plants and flowers, "so that those who entered seemed to have suddenly stepped out of winter into the midst of spring." In these great enclosures musicians discoursed their liveliest strains, refreshments were provided free of charge for all comers, and feasting and merry-making went on the livelong day; "indeed," says a contemporary writer, who appears to have had but little sympathy with such extravagance, "it would have been difficult to believe that France was being desolated by a war as ruinous as it was sanguinary, and any one unacquainted

¹ It was subsequently presented to Cardinal Rohan, to whom it reverted, in virtue of his office as Grand-Almoner.

² *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, vi. 312 et seq.

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with the state of affairs would have imagined us to be in a condition of the most profound peace.”¹

The climax of the festivities was a grand masked ball, which was given at the Hôtel de Ville on February 28, and graced by the presence of the King and the bridal pair. This affair, which was intended to eclipse everything of its kind which had been seen before in Paris, seems to have given rise to a good many heartburnings, and to have afforded an admirable object-lesson to over-ambitious promoters of such entertainments. The original idea was to admit any person of respectability who cared to apply for a ticket, and, accordingly, notices were posted inviting those who desired to be present to attend at the house of M. Bernage, the provost of the merchants, and give in their names. When the day came for the distribution of the tickets, an enormous crowd collected around the provost's house, but, through some mistake, only a very small number of tickets were ready, which so enraged those who were unable to obtain any that they threatened to storm the house; and the unfortunate magistrate was forced to send for the police, and erect barricades to protect his property from the fury of his would-be guests.

After this the provost who, according to Barbier, was “swollen with pride on account of his distant relationship to the Ministers d'Argenson,” proposed that the townsfolk should be excluded altogether, and the ball confined to the Court and people of quality. This proposal, however, was speedily overruled, and it was decided that the provost and the aldermen should distribute the tickets to those whose claims were

¹ *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, ii. 170.

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admitted, but through the post, in order to prevent a repetition of the disorderly scenes which had just occurred. But M. Bernage wished to keep the distribution in his own hands, and refused to give the aldermen more than fifty tickets; whereupon they set off in a body to Versailles and laid their grievance before the Council, which, after mature consideration, decided that each alderman was entitled to two hundred tickets.

While this weighty matter was being settled, the provost had picked a quarrel with the advocates and attorneys of the Parliament of Paris, whose applications for admission he refused, on the ground that the ball was intended for the commercial part of the community, and that the lawyers could very well afford to give one of their own. Finally, however, he yielded, but sent them their tickets in envelopes marked "*As a special favour*," "which seemed to imply," says Barbier, himself an advocate, "that he did not consider them worthy to enter his Hôtel de Ville."

At length the great night arrived. The court of the Hôtel de Ville, which had been converted into a ballroom for the occasion, was magnificently illuminated, while the great hall was festooned with choice flowers and studded with huge mirrors, and presented, we are assured, "an astonishing spectacle."

The spectacle must have been still more astonishing when the guests began to arrive. The provost, whom one writer designates as "a man of very slender abilities,"¹—a statement which it is certainly not difficult to believe—appears to have devoted all his attention to the decorations and to have had none to

¹ *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, ii. 169.

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spare for the comfort of the dancers. "The crush and confusion," says the indignant Barbier, "were truly terrible. It was impossible either to mount or descend the stairs. People crowded into the rooms, they were stifled, they shrieked aloud, they fainted away. There were six buffets, but they were so ill-provided and so badly managed, that three hours after midnight there were no refreshments left. All Paris is unanimous in condemning the disgraceful arrangements of this ball. After having raised so many difficulties and shown so much fastidiousness in selecting the guests, the provost has given away not only an unlimited number of tickets, but has distributed them to labourers and even bagnio-keepers, for there were a number of improper females present. The servants of the foreign Ministers and gentlemen of the Court were selling the tickets on Sunday in Paris, and at ten o'clock on the evening of the ball were crying them in the Place de Grève at twenty-four and even at twelve sous. Numbers of people are ill, several have been seriously injured, and one even hears of some, both citizens and persons of quality, who have died from the effects of fatigue, or from chills caught on leaving the overheated rooms." In short, for the next few days, there would not appear to have been a more unpopular person in Paris than M. Bernage, the provost, who was henceforth known as "the provost of the ballroom."¹

But whatever may have been the shortcomings of poor M. Bernage, there was one person at least who had cause to look back upon the Hôtel de Ville ball with feelings of unqualified satisfaction; for it was in

¹ *Journal de Barbier*, iv. 21 *et seq.*

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the midst of that struggling, perspiring crowd that Madame d'Étioles at length succeeded in attracting the notice of her sovereign.

The royal party arrived at the ball soon after midnight, and were conducted to a small apartment adjoining the great hall, where supper had been prepared for them, and where they remained for some time watching the dancers. Presently the King decided to give his faithful subjects a nearer view of him and, accordingly, made his way into the ballroom.

Louis XV. was at this time in the very prime of manhood, and one of the handsomest princes of his time. "He had," says Casanova, "the finest head in the world, and he carried it with equal dignity and grace. No painter, however skilful, has succeeded in rendering the expression of that splendid head when the monarch turned to look kindly at any one."¹ Moreover, the great outburst of passionate loyalty which his illness at Metz had called forth had not yet had time to expend itself, and his popularity was unbounded. Small wonder, then, that, as he moved through the rooms, every eye was turned in his direction, and many a city beauty's heart beat high in the hope of receiving an approving glance from the handsome monarch.

¹ *Mémoires de Casanova di Seingalt*, i. 571.

"July 30, 1743.—It was yesterday remarked that during the last fortnight there have been more English people in Paris than usual. One hears of two very charming ladies of that nation who spoke of the King with great respect and admiration. They had visited Versailles expressly to enjoy the pleasure of seeing him. One of them said that, to judge by his beautiful face, he had all the perfections of heart and mind, and that if there was a felicity in life, it must be to be beloved by so handsome a King. These were the words she used."—*Journal de Police sur Louis XV.* (1742-1743), p. 330, appended to *Journal de Barbier*, viii.

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The King had not proceeded far when he perceived a young woman dressed to represent Diana, with a bow in her hand, a quiver at her side, and her hair, which fell in ringlets over her shoulder, sparkling with precious stones, who advanced to meet him, and, fitting an arrow to her bow, pretended to aim it at the royal heart.

Struck by her fine shape and the grace of her movements, Louis gallantly assured her that it was her charms and not her darts that he feared, and, upon the goddess making some lively retort, engaged her in conversation, and was so delighted with her wit and vivacity that he entreated her to unmask. This, after some appropriate hesitation, she consented to do; but, with a refinement of coquetry, the instant she had removed her mask and revealed to the King the features of the lady he had observed in the Forest of Sénart, she slipped away and mingled with the crowd, taking care, however, not to allow Louis to entirely lose sight of her. At the same moment, either by accident or design, she dropped her handkerchief almost at the monarch's feet. The King at once stooped, picked it up, and, in as gallant a manner as possible, threw it after the retreating figure. Immediately a confused murmur of "*Le mouchoir est jeté!*" ("The handkerchief is thrown") ran round the ballroom. It was the signal of the triumph of Madame d'Étioles.¹

The *dénouement* of the intrigue was left to Binet. Some days later, if we are to credit the gossip of the time, the King, when retiring to rest, complained to the *valet-de-chambre* of the *ennui* which had afflicted him since the death of Madame de Châteauroux, of

¹ *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, ii. 170 et seq.

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his weariness of passing gallantries, but of the apparent hopelessness of finding among the greedy and ambitious ladies of the Court one whose regard for him was in the least likely to be disinterested. Binet was not slow to avail himself of such an opportunity, and mentioned to his master that he knew of a lady, young, beautiful, and accomplished, who had from childhood cherished the most tender sentiments for his Majesty, and who, though surrounded by lovers, had been heard to declare that "no one could tempt her to forget her marriage vows save the King himself." Louis, thereupon, inquired who she might be, and was told that she was the lady of the Forest of Sénart and of the *bal masqué*.

Louis, his vanity flattered, authorised Binet to ask for a rendezvous. The rendezvous was granted, and the quidnuncs of the Court remarked that for several successive evenings the King supped in his private apartments, without inviting any one to share his repast; and "all Versailles believed that Madame d'Étioles was his companion." The general opinion, however, seems to have been that his Majesty's attentions to the lady were very unlikely to lead to any permanent connection.¹

A month passed. The King made no sign. He appeared deaf to the hints of Binet and of Bridge, one of his equerries and a great friend of Madame d'Étioles, whose good offices the *valet-de-chambre* had enlisted, and to have no desire to continue the acquaintance. Binet was in despair, and feared that the King was on the point of succumbing to the charms of the Duchesse de Rochecouart, whose candidature had the support of Richelieu, or that his former affection for Madame de Lauraguais had suddenly revived, and that

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, vi. 354.

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she was about to be installed in her dead sister's place. As for Madame d'Étioles, history does not record what sufferings she endured throughout this period of suspense, but her disappointment and mortification at seeing the prize for which she had so long striven slipping away from her after it had seemed within her grasp must indeed have been bitter. Fortunately for the success of her schemes, help came from a most unexpected quarter. A false move on the part of an enemy gave the conspirators an opportunity for which otherwise they might have waited in vain.

CHAPTER IV

The Bishop of Mirepoix intervenes—Result of his intervention—Binet returns to the charge—Second visit of Madame d'Étioles to Versailles—A little supper-party—Madame d'Étioles determines to put her fate to the touch—An affecting scene—Triumph of Madame d'Étioles—How M. d'Étioles took the news—His letter to his wife—What the King thought of the letter—M. d'Étioles is sent to Provence—He falls ill at Avignon—But recovers—An embarrassing toast—Subsequent relations between M. d'Étioles and his wife—The King goes to the wars—Madame d'Étioles retires to the country—The Abbé de Bernis—Anecdotes about him—Voltaire in the rôle of flatterer—Louis XV.'s love-letters—Madame d'Étioles is created Marquise de Pompadour—Voltaire's verses—Louis XV. returns to France—Madame de Pompadour's presentation at Court—Her reception by the King—By the Queen—And by the Dauphin—She accompanies the Court to Choisy—And to Fontainebleau—Attentions paid her by Louis XV.—Death of Madame Poisson—Grief of Madame de Pompadour—Her life at Fontainebleau.

WE have mentioned that the fact of Madame d'Étioles's visit to Versailles was an open secret at Court. What also seems to have been pretty well known was that her relative Binet was in some way responsible for her presence there. It was not long before a rumour of what was going on reached the ears of a person who had very little sympathy with the frailties of his royal master—Boyer, the Bishop of Mirepoix, “a sour, opaque

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creature,"¹ who had formerly been tutor to the Dauphin, and was high in favour with both his late pupil and the Dauphiness.

The bishop was one of those honest, hot-tempered, blundering kind of men whose zeal generally outruns their discretion, and who, in consequence, are far more to be dreaded by their friends than by their opponents. He seems to have been perpetually at war with some one or other. At one time, it was with the Jansenists, who, although in a semi-moribund condition, were speedily galvanised into life by his ill-advised persecution of them. At another, it was with the haughty Duc de Duras, who, when he waited upon the bishop to solicit an abbey for his cousin, the Abbé de Durfort, was informed by the prelate, who had forgotten that Durfort was the duke's family name, that abbeys were only intended for young men of noble birth. Then, it was with Piron, the poet, upon whose election to the Academy he persuaded the King to impose his veto, thereby bringing down upon himself a hail of lampoons, and inspiring the rejected candidate to that immortal epitaph:—

“Ci-gît Piron, qui ne fut jamais rien,
Pas même Académicien.”

Now the bishop had suffered many and grievous things at the hands of the *philosophes*, particularly at those of Voltaire, who, encouraged thereto by the Duchesse de Châteauroux, had ridiculed the unfortunate old man in the most merciless fashion. When, therefore, he heard that Madame d'Étioles, a woman who was suspected of irreligion, and whose youth had

¹ Carlyle's "Frederick the Great," v. 223.

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been passed in the society of his most bitter enemies, was likely to succeed to the vacant place of *maîtresse-en-titre*, his indignation knew no bounds, and, sending for Binet, he threatened to advise the Dauphin to dismiss him instantly did the rumours of his connection with this affair prove to be well founded. Binet pretended to be much shocked by the bishop's suspicions; assured him that he had been misinformed; that the charges brought against Madame d'Étioles were the vilest calumnies; that her sole object in coming to Court was to solicit some promotion for one of her relations, and that, having secured it, she would be seen no more at Versailles. The bishop, only half-convinced, renewed his threats, and the *valet-de-chambre* withdrew, promising to do all in his power to prevent Madame d'Étioles returning to Court.

Binet, who was a clever scoundrel, was not slow to perceive how this high-handed action on the part of the bishop could be turned to his cousin's advantage; and, accordingly, lost no time in seeking out several of the King's most intimate friends and informing them of what had passed.

Hitherto these gentlemen had regarded the pretensions of Madame d'Étioles with no friendly eye, having, in more than one instance, candidates of their own for the royal favour; but, on hearing Binet's story, which, it is safe to conclude, lost nothing in the telling, they were inclined to view the matter in a very different light. Ever since the young Dauphin, who was entirely in the hands of the Jesuits, had come to years of discretion, the influence of the priestly party, of which the Bishop of Mirepoix was the "screech-owl," had been increasing daily; and the King's friends were well aware that if once

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the *dévots* were to succeed in working upon Louis's superstitious fears so as to induce him to amend his ways, there would be a speedy end to their own influence. The surest means to prevent this was, of course, to provide the King with a successor to the ill-fated Châteauroux with as little delay as possible ; and, as none of the ladies of the Court appeared to have any particular attraction for him at that moment, it was obvious that the only course open to them was to espouse the cause of Madame d'Étioles.

Having come to this decision, they informed Louis of what Binet had told them ; hinted that the recent refusal of the young Dauphiness to join one of the King's supper parties—a refusal which had caused Louis much annoyance—was due to the advice of her husband's priestly advisers, and pointed out to him that it would be regarded by the *dévots* as a confession of weakness on his part did he fail to resent such presumptuous interference in his private affairs.

The monarch, highly exasperated, thereupon declared that he should do as he pleased, in spite of all the bishops in France ; and Binet was, accordingly, not in the least surprised when his master sent for him one evening, and laughingly inquired what impression he had made upon Madame d'Étioles.

The valet's answer may be readily anticipated. He declared that Madame d'Étioles was madly in love with the King ; that she was nearly heartbroken at his neglect ; that her husband's suspicions had been aroused, and that were he to discover the truth and the King still to remain indifferent, he very much feared she would destroy herself.

Louis then confessed that he had formed a very

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favourable impression of the lady, but that he fancied that he had detected in her some signs of ambition or avarice, which had determined him to wait for a while, in order to see how she would take his apparent indifference.

Binet hastened to assure the King that there could be no question of self-interest on the part of his cousin, as her husband was one of the wealthiest financiers in Paris and heir to M. Lenormant de Tournehem.

Thereupon the King signified that he should be very pleased to see Madame d'Étioles again; and a second interview was arranged for April 22.

"Last night the King again supped with Madame d'Étioles in his private apartments," writes the Duc de Luynes in his journal on the 23rd. "M. de Luxembourg was also there and Madame de Bellefonds, who was invited in place of Madame de Lauraguais, who was in Paris. Every one believed that the King would attend the Spanish Ambassador's ball, but he remained in his apartments and did not retire to rest till five o'clock. To-day he has again dined with Madame d'Étioles, but in the strictest privacy. No one seems to know exactly where she is lodged, but I myself believe it is in a little suite of rooms which Madame de Mailly used to occupy, and which adjoins the King's private apartments. She does not remain here, however, but goes backwards and forwards to Paris, and returns there this evening."¹

But Madame d'Étioles did not return to Paris that evening, nor for many evenings to come. Warned by the astute Binet, she had, on this occasion, carefully dissembled all trace of her ambitious and imperious nature and was now only the agreeable, amusing companion whom the

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, vi. 420.

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King required. At the same time, however, she was fully determined not to allow herself to be made the victim of an ephemeral passion, but to put her fate to the touch without further delay.

The following morning, accordingly, she repaired to the King's apartments, and, throwing herself at his feet, represented to him all she had risked for love's sweet sake. She spoke of her husband—that husband who worshipped the ground upon which she trod, and whose suspicions were already aroused. She could not, she dared not, she declared, return home and face the first outburst of his resentment, grief, and shame. With a voice almost choked by sobs, she depicted him awaiting her with a dagger, or a cup of poison, to avenge his honour. In short, she played the part of the terrified wife to such perfection—for, as we have said, she was a consummate actress—that Louis was almost as much alarmed as he imagined her to be, and offered her an asylum at Versailles, until M. d'Étioles's wrath should have had time to abate.

Here, in the old apartments of Madame de Mailly, secure from all interruption, Madame d'Étioles was free to employ all the resources at her command to rivet the fetters of her royal slave, with the result that when, on May 6, Louis left Versailles to join the army in Flanders, she had successively obtained the promise of a separation from her husband, the promise of protection against the *dévots* of the Court, the promise of a title and an estate, and, finally—crowning triumph of all—the promise that she should be duly installed as acknowledged mistress when the King returned from the wars.

A few days before Louis's departure, another act in

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the little drama had been performed—the breaking of the news to the injured husband. This task was entrusted to M. Lenormant de Tournehem, who, although at first a little inclined to resent the manner in which his nephew had been treated, was quickly mollified by the reflection of the many advantages which might accrue to himself through his connection with the new favourite. M. d'Étioles was returning from Magnanville, where he had been spending Easter at the house of a friend, when he was met by the farmer-general, who informed him that his wife had become the mistress of the King, “on hearing which,” says the Duc de Luynes, “M. d'Étioles fell to the ground in a swoon.”¹

When he came to himself, his agony of mind was terrible to witness, and his uncle had grave fears that he would destroy himself in his frenzy. He, therefore, accompanied him home, directed the servants to remove all the weapons that were in the house, and remained with him until he grew calmer, but had great difficulty in preventing him from rushing off to Versailles and “making the rafters of the palace ring with his cries for justice.” He was, eventually, somewhat pacified by M. de Tournehem offering to be the bearer of a letter to his wife, in which the poor young man entreated her to return to him, promising that, if she would do so, all should be forgiven.

Madame d'Étioles read the letter, without being in the least moved by the despair of the husband who had loved her so tenderly, and, the King happening to visit her at that moment, gave it to him to read, thinking, perhaps, that he would find therein material

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, vi. 423.

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for amusement. In this, however, she was mistaken, for Louis, in spite of his vices, could still appreciate virtue in women and honour in men when he found them, and now, after glancing over the letter, handed it back to her, remarking coldly, "You appear, madame, to have a very honest man for a husband."

But honest man as M. d'Étioles was, it was, nevertheless, deemed expedient that he should absent himself from the neighbourhood of Paris for some time at least; and, accordingly, he received orders to retire to Provence, there to take the place of one of the farmers-general who usually made the circuit of that part of the country. At Avignon he fell dangerously ill with brain fever, the result of the terrible mental suffering which he had recently undergone, and lay for many days between life and death. Thanks to a robust constitution, he ultimately recovered, and returned to Paris, after a year's absence, "entirely cured of his passion for a woman who was so little worthy of him."¹

It was during M. d'Étioles's visit to Provence that a rather embarrassing incident occurred. In every town through which he passed, he received, in virtue of his office of farmer-general, numerous invitations to dine and sup, and his relationship to the King's new mistress, who had now been created Marquise de Pompadour, being, of course, well known, he was treated with even greater consideration than was usually shown to the collectors of the King's taxes. At one of these festive gatherings, there happened to be among the

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, vi. 423. Campardon's *Madame de Pompadour et la Cour de Louis XV.*, p. 13.

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guests an old country gentleman, "fortunate enough to know nothing about the Court, the King, or his mistress, and even unaware that he had one."¹ He was much struck with the deference paid by all present to M. d'Étioles, and inquired of one of his neighbours at table what the name of this distinguished stranger might be. "Can it be possible that you do not know," replied the person addressed, "that he is the husband of the Marquise de Pompadour?" Upon this the old gentleman rose, with his glass in his hand, and, taking advantage of a momentary pause in the conversation, bowed courteously to M. d'Étioles, and exclaimed, "Monsieur le Marquis de Pompadour, will you permit me to drink your health?" The effect which such a toast produced on the company may well be imagined.

Shortly after M. d'Étioles returned to Paris, the Châtelet pronounced a judicial separation between him and his wife. On the other hand, if money was able to compensate the injured husband for the loss of the woman he had so fondly loved, he had little reason to complain, for he received an appointment as farmer-general in Paris, the profits of which were estimated at over 400,000 livres a year. He never saw his wife, but they occasionally corresponded, and when Madame de Pompadour proposed to go to the play, she invariably wrote to her husband to inform him of her intention, in order that he might keep away, as she feared that his presence in a theatre at the same time as herself might be made the occasion of a popular demonstration against her.

Several writers, Capefigue among the number, have

¹ *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, ii. 219.

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asserted that Madame d'Étioles followed the King in the campaign of Fontenoy, though under an incognito. This statement is quite incorrect. Louis, indeed, wished her to accompany him, but mindful of the popular hostility which Madame de Châteauroux's appearance in the royal train had aroused the previous year, and probably also being of opinion that in the early stages of a love affair separation is generally calculated to strengthen the bonds of affection, she declined, and passed the time of the King's absence in a kind of semi-retirement at Étioles, in the society of a few intimate friends, among whom were Voltaire and a person who figures somewhat prominently in this history—the Abbé de Bernis, the future Minister for Foreign Affairs and cardinal.

Francis Joachim de Pierre de Bernis was at this time about thirty years of age. A cadet of an ancient, but impoverished family in Languedoc, which traced its descent back to the tenth century and boasted of an ancestor who had fought at the siege of Antioch, he was educated, like so many of the younger sons of the *noblesse*, for the Church, and at the College of Louis-le-Grand and the seminary of Saint-Sulpice distinguished himself in his studies. Unfortunately for his hopes of preferment, young Bernis was of far too independent a character to commend himself to the dispensers of ecclesiastical patronage, who disliked nothing so much as independence, and, despairing of obtaining a benefice, at the age of nineteen he came to Paris, with empty pockets, but with agreeable manners, a lively wit, an almost sublime confidence in himself, and the title of abbé. An abbé, it may be here observed, was neither a churchman nor a layman, but something between the

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two. In theory, he approximated to the former; in practice, he was hardly to be distinguished from the latter. He wore a short black cloak, was forbidden to dance, and *permitted* to plead conscientious scruples as a reason for declining a challenge to a duel—a privilege which very few cared to avail themselves of; otherwise, he was as much a layman as a captain of musketeers.

Bernis's high birth, good looks, and pleasing manners gave him admission to the best society, where he soon became a great favourite with the fair sex, owing to a happy knack which he possessed of improvising verses in praise of their charms. He was, however, miserably poor; so poor, indeed, that he was forced to take his meals at an ordinary where the charge was but six sous a head, while an invitation to dinner was as often as not accompanied by a crown to defray the hire of his fiacre, for the little abbé's poverty was well known, and, to his credit, he was not in the least ashamed of it.¹

But nothing could damp Bernis's irrepressible good humour, not even a ridiculous nickname which Voltaire bestowed upon him, and which, says one of his biographers, "would have ruined an ordinary man." It

¹ An amusing story is related of Bernis's poverty-stricken days. One afternoon when he was dining at a friend's house at some little distance from the capital, he suddenly rose from the table, begged his hostess to excuse him, as he had just remembered a most important engagement in Paris, and hurriedly took his leave. It subsequently transpired that the future cardinal shared a fashionable suit of clothes with another abbé as poor as himself, one wearing it in the daytime, the other at night, and that Bernis's abrupt departure on the occasion in question was caused by his recollecting that his partner had been invited out to supper that evening and was waiting for the suit.

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cost him, as it was, the favour of old Cardinal Fleury, who had promised Bernis's father to make his son's fortune, but who set but little store by amatory poetry, and, not unnaturally, considered that a person who was known throughout the length and breadth of Paris by the sobriquet of "Babet,"¹ was scarcely a fit subject for ecclesiastical preferment. When, therefore, the abbé waited upon him to solicit a vacant benefice, he was gruffly informed that he might hope in vain for promotion as long as he (the cardinal) was alive.

"Ah, well, I will wait, Monseigneur," replied the petitioner, with a pleasant smile, which did not render the retort the less piquant, as the abbé was very young, while the all-powerful Minister was over eighty. However, it was not until his friend, Madame d'Étioles, began to mount the ladder of fortune that Bernis's patience was rewarded.

Great were the rejoicings at Étioles when, in the middle of May, the news of the victory of Fontenoy arrived. Voltaire, who, tormented as he was by libels and disgusted with the failure of his attempts to break through the ring of bigots which barred his entrance to the Academy, had lately come to the conclusion that a spell of Court favour might do him no harm, hastened to improve the occasion by some pretty verses :—

"Quand Louis, ce héros charmant,
Dont tout Paris fait son idole,
Gagne quelque combat brillant,
On en doit faire compliment
À la divine d'Étiole."

¹ Babet was the name of a pretty flower girl who sold nosegays in the streets of Paris. Voltaire had bestowed it upon Bernis in allusion to the "flowery" nature of his poetry.

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The effect of which was somewhat marred by the following reply from the pen of a rival poet:—

“Pour Louis ce héros charmant
Voltaire écrit mainte babiole.
Bataille et vers tout est brillant,
Et fort digne certainement
De l’incomparable d’Étiole.”

Louis XV.’s military responsibilities did not prevent him from thinking of his mistress, and an active correspondence was kept up between them. Bernis, if Marmontel is to be believed, assisted Madame d’Étioles in the composition of her replies; and this rather strange collaboration was so successful, and the letters, we are assured, were so full of *esprit* and tenderness, that the monarch was enchanted, and the couriers were kept very busy. In the early days of July the triumphant favourite was able to exhibit no less than eighty amorous epistles, each sealed with a gallant motto and marked “Private and confidential,” and, finally, one bearing the direction “*À la Marquise de Pompadour,*” and containing the brevet which conferred that title upon her.¹

The new marchioness received it with a delight which she made no attempt to conceal, and hastened to substitute the arms—three towers—for those of her husband, and to array her servants in a sumptuous livery. Voltaire, who seems to have constituted himself for the

¹ The marquise of Pompadour had originally belonged to an old Limousin family, but had passed out of their possession through failure of heirs male. The last holder of the title readers of Dumas *père* will remember as one of the characters in *Une fille du Régent*. The marquise had recently been granted to the Prince de Conti, from whom Louis now repurchased it.

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nonce her poet-in-ordinary, and was a witness of her satisfaction, felt himself once more inspired to verse. The Patriarch of the Holy Philosophical Church, on the occasions when it suited him to assume the rôle of flatterer, never failed to give a most effective rendering of the part, as the following lines will testify :—

“Il sait aimer, il sait combattre,
Il envoie en ce beau séjour
Un brevet digne de Henri quatre,
Signe : Louis, Mars et l'Amour.
Mais les ennemis ont leur tour,
Et sa valeur et sa prudence
Donnent à Gand, le même jour,
Un brevet de ville de France.¹
Ces deux brevets si bien venus,
Vivront tous deux dans la mémoire.
Chez lui les autels de Vénus
Sont dans le temple de la Gloire.”

Louis XV. returned to his capital on September 8, and, a week later, Madame d'Étioles, or Madame de Pompadour, as we must now call her, was formally presented at Court.

The Princesse de Conti, who had taken a prominent part in bringing about the King's intrigue with Madame de Mailly, and whose extravagance and that of her family inclined her to a complaisant rôle, had readily accepted Louis's suggestion that she should act as the new favourite's chief sponsor ; but, as she desired to remain on good terms with the Queen, she, at the same time, took the precaution of assuring the latter that she had only consented to perform this office under great pressure from his Majesty, and that she earnestly hoped that

¹ The town of Gand had surrendered to the French, July 11, 1745.

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he would release her from her promise before the day fixed for the ceremony arrived. The princess was supported by Madame de Lachau-Montauban and the Comtesse d'Estrades, a cousin by marriage of Madame de Pompadour, who had herself been presented a few days earlier.

The ceremonial of presentation was as follows:—On the day before, the lady who was to be presented went to the palace, accompanied by her sponsors, and was there introduced to the ladies-in-waiting and ladies of the Bedchamber to the Queen and her daughters. On the day of the drawing-room, all the ladies were attired in full Court dress. A more unsightly and more uncomfortable form of apparel it would be difficult to conceive. It consisted of an enormous panniered or hooped petticoat, and a train called a *bas-de-robe*. The petticoat weighed as a rule upwards of forty pounds, and Marshal Saxe, who was once permitted to examine that of the Dauphiness during her toilette, declares that it was heavier than his cuirass, and expressed his astonishment that any woman could support such a burden for hours at a time, as the ladies of the Royal Family were compelled to do on presentation days. The *bas-de-robe* was rather narrow, but of extravagant length, and when the unfortunate *débutante* was “backing” out of the room after being presented, unless she exercised great care, the chances were in favour of her tripping over it and receiving an awkward fall.

The ceremony included presentation to the King and the Dauphin, as well as to the Queen, but that to the last-named was, of course, the most important, and also the most trying part of the ordeal. The *présentée* made a curtsey on entering the room, a second a little farther

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on, and a third in front of the Queen, at the same moment taking up the hem of her Majesty's gown as if to kiss it. This the Queen prevented by a motion of her fan; said a few polite words, and then made a curtsey herself as a sign of dismissal. The lady, thereupon, retired backwards, curtseying as she went, and kicking away her formidable train at every other step.

The presentations began at six o'clock in the evening, at which hour Madame de Pompadour repaired to the King's apartments and was formally introduced to his Majesty. The conversation was short. The monarch seemed much embarrassed, and the marchioness equally so. A few words only were exchanged, and the *présentée* passed on to the Queen. An immense crowd of courtiers, eager to be spectators of the meeting between the wife and the mistress, flocked after her into the room where Marie Leczinska was receiving. All Versailles had arranged the conversation which would ensue. It was generally agreed that the Queen would merely pay Madame de Pompadour some ordinary compliment upon her gown, and then dismiss her. To every one's amazement, however, Marie Leczinska, who was naturally of a kind and, sweet disposition, and, above all things, anxious to conform to her husband's wishes, received the new favourite with marked graciousness, and, remembering that the marchioness had a distant relative among the *noblesse*, a certain Madame de Saissac, said to her, "Have you had any news of Madame de Saissac lately? I should have been very pleased to have seen her occasionally when she was in Paris?"

Touched by this kindly reception, so very different from what she had anticipated, Madame de Pompadour

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could only murmur, "I have an intense desire to please you, Madame," a protestation of devotion which seemed to afford the Queen much pleasure.

After the Queen, it was the turn of the Dauphin. The young prince, however, regarded his father's mistress with the greatest disfavour, and was at no pains to conceal his feelings. He, therefore, simply paid her some empty compliment upon her appearance, with the air of one discharging an unpleasant duty, and dismissed her.¹

A few days later, Madame de Pompadour accompanied the Court to Choisy, which had just been refurnished, presumably in her honour, and where the King gave a very cold reception to his father-in-law, poor old Stanislas Leczinska, the dethroned King of Poland, who, happening to visit him unexpectedly, surprised his Majesty playing cards in his private apartments with the new favourite in her riding-habit.

At the beginning of October, the Court moved as usual to Fontainebleau, and Madame de Pompadour took possession of the suite of apartments which Madame de Châteauroux had formerly occupied. Not long after her arrival she had a slight illness, and was bled, bleeding being at this period considered a remedy for almost every disease known to science. In consequence, she was unable to appear that evening at the King's supper-party, which caused the monarch, we are told, much uneasiness. "In the middle of supper," says the Duc de Luynes, "his Majesty rose from the table, to go and ascertain the latest news about Madame de Pompadour and to keep her company. He remained with her some little time, and when he returned to the dining-room, sent to her

¹ *Mémoires du Comte de Maurepas*, iv. 174.

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first M. de Meuse and afterwards M. de Soubise, in order that she might not be left by herself.”¹

It was while at Fontainebleau, that Madame de Pompadour received intelligence of the death of her mother, which took place on Christmas Eve 1745. Madame Poisson had, indeed, been dying for some months; but her delight at, what one writer calls, the “glorious dishonour” of her daughter had helped to prolong her days, and she had utilised this short respite from the grave to discuss with the new favourite the policy which it would be advisable for her to pursue in order to safeguard her conquest.

Her mother’s early death—she was only forty-six—deeply affected the marchioness. For several days she shut herself up in her apartments and refused to see any one. Her grief, indeed, was such that the King wished to postpone a visit to Marly that the Court was about to make, and in view of which the ladies had gone to considerable expense in the matter of costumes. But this Madame de Pompadour, with characteristic tact, would by no means permit, declaring that the death of her mother was not a matter of such importance as to necessitate the alteration of the arrangements of the Court, and that the ladies would have a right to complain if the proposed visit was cancelled at the eleventh hour.

During her stay at Fontainebleau, Madame de Pompadour lived a very quiet life, seldom leaving her apartments, except to sup with the King, or pay her devoirs to the Queen. She had, however, brought an admirable chef with her, and gave small, but charming supper-parties on the evenings when Louis dined *au grand couvert*.

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, vii. 93.

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She seems, moreover, to have spent a good deal of her time in taking lessons in the minutiae of Court etiquette, and such like matters, from her friend Madame de Tencin, and thus preparing herself for that arduous struggle to maintain her position which she knew would begin in earnest when the Court returned to Versailles.

CHAPTER V

Installation of the new favourite at Versailles—Hostility of the ladies of the Court—Of the Dauphin and Mesdames—And of the Parisians—The *Poissonades*—The Comte de Maurepas—His endeavours to cast ridicule upon the favourite—Madame de Pompadour determines to form a party of her own—Her efforts to conciliate the Queen attended with success—Her letter to the Duchesse de Luynes—The Queen refuses to allow Madame de Pompadour to officiate as a *Quêteuse* at Easter—The favourite gains the friendship of the Princesse de Conti—And concludes an alliance with the brothers Pâris—They contrive the fall of Orry—And of the Marquis d'Argenson—The favourite wins over Saint-Séverin and Belle-Isle—Madame de Pompadour's relations with Louis XV.—The King's eternal *ennui* the secret of her influence over him—Her extraordinary skill in diverting the monarch—She encourages him to neglect the duties of sovereignty—The *petits soupers*—Visit of the King and Madame de Pompadour to Havre.

WHEN, ten years earlier, Madame de Mailly had become the acknowledged mistress of Louis XV., the general opinion seems to have been that, as apparently it was too much to expect that a King of France should remain faithful to his consort, Louis had shown a very proper sense of the duty he owed his subjects in selecting for the object of his attentions a member of one of the oldest families in the realm, and that so long as he confined himself to the daughters of the *noblesse* no one had any right to complain.¹

¹ *Journal de Barbier*, iii. 113.

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Very different was the feeling which the elevation of Madame d'Étioles aroused. The whole Court was up in arms at such a scandalous breach of the traditions of the monarchy. The mere fact that this middle-class woman, this "*robine*"—as even that most democratic of *grands seigneurs*, the Marquis d'Argenson, calls her—should have dared to aspire to a position which had always been regarded as the peculiar appanage of the nobility was an unheard of piece of presumption; that she should have succeeded in her designs was an intolerable outrage. All the jealousy and hatred with which the constantly increasing wealth and influence of the class to which Madame d'Étioles belonged was regarded by the aristocracy seemed to converge upon the devoted head of the new mistress, until for the moment it appeared that the fruits of her hardly won victory must inevitably be snatched from her.

It was, of course, from her own sex that Madame de Pompadour had to encounter the most violent hostility. The Court ladies, forgetting for the nonce their own differences in the face of this common enemy, banded themselves together to ridicule and discredit her. "They spied upon her, they studied her, they analysed her accent and her manners, they sneered at her ignorance of Court etiquette, they mocked at the little *bourgeois* expressions which the journey from Paris to Versailles had not been long enough to enable her to entirely forget."¹ In short, there was a conspiracy among these high-born dames, none the less to be dreaded because it happened to be an informal one, to arouse against the new favourite the King's sense of the ludicrous, and to make him ashamed of his choice by magnifying

¹ *Les Maîtresses de Louis XV.*, i. 206.

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and exaggerating all the shortcomings inevitable in the case of a woman who finds herself for the first time in her life in the midst of a society so different from that to which she has been accustomed.

The Queen, as we have seen, was disposed to treat Madame de Pompadour with courtesy; but the Dauphin, to whom his former tutor, the Bishop of Mirepoix, had succeeded in imparting not a little of his own bigotry, and his sisters, who were also under the influence of the Jesuits, bitterly resented their royal father's conduct, and were at no pains to conceal their antipathy to the marchioness. On one occasion at a hunting party, when the King had desired Madame de Pompadour to enter a carriage in which were his son and two of the princesses, they evinced their disgust by absolutely ignoring her presence, and declining to answer one or two questions which she ventured to address to them; while the Dauphin, who, though a pious youth, possessed an extremely bitter tongue, was continually indulging in biting *bon-mots* at her expense.

The malice of the Court spread to the city; the murmurs of the ante-chamber descended to the street, and turned against Madame de Pompadour the ribald insults of the most licentious rabble in Europe. The cobblers and fishwives of Paris, among whom her father's drunkenness and her mother's gallantries had long been by-words, were not one whit behind the polished lords and ladies of Versailles in pouring ridicule upon the favourite; for they, too, strange as it may seem, resented their ruler's departure from the custom observed by his predecessors, while the arrogance and exactions of the farmers-general with whom she was connected were as odious to them as were the social pretensions of the same class to the *noblesse*.

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Just as, a century before, the animosity of the Parisians against Mazarin had found vent in a storm of lampoons, so now the same effective weapons were employed against Madame de Pompadour. The *Poissonades*, if they lacked the wit of the *Mazarinades*, far excelled them in bitterness, and abounded in the coarsest personalities. The following verses, which the marchioness always asserted to have been the work of Maurepas, the Minister of Marine, and which were sung to the air of an opera song then all the rage, will convey some idea of the popular feeling in the matter:—

“ Une petite bourgeoise
Élevée à la grivoise,
Mesurant tout à sa toise,
Fait de la cour un taudis, dis, dis.
Le roi, malgré son scrupule,
Pour elle fortement brûle,
Cette flame ridicule
Excite dans tout Paris, ris, ris.

Cette catin subalterne,
Insolemment le gouverne,
Et c'est elle qui décerne
Les honneurs à prix d'argent, gent, gent.
Devant l'idole tout plie,
Le courtisan s'humilie ;
Il subit cette infamie,
Et n'est que plus indigent, gent, gent.”

Then follow some verses in which the favourite is described as possessing “wrinkled skin, speckled teeth, colourless eyes, a long neck, and a flat figure”; and the poet concludes by declaring that if the King's choice had fallen upon a beautiful woman, one might have found it in one's heart to pardon him, but, as matters stood, the most charitable sup-

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position was to conclude that he had become "*fou, fou, fou.*"¹

The Comte de Maurepas, who was credited with being the author of this effusion, was a frivolous, dissipated man of forty-five, by no means destitute of ability, however, and noted for his powers of mimicry and his mordant wit. "His eye," says Marmontel, "instantly seized what was weak and ridiculous in men; with imperceptible art he drew them into his snare or led them on to his purpose; with an art still more formidable he could cast ridicule on everything, even on merit itself, when he wished to undervalue it."² Maurepas had been a thorn in the side of Madame de Châteauroux and had now transferred his enmity to her successor,³ inspiring, if he did not actually write, most of the *Poissonades*, and at the supper-parties of his intimate friends mimicking Madame de Pompadour's little oddities of speech and gesture to such perfection as to send every one present into convulsions of laughter. Ridicule, however, is a dangerous weapon and very apt to recoil upon him who employs it too freely, a fact which Maurepas was one day to discover to his cost.

Thus harassed on all sides, Madame de Pompadour perceived the necessity of taking steps to counteract

¹ *Mémoires du Comte de Maurepas*, iv. 266.

² *Mémoires de Marmontel*, iii. 282.

³ "This remarkable Minister, who had built up his influence and retained it by a thousand trifling accomplishments—songs, tittle-tattle, epigrams, gossip. Maurepas, whose principal idea of governing was to please and amuse, and who ruled like a woman and by the same means, naturally looked upon women as rivals, and upon the amours of his master as slights upon his own powers of diverting him."—E. and J. de Goncourt's *La Duchesse de Châteauroux et ses sœurs*, p. 197.

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the machinations of her enemies and, accordingly, began to look about her for allies. She soon decided that if she could by any means succeed in gaining the favour of the Queen, she could afford to ignore the hostility of the rest of the Royal Family, who, though they might annoy, would be powerless to injure her, and she would then be free to deal with her foes at Court and in the Ministry. With this end in view, she allowed no opportunity to slip of ingratiating herself with Marie Leczinska, and invariably showed herself most attentive and respectful whenever the latter happened to address her—conduct in marked contrast to that of Madame de Châteauroux, who had treated the poor Queen with but scant courtesy, and which was by no means without its effect upon the King, who, it began to be remarked, now exhibited more consideration for his wife than he had shown for some years.¹

The Queen, aware that the change in her husband's demeanour was largely due to the influence of the new favourite, and touched by, what she believed to be, the latter's kindness, treated her with marked graciousness, even going so far as to invite her to a meeting in her apartments, which was to be followed by a sermon in aid of some charity. Madame de Pompadour was unwell on the evening in question

¹ The King had not made his consort any New Year's gift for several years, but in 1746 he presented her with a gold snuff-box, on one side of which was a watch. The Queen was highly delighted and regarded it as a mark of returning affection; but her pleasure was of short duration, for a few days later it transpired that the snuff-box had been intended for the estimable Madame Poisson, who, however, had not lived to receive it.

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and unable to be present, but took care to send a donation with her excuses.

Not long after this, the astute favourite pretended to have observed a coldness on the part of the Queen towards her, and hastening to the Duchesse de Luynes, her Majesty's lady-of-honour and confidante, besought her, with tears in her eyes, to endeavour to ascertain what she had done to displease her mistress, declaring that she would be inconsolable were she to forfeit the Queen's good opinion. The duchess, who was a simple-minded old lady, complied with her request and wrote to her as follows :—

The DUCHESS DE LUYNES to MADAME DE POMPADOUR.

“I have just spoken to the Queen, madame, and earnestly entreated her to tell me frankly whether she had any cause of complaint against you. She has answered in the kindest manner possible that she was indeed very sensible of the pains which you have taken to please her on all occasions, and has desired me to write to you to that effect.”

To which the marchioness replied :—

MADAME DE POMPADOUR to the DUCHESS DE LUYNES.

“You give me back my life, Madame la Duchesse. For the last three days my misery has been indescribable—a statement which you, who are aware of my devotion to the Queen, will not find it difficult to believe. The blackest calumnies have been brought against me by those about the persons of M. and

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Madame la Dauphine. They themselves have had the kindness to permit me to prove how baseless these horrible charges are. Some days ago, I was informed that the Queen had been turned against me; judge of my despair, I who would lay down my life for her whose good opinion becomes every day more precious to me. It is certain that the greater her goodness to me, the more the monsters who surround us will seek to multiply their shameful accusations, unless she has the kindness to be on her guard against them and is willing to give me an opportunity of defending myself against my calumniators, in which case it will be easy for me to clear my character. My own tranquillity of mind in regard to this matter answers for me. I trust, madame, that your friendship for me will be sufficient guarantee that my request will be granted. Doubtless, I have wearied you with this long recital of my troubles, but I have so sensitive a heart that it is beyond my power to conceal them. You are aware of my sentiments for you, madame; they will endure as long as I live."

But if the Queen, from her natural kindness of heart and her desire to prevent scandal, appeared willing, when the question was one which concerned herself alone, to ignore the injury Madame de Pompadour had done her, in matters connected with religion she sternly refused to close her eyes to the position occupied by the marchioness.

At the end of Lent 1746, the favourite, emboldened by Marie Leczinska's apparent complaisance, had the temerity to ask permission to hold one of the plates at the *quête* on Holy Thursday. To a woman of the

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Queen's religious convictions such a request seemed little short of an insult, but, unwilling to wound the lady's feelings, she contented herself by sending through her *dame d'honneur* a diplomatic refusal, to the effect that, while much touched by this new proof of Madame de Pompadour's anxiety to please her, she was compelled to accept the will for the deed, as all the plates had already been distributed. When, however, a few days later, the marchioness, who was aware that there was a vacancy among the *quêteuses* chosen for Easter Sunday, once more proffered her services, the Queen, though warned by her ladies-in-waiting that Madame de Pompadour was probably acting on the King's instructions, and that it would, therefore, be wiser to yield, replied that she did not consider her a fit person to take part in a ceremony of this kind, and offered the coveted plate to Madame de Castries.

To the credit of the favourite it must be observed that she did not bear the Queen any ill-will on account of this timely rebuke; and a few days afterwards the latter, evidently desirous of making amends for her refusal, invited Madame de Pompadour to join her card-table.

The Queen thus won over, or, at least, disarmed, Madame de Pompadour succeeded in attaching to her interests the old Princesse de Conti, who had presented her at Court, and her son, the Prince de Conti, by artfully stimulating the former's jealousy of the Condé and Orléans branches of the Royal Family, and by promising to use her influence to bring about the prince's marriage with Madame Adelaïde, Louis XV.'s second daughter.

Her next move was a far more important one,

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nothing less than to conclude with the brothers Pâris,¹ the celebrated financiers, who were at that moment the only persons capable of providing the funds necessary for the prosecution of the war and the expenses of the Court, a treaty of alliance, whereby they engaged to use their immense influence unsparingly on her behalf in return for certain concessions which she was to obtain for them.

The first result of this *rapprochement* was the dismissal of Orry, the Comptroller-General, who seems to have been an honest sort of man, as Ministers of Finance went in those days, and had offended the bankers by

¹ The brothers Pâris, the Rothschilds of those days, were originally four in number; the eldest was named Antoine, the second Claude, the third Joseph, better known as Duverney, and the youngest Jean, commonly called Montmartel. At the period of which we are speaking the two elder brothers were dead. They were the sons of an innkeeper of Moras in Dauphiné, whence they had come to Paris about the year 1702. They began business as army-contractors, with money lent them by the eccentric Simon Bernard, and, prospering exceedingly, opened a bank, and, by their abilities and enterprising spirit, soon acquired great influence. Quickly perceiving the disastrous results which must inevitably follow the adoption of the financial schemes of the Scotch adventurer Law, they strove to prevent it, and sent a memorial on the subject to the Regent Orléans, for which Law, then all-powerful, had them banished to Dauphiné. When the Mississippi crash came, they were recalled, and entrusted by the Regent with the task of restoring the public credit, which they successfully accomplished, in spite of the great difficulties which they had to contend with. For three years after the Regent's death, Pâris-Duverney, through his friendship with Madame de Prie, the mistress of the Duc de Bourbon, practically ruled the country; but when Fleury became Prime Minister, he was thrown into the Bastille, where he remained until 1728. His younger brother, Pâris de Montmartel, was banker to the Court, and so powerful, that he was popularly believed to fix the current rate of interest. He amassed a colossal fortune, which, after his death in 1766, was soon squandered by his son, the prodigal Marquis de Brunoy.

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his refusal to pass certain accounts of theirs relating to the provisioning of the army, and the favourite by his endeavours to check the prodigality in which she was encouraging the King, so economical with his former mistresses. The charge brought against Orry was that of nepotism, an offence not entirely unknown in our own time, and so general in the middle of the eighteenth century that a Minister who failed in his duty to his relatives would have been regarded with unbounded astonishment. However, it served its purpose, and though the King made a feeble protest, he soon yielded when the brothers Pâris refused to advance a sou so long as Orry retained his post. The dismissed Minister was succeeded by Machault, the Intendant of Valenciennes, who had rendered great service to Maréchal Saxe in the campaign of 1745; while the office of Director-General of the Board of Works, which had hitherto been joined to that of Comptroller-General, was separated from it and given to Lenormant de Tournehem, until such time as Madame de Pompadour's brother, Abel Poisson, who had lately blossomed into the Marquis de Vandières, should be of fitting age to fill the post.

After the Comptroller-General it was the turn of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Marquis d'Argenson.¹ This able and far-sighted statesman, of whom Voltaire once said that he was worthy to be Secretary of State in the Republic of Plato, had cherished schemes which, could he but have reckoned on the support of the King

¹ The Marquis d'Argenson, who was the author of the charming *Mémoires*, must be carefully distinguished from his younger brother, the Comte d'Argenson, the Minister for War, of whom we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

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and his colleagues in the Ministry, might have raised France once more to the position in Europe which she had occupied in the palmy days of Louis XIV. His policy embraced an independent Italy; a Poland rescued from anarchy by the dynasty which had been the instrument of her decline—the House of Saxony; a renewal of the French alliance with Holland; the humbling of Austria through the support of Prussia; and the curtailing of the growing maritime and commercial influence of Great Britain by united action on the part of the other Powers.¹ Such a man, however, was quite out of place in the frivolous and incompetent Cabinet of Versailles. The dandies of the Court laughed at his careless dress, his awkward manners, and his slow speech, and nicknamed him “d’Argenson *la bête*.” The very success which had attended one of his plans proved his undoing. He had succeeded in September 1746 in marrying the Dauphin—*en secondes noces*—the ill-fated Infanta Maria Theresa had died in giving birth to a daughter a few months before—to a daughter of Augustus III., Elector of Saxony and King of Poland. By so doing he had incurred the enmity of the Spanish Court, who had wished to replace the deceased Infanta by her sister, for which union they had already taken steps to obtain the Papal dispensation. The Duc de Noailles, a pliant courtier, who had been a devotee during the last years of Louis XIV. and a libertine under the Regency, had been sent on a mission to Madrid, whence, unknown to the Foreign Minister, he kept up a correspondence with the King, which seems to have been the beginning of that secret diplomacy of Louis XV., the extent and

¹ Martin's *Histoire de France jusqu'en 1789*, xv. 293 *et seq.*

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importance of which have only recently been revealed through the investigations of the late Duc de Broglie.¹ Noailles had always made a point of being on good terms with the King's mistress for the time being, just as Maurepas had of opposing her, and now, acting in concert with Madame de Pompadour and the brothers Pâris, who were desirous of replacing the upright d'Argenson by a creature of their own—the Marquis de Puisieux—he persistently exaggerated the resentment of the Spanish Court, declaring that nothing would satisfy it but the dismissal of the Minister who had been responsible for the Saxon marriage. Once more the feeble King yielded against his better judgment; and in January 1747 d'Argenson was dismissed, and Puisieux reigned in his stead. In after years Madame de Pompadour had cause to regret the part she had taken in bringing about the fall of d'Argenson, and confessed that, in so doing, she had sinned both against the King and the public interest; but it was then too late.

The favourite managed to secure two other useful allies about this time in the persons of the Comte de Saint-Séverin and Maréchal de Belle-Isle. Saint-Séverin was an Italian by birth, who had come originally to Paris as the Ambassador of the Duke of Parma, and had been induced by Fleury, who had a high opinion of his diplomatic capabilities, to enter the service of France. Like most adventurers, he had his price, and considered that the party which had the Pâris brothers behind it was the most likely to be able to pay it.

Belle-Isle, whom Carlyle calls "the last of the grand old Frenchmen,"² was a very different kind of man.

¹ See Broglie's *Le Secret du Roi*.

² Carlyle's "Frederick the Great," ix. 123.

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The grandson of the unfortunate Fouquet, whose ill-gotten wealth had brought down upon him the wrath of *le Grand Monarque*, he had inherited both his grandfather's talents and ambition. His head was full of the wildest schemes for the aggrandisement of France, and it had been largely through his influence that Fleury had been forced into the War of the Austrian Succession, in which, however, Belle-Isle had earned undying renown by his gallant defence of Prague and the masterly manner in which he had subsequently conducted the retreat of the garrison to Eger through the midst of an enemy's country and in the depth of winter.¹ The marshal was not, of course, amenable to the arguments which had proved so efficacious in the case of the Pâris brothers and Saint-Séverin, but he had a weakness—he was very susceptible to flattery; and this Madame de Pompadour discovered and played upon with great adroitness, always deferring to his opinion and informing him that “the King regarded him as the greatest general he possessed, and also the most honourable and loyal of his subjects.” Such praise from the lips of a pretty woman was extremely gratifying to the old soldier, who soon came to regard the favourite as a very amiable and intelligent person.

¹ “‘Comparable to the retreat of Xenophon!’ cry many. Every retreat is compared to that. A valiant feat after all exaggeration. A thing well done, say military men—‘nothing to object, except that the troops were so ruined’; and the most unmilitary may see it is the work of a high and gallant kind of man. One of the coldest expeditions ever known. There have been three expeditions or retreats of this kind which were very cold; that of those Swedes in the Great Elector’s time (not to mention that of Karl XII.’s army out of Norway after poor Karl XII. got shot); that of Napoleon from Moscow; this of Belle-Isle, which is the only one brilliantly conducted, and not ending in rout and annihilation.”—Carlyle’s “Frederick the Great,” v. 180.

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It must not be imagined that while Madame de Pompadour was thus engaged in fortifying, so to speak, the approaches to the citadel which she had stormed, she was in any way neglectful of her conquest itself. She was well aware that the complaisance of the Queen, the support of the brothers Pâris, the servility of Puisieux, and the friendship of Belle-Isle would avail her but little if once her ascendancy over the King's heart began to wane; and while thus struggling against the Royal Family, the Court, and the Ministry, she had contrived, by carefully studying the tastes and temperament of her lover, and making it the business of her life to conform to and humour them, to gradually render herself indispensable to his happiness.

There are many circumstances in the life of kings which, as Lord Bacon said in another sense, are calculated to blunt the edge of envy, and not the least of these is that feeling of weariness and disgust with their surroundings which is the inevitable outcome of having early run through the whole gamut of pleasure. But of all the kings who ever wore a crown none was more *ennuyé* than Louis XV. *Ennui* was not with him, as with *le Grand Monarque*, the tardy fruit of old age and disappointed ambition; it was a chronic malady, which had afflicted him from his boyhood and in the most prosperous years of his reign—a malady which rendered impotent all the faculties with which nature had endowed him, which enfeebled his will, which stifled the voice of conscience, which rendered him alike indifferent to the claims of duty and the dictates of honour, which, in short, degraded monarchy itself in his person, until the witty Abbé Galiani declared that “Louis had made the trade of king the most ignoble one in the whole world.”

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It is to this unhappy trait in Louis XV.'s character that we must look for the source of Madame de Pompadour's influence, the secret of that long domination, which ended only with life. She had very soon made the discovery that of all ways of pleasing the monarch none would have greater power to bind him to her than that of amusing him, and for that task, fortunately for the success of her schemes, no woman in France was better qualified. Had she possessed nothing but beauty and ordinary accomplishments, her reign, in the face of the violent opposition which she had to encounter, would not have lasted a twelvemonth. But she had far more valuable resources than these at her command; she had patience, she had tact, above all, she had in a pre-eminent degree the art of pleasing: of inventing new diversions and imparting novelty to old, of investing with interest the veriest trifles—the daily gossip of the Court and the town—by her skilful mode of handling them. “That in which she most excelled, however,” says a contemporary writer, “was in the art of never prolonging any particular amusement beyond the point when her exquisite discernment taught her that it might conceivably begin to pall, and thus deprive her of some of the credit for the entertainment she had previously afforded.”¹

To rescue the monarch from that black slough of *ennui* which was perpetually threatening to engulf him, and, in so doing, to make herself necessary to his very existence was henceforth her constant and daily task,

¹ *Histoire de la Marquise de Pompadour*, a curious little work published in 1759 in Holland, and immediately suppressed at the instance of the French Ambassador. A few copies, however, found their way to England, and one is preserved in the British Museum.

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and the genius for invention which she exhibited and the variety of means to which she had recourse in order to accomplish her purpose were truly astonishing. To the stereotyped amusements for filling up the void of the royal days—the chase, the card-table, and the theatre—she added frequent changes of residence, costly building operations, the taste for luxury and refinement. In the course of a few months she had transformed a man naturally niggardly into the most prodigal prince of his time; but if she took full advantage of the King's increased liberality, it was less from the desire of assuring to herself a great fortune than of possessing the means to initiate her lover into all the luxurious comfort of private life to which he had hitherto been almost a stranger.

Nor was this all. To effect the object which she had at heart, she did not hesitate to upset the whole machinery of State. Knowing that nothing wearied Louis so much as the transaction of public business, she deliberately set herself to stimulate his antipathy to mental exertion, frequently denying him to his Ministers, and sometimes even to the foreign Ambassadors, and encouraging him to forget the responsibilities which sovereignty entailed, to regard, in fact, the throne of France as a kind of magnificent sinecure the duties of whose occupant should be confined to now and again scrawling his signature at the foot of a sheet of parchment. Hitherto the Ministers had experienced no difficulty in approaching the King when occasion demanded; now private audiences were things of the past, for Madame de Pompadour was invariably present. Hitherto affairs of State had only bored Louis; now, under the favourite's tuition, he had come to regard them with something very like contempt.

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When, not infrequently after one or two unsuccessful applications, an audience had been granted, and the Secretary for War or the Foreign Minister had begun to read the memorial which he had prepared, the King would glance at Madame de Pompadour, as if for encouragement, and then commence to rally the reader on his seriousness, or even burst out laughing; and if, indignant at such ill-timed levity, the Minister paused, the monarch would exclaim, "Proceed, monsieur, proceed; I am all attention," at the same time making a wry face, or pretending to stifle a yawn.

Sometimes it would happen, however, that the matters brought to his notice were of such gravity, that Louis was compelled to listen, in spite of himself; but the marchioness was always equal to the occasion. One day Maurepas was reading a report on the condition of the navy, which would certainly have afforded food for reflection to any sovereign not entirely lost to all sense of duty, and Louis was following him with attention not unmixed with alarm,¹ when Madame de Pompadour suddenly interposed by exclaiming, "Oh, pray, go away, M. de Maurepas! You are *upsetting* the King. . . . Adieu, M. de Maurepas!" And the question of naval reform was postponed *sine die*!²

One of Madame de Pompadour's favourite modes of amusing the monarch were the famous *petits soupers*,

¹ The Duc de Luynes in his *Mémoires* (viii. 420) gives a list of 24 French men-of-war, carrying 1200 guns, and manned by 10,112 men, which had been either captured or totally destroyed by the English from the commencement of hostilities in 1743 to the end of November 1747. A large proportion of these ships had been worsted in single combat, though, if the duke's figures are correct, the conquerors would in most cases appear to have been superior in weight of metal.

² *Mémoires du Duc de Richelieu*, viii. 185.

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which she usually gave several times a week in her private apartments. On these occasions she was permitted to invite whom she pleased, a privilege which she also enjoyed when Louis himself entertained. The most frequent guests were the Prince de Soubise, the general who commanded the French troops in the fatal battle of Rossbach, Madame d'Estrades, the Duc d'Ayen, Madame de Bellefonds, Madame de Sassenage, the little Maréchale de Mirepoix,¹ a great ally of the marchioness, and, in later years, of her successor Madame du Barry, and the inevitable Richelieu. At these repasts, which were of the most *recherché* description, for the favourite's chef was a past-master of his art, and at which champagne, a wine of which Louis was particularly fond, was wont to circulate pretty freely, the King unbent, royal etiquette was relaxed, and every one was permitted to speak without restraint, and even to rally the monarch.

¹ Anne Gabrielle de Beauvau-Craon, sister of the Prince de Beauvau and wife of Charles Pierre de Lévis, Marquis and afterwards Duc de Mirepoix, a brave soldier who distinguished himself in the War of the Austrian Succession and in the early part of the Seven Years' War, and was French Ambassador at the Court of St. James's from 1749 to 1751. Madame de Mirepoix was at the time of Madame de Pompadour's "accession" *dame du palais* to the Queen. The Prince de Ligne says of her in one of his letters: "She had that enchanting talent which supplies the means of pleasing everybody. You would have sworn that she had thought of nothing but you all her life." She died at Brussels in 1791, at a very advanced age, preserving her wit and gaiety to the last. The day of her death, after she had received the last Sacraments, her physician thought he detected a slight improvement in her condition, and told her so. "You give me bad news," she replied; "having packed up, I would prefer to go." Her husband, Maréchal de Mirepoix, was also on very friendly terms with Madame de Pompadour, and several interesting autograph letters, written by the favourite to him while he was Ambassador in London, may be seen in the Manuscript Room at the British Museum.

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Strict orders were issued that on no account was the King to be disturbed when supping with the marchioness, and not even the Ministers were allowed to enter. In the event of any thing of unusual importance demanding attention, as, for instance, the arrival of a courier from the army, application for an audience had first to be made in writing to Madame de Pompadour, who, if she considered the matter of sufficient urgency, granted the requisite permission; otherwise, the applicant was compelled to wait until the supper-party dispersed. One evening the Prince de Dombes, one of the princes of the blood, having been entreated by the Comtesse de Toulouse to obtain leave of absence from his military duties for her son, who had been seriously ill, was forced to go in person to the favourite's apartments and submit his request for an interview with the King in the usual way. The marchioness, we are told, was graciously pleased to accede to it.

Another form of diversion consisted in inducing Louis to frequently change his place of residence. Thus she would whirl him away from Versailles to Choisy, from Choisy to Fontainebleau, from Fontainebleau to Marly, and from Marly to Compiègne, spending a few days at each place, and then going on to the next. When Louis began to show signs of tiring of the royal châteaux, she conceived the idea of extending their expeditions and carrying the King and his *ennui* on a tour through the whole of France. So she persuaded him to pay a visit to Havre,¹ where, as it was her first visit to the sea, some

¹ A few days before the King and the favourite started for Havre, Louis told the Archbishop of Rouen that he intended to break his journey at Gaillon, where the archbishop resided. The latter, feeling that it was hardly compatible with his dignity to receive in the archiepiscopal palace

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naval manœuvres were arranged in her honour, and where she was invited to rivet the first bolt of a merchant vessel, which was, in consequence, named *Le Gracieux*. The expenses of this little trip, however, which is said to have cost a million livres, decided the King to confine his excursions in future to the neighbourhood of his capital.

Finally, Madame de Pompadour bethought herself of diverting her royal lover by an entirely novel form of amusement, which, however, is of sufficient importance to warrant a chapter to itself.

a lady in the position of Madame de Pompadour, contented himself by acknowledging the honour which the monarch proposed to do him by a profound reverence. The King, under the impression that the prelate had misunderstood him, exclaimed, "Did you hear that I am coming to pay you a visit?" The archbishop again bowed, but remained silent. Louis thereupon turned angrily on his heel, remarking, as he did so, "No, monsieur, I would rather be hanged than accept your hospitality."

CHAPTER VI

The Théâtre des Petits Appartements—Its code of regulations—Composition of the company—The orchestra—Operas—Ballets—List of properties—Tickets of admission—Anxiety of the courtiers to gain admittance—The smallest parts eagerly contended for—Anecdote related by Madame du Hausset—*Tartuffe* inaugurates the theatre—*Le Préjugé à la mode* and *L'Esprit de Contradiction*—*Les Trois Cousines*—The Queen and Mesdames witness the performance of *Érigone*—The Duc de Luynes's criticism of Madame de Pompadour's acting—Success of the performances—Alterations in the theatre—*Le Mariage fait et rompu* and *Ismène*—Mysterious death of the Comte de Coigny causes the postponement of Voltaire's *Enfant prodigue*—Barbier's version of this affair—What really happened—A new theatre constructed in the cage of the Ambassadors' staircase—Madame de Pompadour as Urania and Venus—The Duc de Richelieu's hostility to the favourite—He endeavours to interfere with the performances—Violent quarrel between him and the Duc de la Vallière—Louis XV.'s tact—Reconciliation between the marchioness and the marshal—The performances transferred from Versailles to Bellevue—Rousseau's *Le Devin du Village*—The company is disbanded.

It happened that during Holy Week 1746 Madame de Pompadour, for the purpose of distracting the King from the religious terrors which the return of that solemn season never failed to engender in his superstitious mind, had given in her private apartments a series of sacred concerts, at which she herself and other ladies of the Court had assisted the professional artistes. The success which

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had attended these concerts suggested to the favourite the idea of attempting a much more ambitious kind of entertainment, namely, to construct a little theatre in the Palace of Versailles and to renew there before the King and a circle of intimate friends the histrionic triumphs which she had enjoyed on the boards of her own theatre at Étioles and in that of her friend Madame de Villemur at Chantemerle.

To gain Louis's consent to her scheme was a matter of little difficulty, for he was only too ready to welcome any amusement which bore the stamp of novelty, and was, besides, curious to see how his mistress would acquit herself upon the stage, having already heard her talents in that direction highly spoken of by Richelieu, who had seen her perform at Chantemerle, and by the Duc de Duras and the Duc de Nivernois, who had played there with her.

The King's consent having been obtained, Madame de Pompadour lost no time in putting her plan into execution; and in the winter of 1746-47 a gallery adjoining the Cabinet des Médailles was transformed into a perfectly appointed little theatre, which received the name of the Théâtre des Petits Appartements (Theatre of the Private Apartments).

In conjunction with the monarch, who seemed almost as interested as herself in this new plan for his diversion, she then proceeded to draw up a code of rules for the regulation of the company which she intended to gather round her:—

I. To be admitted a member of the company, it is necessary to prove that it is not the first time one has played comedy, so that novices may be excluded.

II. Each member must choose the kind of part (*emploi*) he intends to play.

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III. No one will be permitted, except with the consent of the whole company, to take a different kind of part to the one he has chosen.

IV. No one will be permitted, in case of absence, to select a substitute (that is a privilege expressly reserved for the company and to be decided by a majority of votes).

V. The absent member will resume his part on his return.

VI. No member of the company will be permitted to refuse a rôle belonging to his *emploi*, under the pretext that it is unsuitable or too fatiguing.

The above six rules are binding on actors and actresses alike.

VII. Only the actresses have the privilege of selecting the plays which are to be performed.

VIII. They have also the privilege of choosing the day for the performance, of settling the number of rehearsals, and of fixing the day and the hour for them.

IX. Every actor must attend at the precise hour fixed for rehearsal, under pain of a fine, which the actresses will decide upon among themselves.

X. The actresses only are allowed half-an-hour's grace, and in cases where it is exceeded, they themselves will decide upon the fine.¹

The next business was the selection of the company, which was a matter of some little difficulty, for, though there was a host of candidates, Madame de Pompadour was determined that the troupe should be a thoroughly efficient one, and, by the first rule, novices were expressly excluded ; indeed, it was only after much persuasion that

¹ Jullien's *Histoire du Théâtre de Madame de Pompadour*, p. 3.

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she was induced to waive this regulation in favour of the Duc de Chartres, eldest son of the Duc d'Orléans, the first prince of the blood. At length, however, a company was selected which promised to be not altogether unworthy of the abilities of its chief. It was constituted as follows :—

Actors : The Duc de Chartres, the Duc d'Ayen, the Duc de Nivernois, the Duc de Duras, the Comte de Maillebois, the Marquis de Courtenvaux, the Duc de Coigny, and the Marquis d'Entraigues.

Actresses : Madame de Pompadour, the dowager Duchesse de Brancas, Madame Trusson, *femme-de-chambre* to the Dauphiness, the Comtesse de Livry, Madame de Pons, Madame de Sassenage, and the beautiful Madame de Marchais, who was distantly related to the favourite, having married a son of the scheming Binet.

At its first meeting for the transaction of business, the company elected as its stage-manager the Duc de la Vallière; as assistant stage-manager, the Academician Moncrif, the historian of cats; and as its secretary and prompter, the Abbé de la Garde, Madame de Pompadour's librarian. Two professional actresses from the Comédie Française were engaged to superintend the rehearsals and give the less experienced members the benefit of their advice.

The orchestra was composed partly of amateur and partly of professional musicians. Among the former were the Prince de Dombes, who played the bassoon; Courtaumer, the King's cloak-bearer, a violinist of some skill; and a cousin of Madame de Pompadour, a certain M. Ferrand, whose speciality was the harpsichord. Among the professional artistes may be mentioned the celebrated Jéliotte of the Opera, the happy and discreet

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conqueror of the most beautiful ladies in Paris,¹ who had given Madame de Pompadour her first music lessons, and Mondonville, the choirmaster of the royal chapel. Rebel, a famous violinist, was the conductor.

Opera was played as well as the drama, but, as only three members of the original company—Madame de Pompadour herself, the Duchesse de Brancas, and the Duc d'Ayen—had voices sufficiently powerful to warrant them performing in public, their choice in this direction was at first somewhat limited. Later, however, the voices of Madame Trusson and Madame de Marchais improved sufficiently for them to undertake small parts, and the vocalists were further strengthened by the inclusion of the Vicomte de Rohan and the Marquis de la Salle.² The chorus was chosen from the choir of the royal chapel, in order of seniority, so as to prevent jealousy.

Ballets were frequently performed, and for this purpose the services of a number of children from nine to twelve years old were engaged. They were selected and trained by Dehesse, an actor from the Comédie Italienne.

There were also four *danseurs seuls*, all of whom were amateurs. The Marquis de Courtenvaux, the *premier*, the Duc de Beauvron, the Comte de Langeron, and the Comte de Melfort, the lover of the beautiful Duchesse de Chartres.

Pérot painted the scenery; Perronet, the Worth

¹ *Mémoires de Marmontel*, i. 355.

² "The government of a little province called La Marche, which became vacant through the death of the Marquis de Saint-Germain, has been given to the Marquis de la Salle. Several Maréchals de France and a number of senior lieutenant-generals asked for it, but M. de la Salle makes himself very agreeable in the Cabinets, and sings in a very superior manner in the Operas which are performed there."—*Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson*, vii. 241.

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of those days, designed the costumes; and Notrelle, "the most renowned artiste of the capital," attended to the coiffures.¹

None of the accessories of a well-appointed theatre were wanting. The list, which we extract from the *Magasin pittoresque* of July 1842, is a curious one. It includes an assortment of masks, garlands and bouquets of artificial flowers, tin chains, horsehair crests, boots *à la romaine*, gold and silver spangles, artificial jewellery, pasteboard fowls and turkeys, dancing shoes and silk stockings, 12 staves of blue and silver, 12 gourds, 4 spades, 4 silver crosiers, 4 tambourines, 4 crowns of laurel, 2 distaffs, 2 German flutes, a bow and a quiver of arrows, a pasteboard club, an iron sickle, a perfuming pan, a sceptre gilded at the end, a trumpet plated with gold, a pasteboard lyre, a magician's wand, a wheel of fortune (valued at 4 louis), and a thunderbolt.

Finally, the theatre had its tickets. "On a card the size of a playing-card, the clever pencil of Cochin² has

¹ "Some years later Notrelle inserted in an almanack the following advertisement: 'The sieur Notrelle, perruquier to the *Menus Plaisirs* of the King and to all the theatres, Place du Carrousel, has exhausted the resources of his art to imitate the wigs of gods, demons, heroes, shepherds, tritons, cyclopes, naiads, furies, &c. Although these persons, both mythological and real, were unacquainted with the custom, his powerful imagination has enabled him to divine what would have been their taste in this direction, had the fashion of wearing wigs existed in their time. To these sublime wigs he has added a collection of beards and moustaches of all colours and shapes, both ancient and modern.'"—Jullien's *Histoire du Théâtre de Madame de Pompadour*, p. 7.

² Charles Nicolas Cochin, the younger, a member of a famous family of painters and engravers. He accompanied Madame de Pompadour's brother on his tour in Italy in 1749 (see chap. ix.), and on his return was made a chevalier of the Order of Saint-Michel and Secretary to the Academy of Painters.

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depicted, on a balcony supported by trestles, a Columbine, the corsage of whose dress is ornamented with bows of ribbon, like the gown of Silvia in La Tour's portrait.¹ She affects astonishment and plays with her fan, while at her side Léander, in ruffles, bowing to the wooden balustrade, declares his love under the nose of Pierrot, who pushes his head through the curtain behind them. Such was the Open Sesame to the theatre of Madame de Pompadour."²

These artistic tickets were far from easy to obtain. The spectators were specially chosen by the King, and as it was deemed a great honour to be named by him, the favourite, with whom, of course, the selection really lay, was besieged with applications for admission, and became more powerful than ever. The audience was usually composed of Madame de Pompadour's relatives and friends, what might, in fact, be called her court—her brother, M. de Tournephe, the Abbé de Bernis, Madame d'Estrades, Madame du Roure, and the Maréchale de Mirepoix, who had a place reserved for her use in the box occupied by the actresses who were not on duty, together with any influential persons whom the marchioness might wish to propitiate, Maréchal Saxe, President Hénault, and the Comte de Guerchy, the nobleman who had such a terrible time when Ambassador at St. James's, some years later, owing to the machinations of the adventurer d'Eon.

But great as was the desire among the courtiers to witness the performances, it was nothing in comparison with their anxiety to be allowed to appear, even for a single night, upon the stage of the little theatre. The

¹ La Tour's pastel of Madame de Pompadour, now in the Louvre.

² *Les Maîtresses de Louis XV.*, i. 227.

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smallest parts, the mere utility parts, were eagerly contended for, and became the objects of flattery, intrigues, and even bribery.

“At the time that plays were being performed in the private apartments,” says Madame du Hausset, “I obtained a lieutenancy for one of my relations in a singular manner, which shows the importance which even the greatest people attach to the slightest access to the Court. Madame (Madame de Pompadour) did not like to ask anything of M. d’Argenson,¹ and, being pressed by my family, who could not understand that, situated as I was, it would be difficult for me to obtain a little command for a good soldier, I determined to go and ask the count myself.

“I made my request and presented a memorial. He received me coldly and gave me vague answers. I went out, and the Marquis de V——², who was in his cabinet and had heard my petition, followed me.

“‘You want,’ said he to me, ‘to obtain a commission; there happens to be one vacant, which has been promised me for one of my protégés, but if you are willing to do me a favour in return or obtain one for me, I will give it to you. I want to be a police officer, and you have it in your power to procure me that place.’

“I told him I did not understand the purport of his jest.

“‘I will explain,’ said he. ‘*Tartuffe* is going to be performed in the Cabinets, and there is the part of a police officer in it, which only consists of a very few lines. Prevail upon the marchioness to give that part to me, and the commission is yours.’

¹ Comte d’Argenson, the Minister for War.

² The Marquis de Voyer, d’Argenson’s eldest son.

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“I promised nothing, but I related the story to Madame, who said she would see if it could be arranged. The thing was done; I obtained the commission and M. de V—— thanked Madame as if she had made him a duke.”¹

Molière had the honour of inaugurating the Théâtre des Petits Appartements. On January 17, 1747, *Tartuffe*, which had been carefully rehearsed at Choisy, during a visit arranged for the express purpose of practising it at leisure, was performed by the marchioness and her company. The audience, including the King, who had desired that all etiquette should be laid aside on these occasions, only numbered fifteen persons, among whom were the Marquis de Vandières, the favourite's brother, Marshal Saxe, and Madame d'Estrades.² The evening was a complete success, and at the conclusion of one of the acts the King was heard to say to Madame de Pompadour, “You are the most charming woman in France.”

Unfortunately, no record of the cast at this performance is in existence, but when the play was repeated the following year, it was as follows:—

<i>Mme. Pernelle</i>	.	.	Mme. la Marquise de Sassenage.
<i>M. Orgon</i>	.	.	M. le Marquis de Croissy.
<i>Mme. Orgon</i>	.	.	Mme. la Duchesse de Brancas.
<i>Tartuffe</i>	.	.	M. le Duc de la Vallière.
<i>Damis</i>	.	.	M. le Comte de Maillebois.
<i>Mariane</i>	.	.	Mme. la Comtesse de Pons.
<i>Cléante</i>	.	.	M. le Marquis de Gontaut.
<i>Valere</i>	.	.	M. le Duc de Duras.

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset*, (edit. 1825), p. 177.

² *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, viii. 86.

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Dorine, suiv. de Mariane Mme. la Marquise de Pompadour.

M. Loyal . . . M. le Marquis de Meuse.

L'Exempt . . . M. le Marquis de Voyer.

On the 24th of the same month two pieces, La Chaussée's *Le Préjugé à la mode* and Dufresny's *L'Esprit de Contradiction* were played; and after the supper which followed the performance there was a ball, at which the King danced several country-dances, and Madame de Pompadour a minuet with the Comte de Clermont.

Three days later, Dancourt's *Les Trois Cousines* was given, the audience on this occasion including the Dauphin and Dauphiness. Madame de Pompadour, we learn, was "ravishing" in the part of Collette; while the Duchesse de Brancas "played correctly, but with an absence of warmth," as the miller's wife. The evening concluded with a one-act burlesque, which, however, appears to have fallen rather flat, in spite of the singing of the favourite and the Duc d'Ayen, and the artistic dancing of the Marquis de Courtenvaux and the Duc de Villeroi.

The company more than retrieved its reputation the following month in an opera called *Érigone*, of which Mondonville, the choirmaster of the royal chapel, was part composer. This was so successful that the King ordered it to be repeated a few days later, when, for the first time, the Queen and her daughters graced the proceedings with their presence. That observant old gentleman, the Duc de Luynes, was also among the spectators. His criticism of the performers is interesting:—

"Madame de Pompadour," he says, "excelled every one. She has not a powerful voice, but it is a very

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agreeable one, and she sings with much expression. Madame de Brancas has a powerful voice, but she does not sing with the same expression as Madame de Pompadour. The dances, which were arranged by Dehesse of the Comédie Italienne, were very charming, but none of the ladies danced with such grace as Madame de Pompadour.”¹

This highly successful evening brought to a close the first season of the Théâtre des Petits Appartements. The noble performers retired amid salvoes of applause, while the professionals, who had so ably seconded their efforts, were liberally—some people thought rather too liberally—rewarded.²

The favourite was universally acclaimed the heroine of the season, and had every reason to feel satisfied with her experiment. She had appeared to her royal lover in the triple rôle of a finished actress, a charming cantatrice, and a graceful dancer. So many talents re-awakened the affection of the monarch, which, to tell the truth, had begun to cool. Madame de Pompadour had attained her end, and confirmed her authority.³

The performances did not recommence until the winter,

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, viii. 147.

² “They have given two thousand livres to the authors of a wretched ballet [*Érigone*], which has been performed for the glorification of Madame de Pompadour. Dehesse, an Italian actor, who arranges the ballets for the King’s little comedies at Versailles, has received two thousand crowns. People are complaining about this, and it must be admitted that the state of affairs certainly does not warrant such extravagance.”—*Mémoires du Marquis d’Argenson*.

Writing under date November 16, 1749, the marquis tells us that one Tribou, a singing-master, had received a pension of eight hundred livres on the royal treasury, and Legard, a composer, “with an agreeable voice,” another of fifteen hundred.

³ Jullien’s *Histoire du Théâtre de Madame de Pompadour*, p. 13.

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the intervening months being utilised to make several necessary alterations in the theatre. The space reserved for the orchestra was enlarged, and several dressing-rooms were constructed behind the stage for the accommodation of the players, who had hitherto been compelled to "make up" in apartments at some little distance from the scene of action, an arrangement which the ladies of the company had found very inconvenient.

The theatre reopened at the end of December with Dufresny's *Le Mariage fait et rompu*, in which it is interesting to note that Madame de Pompadour did not perform. She appeared, however, in the title-part in a pastoral called *Ismène*, written for the occasion by Rebel, the conductor of the orchestra, and Moncrif, the Academician, and sang "ravishingly," while the Marquis de Courtenvaux danced "with his accustomed grace." The King was much delighted; he sent for the author and composer and warmly complimented them, and left the theatre exclaiming, "What a delightful piece!" The Parisians, it may be remarked, did not endorse the royal judgment, and when *Ismène* was produced at the Opera, with the celebrated Madame Vestris in the principal part, it was very badly received indeed.¹

Another success awaited Madame de Pompadour and her company in Voltaire's *Enfant prodigue*, in which the favourite played Lise.² This was to have been repeated

¹ Jullien's *Histoire du Théâtre de Madame de Pompadour*, p. 18.

² Voltaire, who was in disgrace at this moment, does not appear to have received an invitation to witness the production of his comedy—a privilege usually accorded to the authors of plays and operas performed at the Théâtre des Petits Appartements; but he was present when his *Alzire* was given in February 1750, on which occasion his vanity was deeply wounded by hearing the King express his astonishment that the man who wrote *Alzire* could be the author of such a miserable play as *Orestes*.

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at the beginning of March, but a mysterious and tragical affair, in which a member of the company and the relative of another were concerned, caused it to be abandoned. At the very moment when Notrelle, the perruquier, was arranging the coiffures of the players, a messenger came from the King, countermanding the play and announcing that the Comte de Coigny, a great favourite of the monarch, had been found lying dead at a lonely spot on the road between Versailles and Paris. Barbier gives the following version of this affair:—

“On the night of Sunday the 3rd to Monday the 4th a terrible accident occurred on the Versailles road. It had been colder for some days past than it had been all the winter. For three or four days it had been snowing, and on Sunday night the snow fell in great flakes, entirely covering the ground. It is customary for the nobility to travel by night rather than by day; nothing stops them, and it is *le bon air*. The Comte de Coigny, lieutenant-general, colonel-general of dragoons, *ordon-bleu*, governor of the Château of Choisy, favourite of the King, son of the Maréchal de Coigny, who is still living, was supping at the house of Mademoiselle —, princess of the blood, whose ‘*ami*’ he has always been—a fact which has contributed to his advancement—and was in the highest spirits.

“As he was to make one of the King’s hunting-party on the Monday morning, he entered his postchaise, accompanied by a footman, an hour or two after midnight, with the intention of going to Versailles. Mademoiselle pointed out to him that it was madness to make the journey at such an hour, and that it would be much wiser to sleep in Paris and start at seven o’clock in the morning. His postilion told him in Mademoiselle’s

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courtyard that he was frozen and blinded by the snow, and could not see his way. 'You are always afraid, you and the others,' was the reply. 'Start at once.'

"Opposite the village of Auteuil, there are ditches on the right side of the road. The postilion could neither see nor feel his way, and the result was that the chaise was upset into the ditch. Some say that M. de Coigny's head came in contact with the window, and that he broke his neck; others that he received a fatal wound on the back of the head; anyhow, he died on the spot. The footman, although he was injured, has come to Paris to inform the people of the house, in order that they might send for the body. As for the chaise, it has been left in the ditch, and has been seen by every one who passed by there in the morning.

"The King asked on Monday morning if Coigny was at Versailles, and was informed that his carriage had been upset during the night while on his way thither. He inquired if he was injured; to which they sadly replied that he was and very dangerously. On learning that he was dead, the King retired to his closet, and has countermanded the hunting-party, and even the comedy which was to have been performed in the evening at Versailles."¹

But a day or two later Barbier has quite another tale to tell.

"There is different news. They say that it was a duel, and that it was agreed to upset the chaise into the ditch. They speak of the Prince de Dombes, the Comte d'Eu, the Duc de Luxembourg, and M. de Fitzjames."²

¹ *Journal de Barbier*, iv. 285 et seq.

² *Ibid.*, iv. 287.

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It was, as a matter of fact, in a duel with the Prince de Dombes, the nobleman who played the bassoon so skilfully in the orchestra of the Théâtre des Petits Appartements, that the unfortunate Coigny had met his death ; and this is how it came about.

Coigny and the prince, who was the eldest son of the Duc du Maine and grandson of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan, were playing at the King's card-table at Versailles. The count lost a good deal more than he could afford and his temper as well, and remarked, loud enough for Dombes, who was the principal winner, to hear : "One must be a bastard to have such good fortune."

The prince, though boiling with rage at so gross an insult, controlled himself by a great effort, and, without laying down his cards, leant across the table and said in a low voice, "You, of course, intend, monsieur, for us to meet immediately?"

"When and where you please," answered the other, insolently.

"On the road at daybreak."

They met, accordingly, at a lonely spot on the banks of the Seine and close to the village of Auteuil, on ground which was covered with a thick carpet of snow ; and there, just as the March morning was beginning to break, they crossed swords. After a few passes, Coigny received a mortal wound and expired almost immediately. The chaise in which he had travelled was then, as had been previously arranged, overturned into the ditch by the roadside, in the hope of diverting public curiosity ; but the truth soon leaked out, and for some days nothing else was talked of in Paris and Versailles. Numbers of people

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visited the scene of the duel, which was henceforth known as the *Point du Jour* (Break of Day).¹

Mademoiselle —, Barbier informs us, took the matter very much to heart at the time, but in a month had forgotten all about her ill-fated lover. Nor was the grief of the King and Court of longer duration. A week later, Madame de Pompadour appeared in a ravishing costume as Almasis in the opera of that name, while the Prince de Dombes occupied his usual place in the orchestra and played his bassoon as tranquilly as ever.

The Théâtre des Petits Appartements had two very serious drawbacks. In the first place, it was too small to accommodate more than a handful of spectators, and, in the second, the stage was so far away from the auditorium, that the majority of the players had considerable difficulty in making themselves heard. To remedy these defects, advantage was taken of the annual autumn visit of the Court to Fontainebleau to construct an entirely new theatre, which was fitted up in the cage of the Ambassadors' Staircase, and is described by the Duc de Luynes as "a masterpiece of mechanism, which could be set up in twenty-four hours and taken to pieces in fourteen."

This building was not constructed without great expense, and it was commonly reported that the favourite's new toy had cost two million livres. On this being told to the marchioness one day while her toilette was being performed, she angrily exclaimed, "What is this that I hear about the new theatre which the King has just built on the Grand Staircase costing him two million? I desire it to be known

¹ *Journal de Barbier*, iv. 288.

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that it has not cost twenty thousand crowns, and I should like to know whether his Majesty cannot spend that sum on his amusement."

But whatever the expense may have been, there seems to have been no disputing the fact that, when the new theatre opened its doors on November 27, 1748, it was a very convenient and charming house. It had accommodation for forty musicians and the same number of spectators. Facing the stage were the seats reserved for the King and the Royal Family, while to the right and left were two balconies, which were occupied by the most favoured courtiers. Occasional guests were usually given seats behind the orchestra. The theatre was upholstered in blue and silver, and the same colours had been used in the decorations, which had been executed by Boucher.

The piece chosen for the opening night was *Les Surprises de L'Amour*, which consisted of two ballets, in the first of which Madame de Pompadour appeared as Urania, and in the second as Venus. As Urania she wore:—

"Blue taffeta skirt, printed and embroidered with silver star spangles, both large and small, arranged garland fashion; the skirt being lined with Lyons linen and edged with a wide silver net border. Drapery, loose both on bodice and skirt, of English silver point lace, trimmed with silver net and blue chenille; white taffeta lining. Blue taffeta mantle, printed with silver stars and bordered with wide silver net-band."

As Venus she wore:—

"Bodice and basques of blue mosaic material, trimmed with silver net and blue chenille. Blue silver printed taffeta mantle, edged with scallops of

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painted taffeta, trimmed with silver net and blue chenille, linen-lined; the said train depending from the robe to make it serviceable for 'princesses' parts. White taffeta skirt, with large painted taffeta scallops, trimmed with silver net and blue chenille, and *enroulements* of double net blue chenille, with rosettes of ribbon, silver-fringed."

After all the pains which must have been bestowed on these costumes, it is sad to relate that they failed to produce the desired effect, and that the King was ungallant enough to remark that "he preferred comedy"; but it would appear that the Duc d'Ayen, who played Adonis to the favourite's Venus, was anything but a success in the part of that ill-starred youth. However, compensation was not far distant, as Quinault's *La Mère Coquette*, which was played a few days later, was warmly commended by his Majesty, who was also graciously pleased to approve of "a most diverting pantomime" which succeeded it.

Matters did not always progress with perfect smoothness in the Théâtre des Petits Appartements. One evening, the Duchesse de Brancas, who, next to Madame de Pompadour, was by far the most able vocalist in the company, happened to hear at a *bal-masqué* her own and her colleagues' acting criticised so adversely, that in disgust she resigned her post and remained out of the bill for a whole season. At the beginning of the year 1749 there was an unfortunate accident, in which one of the stage carpenters lost his life and two others were injured; and, about the same time, there was a violent quarrel between Madame de Pompadour and her manager, the Duc de la Vallière, on the one side, and the Duc de Richelieu on the

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other, which threatened to quite spoil the performances.

Richelieu who, through his friendship with the Duchesse de Châteauroux, had during her ascendancy practically governed the King and the country, had after the decease of that lady endeavoured to replace her by the Duchesse de Rochechouart or Madame de la Poplinière, the wife of a wealthy financier; but his opportunities for intrigues were just then much curtailed, owing to the long absences from Versailles which his military duties necessitated, and Madame d'Étioles had secured the coveted post. Richelieu was, in consequence, anything but amicably disposed towards the favourite, and, on his return from Italy in 1748, tried to induce Madame de Flavacourt, another of the too famous sisters De Nesle, to enter the lists against her, but was informed by the lady in question that "she preferred the esteem of her contemporaries to the favour of the King"—a sentiment which would have done the speaker infinite honour, had it not subsequently transpired that her husband, who was of an excessively jealous disposition, had threatened to kill her the moment he had reason to suspect her fidelity.¹

But although it was beyond Richelieu's power, for the moment at any rate, to oust Madame de Pompadour, he was able to harass and annoy her in many ways. Few men were more adept in the art of making themselves intolerable to the objects of their dislike, while maintaining towards them an attitude of perfect friendliness, and this art Richelieu practised

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Richelieu*, vii. 85; Martin's *Histoire de France*, xv. 276.

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unsparingly against the favourite. At the King's supper-parties and at the marchioness's own, to which, in deference to Louis's wishes, she was compelled to invite him, he would sometimes exasperate her almost beyond endurance by his familiarity; at others he would adopt a patronising tone towards her, which was even more galling. In vain did she beg the King to exclude him; but the latter could not make up his mind to do without Richelieu, besides which the duke was a dangerous person for even a king to offend. So he would merely shrug his shoulders and reply, "You do not know M. de Richelieu. If you send him out by the door, he will return by the chimney."¹

At length, Richelieu, gathering boldness through impunity, ventured to attack Madame de Pompadour in her holy of holies, the Théâtre des Petits Appartements. The theatre had been fitted up, as we have mentioned, in the cage of the Ambassadors' Staircase; and the First Gentlemen of the Bedchamber, of whom Richelieu was one, pretended that it came within their jurisdiction, and that, consequently, the performances ought not to take place except with their permission. Hitherto, however, they had contented themselves with sending a formal protest to the stage-manager, the Duc de la Vallière, which that nobleman appears to have ignored. But when in January 1749, Richelieu entered upon his year of office, he at once issued an order prohibiting the musicians of the King's band, who were under the control of the First Gentlemen, and of whom the professional

¹ This was probably in allusion to an incident in Richelieu's intrigue with Madame de la Poplinière, which will be found related at considerable length in the *Mémoires de Marmontel*.

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part of the orchestra of the Petits Appartements was mainly composed, from accepting any engagements without his sanction; and on the Duc de la Vallière venturing to remonstrate, treated him with the greatest insolence and "concluded by calling him a fool and snapping his fingers in his face."

The stage-manager, of course, complained to Madame de Pompadour, who was highly indignant and hastened to lay the matter before the King. Louis appears to have acted on this occasion with commendable tact. Instead of ordering the duke to withdraw his prohibition to the musicians, or reprimanding him for his treatment of La Vallière, he at first declined to interfere, and then one day on his return from hunting, when Richelieu, in his capacity as First Gentleman, was removing his boots, a number of courtiers as usual standing round, suddenly remarked, "By-the-bye, M. de Richelieu, how many times have you been in the Bastille?"

"Three times, Sire,"¹ answered the duke, without changing countenance.

Nevertheless, he deemed it prudent to take the hint, and, satisfied with the annoyance he had already caused his enemy, pretended that he had raised the difficulty not out of any ill-feeling towards the Duc de la Vallière, still less towards Madame de Pompadour, but solely for the sake of his own honour and that of his colleagues of the Bedchamber, as successive encroachments upon their

¹ In 1711, "that he might have leisure to reflect on the imprudence of neglecting his wife in order to attach himself to princesses"; in 1716, for fighting a duel in the middle of the Rue Saint Thomas du Louvre with the Comte de Gacé, in which both combatants were wounded, and Richelieu narrowly escaped with his life; and in 1719, for his share in the Cellamare conspiracy.

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privileges, if allowed to pass without protest, might easily lead to abuses, and that nothing had been farther from his thoughts than to cause inconvenience to any member of the company of the *Petits Appartements*.

Madame de Pompadour, on her side, was fain to accept the duke's explanations; and a compromise was effected, whereby it was arranged that in future none of the musicians belonging to the King's band should take part in the performances of the *Petits Appartements* without a written permission from the First Gentlemen, the latter undertaking never to withhold the same without good and sufficient reason.

This dispute, so trifling in itself, had one important result: it put an end to the quarrel between Richelieu and the marchioness. The former reluctantly came to the conclusion that Madame de Pompadour was too firmly established in Louis's good graces for him to entertain any hope of ousting her, and that if he wished to retain the monarch's favour, it would be as well to accept the situation; while the favourite recognised that in Richelieu she had a dangerous and resourceful enemy, whom it would be wise to conciliate without delay. A few weeks later, we find d'Argenson announcing that "a grand and formal reconciliation had taken place between the marchioness and the marshal."¹

The performances of the *Théâtre des Petits Appartements* went on until April 1750. They began, as a rule, after the return of the Court from the autumn hunting-parties at Fontainebleau and continued until Lent; were resumed after Easter, and concluded at the end of September. Two motives decided Louis to put a stop to the plays. One was the immense expense which they

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson*, iii. 246.

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entailed;¹ the other was the disapproval with which, from the very first, they were regarded by the public, who were not unnaturally indignant at such extravagance when the financial condition of the country left so much to be desired; and expressed their resentment in their favourite manner by lampooning the actors and actresses, and even the King himself. Accordingly in January 1751 the venue was changed to the Château of Bellevue, which Madame de Pompadour had just built for herself, and where one of her first cares had been to construct a miniature theatre. Here, in March 1753, Rousseau's *Le Devin du Village* was performed, with the marchioness as

¹ The following list of expenses for a single year, which M. Jullien gives in his interesting work, *Histoire du Théâtre de Madame de Pompadour*, will convey some idea of what this little amusement must have cost the Royal Treasury. It is extracted from the *Livre Rouge*, a register of the secret expenses of the Court, which fell into the hands of the National Convention in 1793, and was published by their orders, presumably to cast odium upon the Monarchy.

“To M. le Duc de la Vallière for the plays—

February 22, 1750	.	.	.	20,000 livres.
March 22, „	.	.	.	20,000 „
April 19, „	.	.	.	20,000 „
May 17, „	.	.	.	30,000 „
June 7, „	.	.	.	30,000 „
July 12, „	.	.	.	30,000 „
August 9, „	.	.	.	30,000 „
September 20, „	.	.	.	25,000 „

To Hebert for various articles of jewellery presented to those who have played in the Théâtre des Petits Appartements,

May 16, 1751	.	.	.	25,203 „
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230,203 livres.”

In 1748 the Duc de la Vallière admitted that the expenses for that year had reached half a million livres, an estimate which was generally believed to be much below the sum actually expended.

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Colin, the only occasion on which we find her in a masculine rôle. D'Argenson declares that this single representation cost the King fifty thousand crowns; but we are inclined to think that this is one of the chronicler's statements which should be taken with a grain of salt.

Madame de Pompadour and her colleagues did not find at Bellevue the vogue which they had obtained at Versailles. The theatre was too small to accommodate more than a very few spectators, and the actors, accustomed to the applause of a comparatively large audience, soon grew tired of playing for themselves alone. Thus the performances lost in their eyes much of their former charm. The members began to drop off; the intervals between the plays grew longer and longer; and, at length, in the spring of 1753, it was decided to disband what was left of the company.

The Théâtre des Petits Appartements had lasted a little over six years.¹

¹ Jullien's *Histoire du Théâtre de Madame de Pompadour*, p. 66.

CHAPTER VII

Madame de Pompadour's power increasing—Animosity between the favourite and Maurepas—Prince Charles Edward and the French Government—"Unheard of, inhuman, and barbarous treatment" which he receives—Indignation in Paris—The *Poissonades* recommence—Maurepas suspected of inspiring them—The Lieutenant of Police professes himself unable to discover the writers—A cruel insult—Fury of the favourite—Interview between her and Maurepas—Maurepas's conversation with Maréchal de Villars—Violent scene between the marchioness and the Minister—Madame de Pompadour urges the King to disgrace Maurepas—And declares that he intends to poison her—Maurepas is exiled—The *Poissonades* continue—Fate of Desforgues—Danry *alias* Latude—His impudent attempt to impose upon Madame de Pompadour—His long imprisonment and various escapes—His release in June 1777—His second imprisonment—His apotheosis after his release in March 1784—His action against Madame de Pompadour's heirs.

IN the midst of these amusements and, indeed, in no small degree by their help, Madame de Pompadour was gradually extending the sphere of her influence, and every day saw her assume a tone of more assured authority and approach a step nearer to that almost undisputed power which she was eventually to exercise. We have seen how she had succeeded in bringing about the fall of Orry and of the Marquis d'Argenson, and in the spring of 1749 she contrived to rid herself of her enemy Maurepas.

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Time had wrought no change in the hostile attitude which the Minister of Marine had from the very first adopted towards the mistress; and, not content with ridiculing her pretensions and her person whenever an opportunity presented itself, he had devoted himself to stirring up the younger members of the Royal Family, with whom he was a great favourite, against her, and had moreover gone out of his way to protect her old antagonist, the Bishop of Mirepoix, whose destruction, d'Argenson tells us, Madame de Pompadour had sworn, "as Herodias did that of John the Baptist."

Such being the case, it was only to be expected that, as the favourite's power grew, she should treat the Minister with increasing hauteur, and exult in flaunting before his eyes her influence over the King. On one occasion it happened that a *lettre-de-cachet* had been launched against a protégé of hers. She desired that it should be cancelled, and, Maurepas coming to wait upon the King, formulated her demand by remarking curtly, "Monsieur — must be allowed to return."

Maurepas raised some objections, addressing his remarks to Louis, and then, turning to Madame de Pompadour, added, "It is necessary, Madame, for the order to come from the King."

"Do what Madame wishes," interposed Louis, with a sigh of resignation.

At the close of the year 1748 an event occurred, which was the means of bringing matters between the marchioness and Maurepas to a crisis.

By a clause in the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, the Government had pledged itself to expel Prince Charles Edward, the Young Pretender, from France. The youthful adventurer was very popular in Paris, where

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the ladies, we are assured, literally "pulled caps" over him. He dressed splendidly, affected an air of gaiety, in spite of his reverses of fortune, and entertained in truly royal fashion, on one occasion ordering a service of plate worth one hundred thousand livres for a dinner-party which he gave to some of his fair admirers. The Government had repeatedly requested him to leave France, offering him an asylum in the Canton of Fribourg, together with a guard of honour and a liberal pension, but he had haughtily refused, and talked about imitating Charles XII., and standing a siege in his house, as the Swedish King did at Bender, rather than comply with their demands.

At length, the patience of the Ministry was exhausted, and on December 9 the prince received an intimation that he must leave the country within three days; but of this warning he took not the slightest notice. Two days later, as he was entering the Opera House, he was arrested by the Duc de Biron at the head of a company of the Guards, his sword taken from him, and his hands bound with a silken cord. After which he was carried head foremost, "like a corpse," as he expressed it, to a coach which was in waiting, and driven to Vincennes, while his attendants, who had also been arrested, were removed to the Bastille. At Vincennes Charles was kept in confinement for some days, and then liberated, on his passing his word to leave French territory. He betook himself to Avignon, which was not French territory, as it belonged to the Pope, where he arrived at the beginning of the following year "in good health, notwithstanding the unheard of, barbarous, and inhuman treatment I have met with."

Meanwhile this "unheard of, barbarous, and inhuman

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treatment" had excited a perfect storm of indignation in Paris. Contemporary French writers speak of the "meanness and perfidy" of the Government, and accuse them of exploiting the unfortunate young man for their own ends, and disowning him the moment he ceased to be of use to them. The Dauphin, we are told, wept and remonstrated with Louis in public. Libels and lampoons rained on the King and his Ministers. But it was for Madame de Pompadour that the brunt of the popular resentment was reserved. It was currently reported that she had said to Saint-Séverin, the French plenipotentiary, as he was on the point of setting out for Aix-la-Chapelle, "In any event, remember, monsieur, that you are not to return without peace; the King desires it, whatever it may cost." And to this was ascribed the humiliating clause with regard to the Pretender, and also that relating to the fortifications of Dunkirk, which had caused almost equal dissatisfaction. The *Poissonades* broke out again, exceeding, if possible, in bitterness those which had previously appeared. Maurepas was suspected of having invoked the satiric muse on more than one occasion, a suspicion which was confirmed by the behaviour of Berryer, the Lieutenant of Police, who, when some of the favourite's friends were complaining of his failure to discover the authors of the obnoxious verses, replied, "Gentlemen, I know Paris as well as it is possible to know it, but I do not know Versailles."

The ordinary *Poissonades* Madame de Pompadour might have ignored, indeed, she was probably becoming inured to them; but, at length, one appeared which went beyond all the bounds of decency.

One evening at Marly the marchioness found under

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her serviette a quatrain ridiculing her upon an infirmity, very common in women of delicate constitution, from which she had long been a sufferer, but which she had been so careful to conceal, that she was under the impression that no one was aware of it. The haughty woman's fury and mortification may be conceived when she learned that copies of these atrocious verses had been distributed in Paris, and that her infirmity was now common property.

The police as usual professed themselves unable to discover the culprit, whereupon Madame de Pompadour resolved to take matters into her own hands, and, in company with her cousin, Madame d'Estrades, presented herself at Maurepas's hôtel and demanded to see the Minister on business which would admit of no delay.

The interview, as reported by d'Argenson, was a brief one.

"People shall no longer say," began the marchioness, "that I am in the habit of sending for the Ministers; I go to find them. When are you likely to discover the writer of these verses?"¹

"When I discover him," drily replied Maurepas, "I shall inform the King."

"You set small store by the King's mistresses, Monsieur," rejoined the favourite.

¹ Maurepas combined the offices of Minister of Marine and Minister for Paris, and in the latter capacity had authority over the police. This fact no doubt accounted for Berryer's inability to discover the writers of the lampoons. Maurepas in his *Mémoires* denies that he was the author of the quatrain which so exasperated Madame de Pompadour and throws the blame upon Richelieu, who, he says, wrote the verses and caused them to be circulated in Paris, with the object of annoying the favourite, and, at the same time, injuring Maurepas whom he hated, and upon whom he contrived that suspicion should fall.

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"I have always respected them, Madame, *for something which they once were*," was the biting retort, and with this the conversation ended.

Soon after Madame de Pompadour had taken her departure, Maurepas happened to call upon his friend, Maréchal de Villars, who, having heard of the favourite's visit to the Minister of Marine that morning, said to him, with a smile—

"You have had a fair visitor to-day?"

"Yes," answered Maurepas, laughing, "the marchioness; her visit will bring her bad luck. I remember that Madame de Mailly also came to see me two days before she received her dismissal. As for Madame de Châteauroux, all the world knows that I poisoned her.¹ I bring misfortune to them all."

But Maurepas was wrong. History on this occasion did not repeat itself. It was for himself, and not for the mistress, that misfortune was in store. Secure in the favour of the King, as the only Minister who had ever yet succeeded in rendering business "amusing," and in that of the Queen and Dauphin, the former of whom is said to have loved him "as a son"—a rather singular comparison, seeing that Maurepas was the elder of the two—he flattered himself that not even Madame de Pompadour was strong enough to overthrow him; but he had little idea of the resources of his adversary.

The interview we have described was followed by a declaration of open war on the part of the marchioness. A violent scene took place, in which, unrestrained by the

¹ At the time of Madame de Châteauroux's death, a report was spread that she had been poisoned by Maurepas. The only justification for this was that the lady had died rather suddenly, and that the Minister had visited her a few days before her death, with a message from the King.

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presence of the King, she branded the Minister as a "liar" and a "knave." From morning until night she importuned Louis to dismiss her enemy, pointing out that Maurepas had injured him in his threefold capacity as King, lover, and father. It was he, she declared, who was responsible for the lampoons which had so long plagued the sovereign and his Ministers. It was he who had composed the shameful verses which insulted the monarch in the person of his mistress. It was he who had incited the younger members of the Royal Family to rebellion against their chief. Finally, finding the King disposed to make excuses for his old friend, she changed her tone and vowed that she went in fear of her life because of him; that she was convinced that he intended to poison her as he was said to have poisoned Madame de Châteauroux. She ordered her physician to sleep in her ante-chamber, so as to be at hand in case of emergency. At the King's supper-parties, she refused to partake of any dish, unless some one else had first eaten of it; while at the performances of the Théâtre des Petits Appartements, whenever she happened to feel thirsty, her physician, always now within call, was summoned to prepare her lemonade with his own hands.

These extravagances ended, as the astute favourite had foreseen, in exhausting Louis's powers of resistance, not that for a moment he believed Maurepas capable of a crime, but simply because he would have sacrificed his whole Council of State, in order to preserve the peace and quiet he desired to see reign around him. Very reluctantly he at length yielded, and in the small hours of the morning of April 25, 1749, d'Argenson, the War Minister, was roused from his slumbers by a royal

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messenger, bearing a *lettre-de-cachet*, which he was directed to deliver to Maurepas at the earliest possible moment. It was dated from Madame de Pompadour's château of La Celle, eleven o'clock the previous evening, so the marchioness had lost no time in making use of the document, which she had doubtless extracted from the King at the supper-table.

Some years before, Maurepas, half in jest, had begged Louis to give him warning when he wished to dispense with his services, in place of sending him the usual formal dismissal; and the letter which he now received was as follows:—

“I promised you that I would warn you; I keep my word. I no longer require your services, and you must hand in your resignation to M. de Saint-Florentin. You will go to Bourges; Pontchartrain is not far enough away. I give you the remainder of the week in which to make your preparations for departure. You must see no one except the members of your family. Do not send me any reply.”¹

So Madame de Pompadour triumphed over another of her enemies, and her courtiers, who had pretended to share her fears, were able to exclaim, “At last the life of the marchioness is safe!” But, notwithstanding Maurepas's disappearance, the *Poissonades* continued. The friends of the favourite declared that they were written by the exiled Minister's supporters, with the object of proving that he could not have been the author of the preceding ones; but, whether this was the case or not, it is certain that they had lost nothing of their former venom. Now, however, the police, who so long as Maurepas was in power, had, for obvious reasons,

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, x. 121.

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refrained from making too conscientious investigations, showed commendable activity, and the Bastille was soon filled with prisoners. Exemplary punishment was meted out to the principal offenders, one unfortunate rhymer, named Desforges, being sent to meditate on his temerity in the famous iron cage on Mount Saint-Michel, where he remained for several years in a miserable condition, until the Abbé de Broglie took pity upon him and obtained his release.

Although Madame de Pompadour's charges against Maurepas were absolutely devoid of foundation, and were, indeed, nothing but a ruse to rid herself of a formidable adversary, she would appear to have been really apprehensive that the popular resentment of which she was the object might take the form of some attempt upon her life, and her fears in this direction gave rise to a very remarkable episode.

There happened to be in Paris at this time a young man of twenty-three, who called himself Jean Danry. This Danry, who was the illegitimate son of a poor woman, named Jeanneton Aubrespy, of Montagnac in Languedoc, and "of a father unknown," had served for some time as an assistant-surgeon in the French army in Flanders, but was now out of employment. He seems to have been a youth of considerable intelligence, but of dissolute character, in consequence of which he had fallen into the most abject poverty. In these straits, he endeavoured to obtain money from Moreau de Séchelles, commissary of the army in Flanders, on the plea that, while devoting himself to the care of the wounded at the siege of Bergen-op-Zoom, he had been robbed of all his belongings by marauding soldiers. This experiment proved a failure, but Danry was a man of resource, and

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ere long he had hit upon another, and far more ingenious, plan for filling his empty purse.

On April 27, 1749, in a shop under the arcade of the Palais-Royal, he purchased from a small tradesman six of those little bottle-shaped toys, once known as Prince Rupert's Drops. They were globules of molten glass, which, on being thrown into cold water, had taken the shape of pears, and which, if the tapering end were suddenly snapped, crumbled into dust with a loud report. He next procured a cardboard box, in which he placed four of the crackers, binding the thin ends together with a thread which he fixed in the lid. Over the crackers he sprinkled some toilet powder, and over this again a layer of powdered vitriol and alum. The whole packet he then enclosed in a double wrapper, writing on the inner one, "I beg you, madame, to open the packet in private," and on the outer one, "To Mme. la Marquise de Pompadour, at Court."

The following evening Danry, having posted his packet, hurried off to Versailles, where he related to Gourbillon, one of the favourite's confidential servants, a most alarming story. It was to the effect that, happening to be in the gardens of the Tuileries that afternoon, he had observed two men seated in animated conversation, and, on approaching them, had heard them utter the most horrible threats against Madame de Pompadour; that when they rose, he had dogged their footsteps, which led to the post-office, where they had consigned a packet to the box; and that, being devoted to the interests of the marchioness, he had lost no time in setting out for Versailles to warn her of her danger.

Gourbillon, of course, instantly informed his mistress of what Danry had told him, and when, next day, a

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packet such as the young man had described duly arrived for the favourite, Quesnay, the marchioness's private physician, was requested to open it. This, being a cautious man, he did with the utmost care, and, after a brief examination, pronounced the contents innocuous; but, since alum and vitriol were substances capable of being employed for baneful purposes, gave it as his opinion that it was a case of a criminal design clumsily executed.¹

Both the marchioness and Louis XV., when he learned of what had happened, were seriously alarmed, and instructions were given to Berryer to spare no pains to discover the authors of the supposed plot.

Berryer put the affair into the hands of the most skilful of his detectives, one Saint-Marc, who, having ascertained that Danry had been a surgeon and that Binguet, a friend who shared his garret, was an apothecary, recommended that both should be arrested and their rooms searched.

Accordingly, on May 1, Danry and Binguet were apprehended and taken to the Bastille; while a written account of the former's adventure, which Saint-Marc had on some pretext obtained from him, was submitted to an expert in handwriting, together with the wrapper of the packet which had been sent to Versailles. The expert at once pronounced that the directions on the wrapper were undoubtedly in the same hand as the document which Saint-Marc had procured; a search in Danry's room still further confirmed the detective's suspicions, and the unfortunate young man was lost.

Now comes the extraordinary part of the affair.

Both Madame de Pompadour and the police appear to

¹ M. Funck-Brentano's *Les Légendes et les Archives de la Bastille*, p. 157 et seq.

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have been convinced that what was merely a stupid hoax was in reality a deep-laid plot against the life of the favourite, instigated by some persons of high rank, and that at the critical moment either Danry's courage had failed him, or that he had warned the marchioness, in the hope of reaping some reward from both sides. For this view of the matter and for the sufferings which it subsequently entailed upon him, Danry had only himself to thank. Being shut up in the Bastille, he was, of course, in complete ignorance that his rooms had been searched by the police, and that the remarkable similarity between the handwriting of the report he had drawn up for Saint-Marc and that upon the wrapper of Madame de Pompadour's packet had been detected. When, therefore, Berryer came to visit him, pointed out the danger he was incurring, and implored him to make a clean breast of the matter, he answered at first with lies, and then, changing his tactics, sullenly refused to reply to the questions put to him.

So matters went on for some six weeks, when Danry at length made up his mind to do what he ought to have done at the beginning and volunteered a statement which was substantially correct. But now he was not believed. He had misrepresented the facts of the case on previous occasions, and the authorities had no grounds for supposing that he was not misrepresenting them still. The only result of his confession was that his assurance that his friend Binguet was entirely innocent was accepted, and the apothecary set at liberty.

Danry, therefore, remained a prisoner, but, in accordance with Berryer's instructions, was treated with the utmost consideration. He was provided with books and tobacco, was permitted to play on the flute, and was

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informed that "he was to be allowed to want for nothing." Berryer no doubt hoped, by dint of kindness, to induce him to disclose the names of the authors of the supposed plot.

At the end of July Danry was removed to Vincennes, which, like the Bastille, was usually reserved for prisoners of good position. A few days before the philosopher Diderot had been taken thither, his *Lettres sur les aveugles* having given offence in certain influential quarters. Diderot's imprisonment seems to have been a merely nominal one; he was allowed every possible comfort, was permitted to receive his friends and walk with them in the wood, and, on more than one occasion, with the secret complicity of the governor of the fortress, the Marquis du Châtelet, he climbed over the walls of the park as soon as the shades of evening had fallen, in order to pay a visit to a fair lady in Paris, returning, however, before his gaoler came to bring him his morning coffee.

At Vincennes Danry was treated even better than had been the case in the Bastille. The best room was reserved for him; he was allowed to take exercise in the park for a couple of hours every day, and when he complained of illness, he was attended by a specialist as well as by the prison surgeon.

Meanwhile Berryer came again to see him, and advised him to write direct to Madame de Pompadour to implore her pardon. Danry followed the Minister's advice, and this is what he wrote:—

"VINCENNES, *November 4, 1749.*

"MADAME,—If wretchedness, goaded by famine, has driven me to commit a crime against your dear person, it was with no intention of doing you any injury. God

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is my witness. If the divine mercy would assure you to-day, on my behalf, how my soul repents of its grievous sin, and how for one hundred and eighty-eight days I have not ceased to weep at the sight of my iron bars, you would have pity on me. Madame, in the name of God, who is enlightening you, suffer your just indignation to be appeased at the sight of my repentance, my misery, my tears, and one day God will reward you for your humanity. You are all-powerful, madame; God has given you influence with the greatest King on all the earth, His well-beloved; he is compassionate, he is not cruel, he is a Christian. If the divine power enables me to move your magnanimity to grant me my freedom, I would rather die, or support existence on roots, than jeopardize it a second time. I have based all my hopes on your Christian charity. Give heed to my prayer; do not abandon me to my unhappy fate. My hope is in you, madame, and God will vouchsafe an answer to my prayers that your dear person may obtain all your heart's desires. I have the honour to be, with a repentance worthy of pardon, madame, your very humble and very obedient servant, DANRY."

This letter was duly forwarded to the marchioness, but produced no result, and, losing patience, Danry resolved to effect his own release and on June 15, 1750, he escaped, not in the ingenious manner related in his *Mémoires*, but by the delightfully simple process of walking through one of the gates in the park which happened to have been left unlocked. He made his way to Paris, where, with the assistance of a girl, named Annette Benoist, he eluded the police for several days, but was eventually recaptured and taken a second time to the Bastille.

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By his escape from Vincennes, Danry had, of course, increased the gravity of his offence, and he now found himself confined in one of the cells set apart for in-subordinate prisoners. On the other hand, he was still fed as well as formerly, was allowed books and papers, and enjoyed the privilege of two hours' exercise daily. Instead, however, of being grateful for these concessions and bearing his lot with patience, Danry grew more and more irritable every day, flew into violent passions with his gaolers, shrieked, tore up and down his cell like a madman, and on the books of the Bastille library, which circulated among the prisoners, wrote ribald verses against Madame de Pompadour.¹

Under these circumstances, it is scarcely surprising that his sojourn in the cells should have been prolonged till the autumn of 1751, when he was put back into a good room and given a servant to wait upon him, and subsequently, on the servant being taken ill, a companion, a certain Antoine Allègre, who had been a prisoner since May 1757.

This Allègre, curiously enough, owed his confinement to circumstances almost identical with those which had led to the incarceration of Danry. He had fabricated a story of a conspiracy against Madame de Pompadour, in which Maurepas, the Archbishop of Albi, and other influential persons were involved, and had sent a denunciation of the supposed plot to Versailles, where it was speedily discovered to be a mere figment of his own imagination.

Allègre, who had formerly been a schoolmaster at Marseilles, was a man of superior education, an excellent mathematician, and so clever with his fingers that the

¹ *Légendes et Archives de la Bastille*, p. 171.

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officials of the Bastille declared that he could make whatever he pleased. He was, however, of a passionate and quarrelsome disposition, and had on one occasion nearly killed a warder against whom he had a grievance.

After Danry and Allègre had been together for a couple of years, they resolved to endeavour to effect their escape. The difficulty of such an undertaking may be imagined when we mention that their cell was between three and four hundred feet from the ground, that both the window and the chimney were guarded by stout iron bars, and that the wall of the Bastille, through which a passage large enough to admit a man's body would have to be made, was several feet thick and patrolled by armed sentinels.

Undaunted by the apparently insuperable obstacles with which they had to contend, the two prisoners set about the construction of their famous rope-ladder, for which in after days, when Allègre had become insane and was no longer able to contradict him, Danry appropriated the whole credit, though there can be little doubt that the scheme originated with his companion, and that Danry merely carried out the latter's directions. It was a work of long patience and amazing ingenuity, made as it was by the laborious unravelling of shirts, stockings, serviettes, coverlets, and pocket-handkerchiefs, in short, of everything which could supply either silk or thread.

The night of February 25, 1756, was the one selected for their daring attempt. They had succeeded, after many weeks' weary toil, in loosening the bars in the chimney of their room, and these they now removed, and climbed to the platform above. Then, fastening their ladder to a gun-carriage, they descended into the

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fosse, where, as the Seine was in flood, the water reached to their arm-pits, and by the aid of an iron bar, which they had brought with them, levered out a large stone in the wall which separated the Bastille moat from that of the Arsenal, and escaped through the hole thus made.

The two fugitives remained for some little time in hiding in Paris, in the house of a tailor named Rouit, and then made their way across the Flemish frontier, with the intention of taking refuge in Brussels. They had deemed it advisable not to travel together, and Allègre was the first to reach their destination, whence he wrote an insolent letter to Madame de Pompadour. This, of course, gave the Paris police a clue which they were not slow to follow up, and when, in his turn, Danry arrived at Brussels, he learnt that his friend had already been re-arrested. He, accordingly, lost no time in setting out for Holland, and at Amsterdam took service with one Paul Melenteau; but the detective Saint-Marc was on his track, disguised as an Armenian merchant, and on June 1, 1756, he too was arrested on an extradition warrant, "readily and gladly granted" by the burgomaster, and a week later found himself for the third time in the Bastille.

By this second escape, the luckless young man had succeeded in making his case a very serious one; but the authorities contented themselves with directing that he should again be confined in the cells. Here he remained for more than three years. In his *Mémoires* Danry gives a most harrowing account of the sufferings he endured during this period; but it is full of the grossest exaggeration. For instance, he complains of having to eat "hard, coarse meat, either almost raw or dressed to rags; pulse, swimming in rancid butter; fish, sometimes

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putrid and always tasteless; pigs' feet, unscraped," and so forth; whereas we learn from the reports drawn up by one of the Bastille officials that he had "sworn like a trooper," because a fowl which had been served him had not been stuffed, and that on fast days he had requested that warders should be sent early to the market to buy him fish," as he never eat "eggs, artichokes, or spinach." Again, he asserts that his clothing consisted of "half-rotten rags," when he was actually being provided with "dressing-gowns lined with rabbit-skin, waistcoats lined with silk plush, fur hats, and first-rate leather breeches," and the commissary charged with the prisoner's supplies was ransacking the shops of Paris, to obtain for him "a calamanco dressing-gown with red stripes on a blue ground."¹

At the beginning of September 1759, Danry was again removed from the cells and lodged in a comfortable room. He wrote at once to the Lieutenant of Police to thank him, and to beg his acceptance of two doves, the offspring of a pair which had built their nest in his cell, "as a slight mark of his great gratitude," and to ask permission to send a similar present to Madame de Pompadour, "who might perhaps allow her heart to be touched by these two innocent pigeons."

Leave was granted him, whereupon the prisoner addressed to the marchioness the following letter:—

"MADAME,—Two pigeons used to come every day to pick the grain out of my straw; I kept them, and they gave me young ones. I venture to take the liberty of presenting you with this pair, in token of my respect

¹ *Mémoires de Latude, passim. Légendes et Archives de la Bastille*, p. 183.

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and affection. I implore you to have the goodness to accept them, with as much pleasure as I have in offering them to you.

"I have the honour to be, with the profoundest respect, madame, your very humble and very obedient servant,

"DANRY (for eleven years in the Bastille)."

But still Danry remained a prisoner, and as time went on, his temper grew more and more embittered, and the letters he addressed to the favourite are anything but complimentary.

"You will see yourself one day," he writes, "like that owl in the park at Versailles; all the birds throw water over him to choke and drown him; if the King happened to die, before two hours had passed some one would set five or six persons at your heels, and you would yourself pack to the Bastille." And again:

"Be on your guard! When your prisoners get out and publish your cruelties abroad, they will render you odious to Heaven and the whole earth."

After which, one can scarcely be surprised that the writer remained under lock and key.

When, at the beginning of the year 1764, Madame de Pompadour was taken seriously ill, Chevalier, major of the Bastille, who appears to have shown the prisoner great kindness, came to Danry's room and said to him, "Monsieur, write four words to Madame de Pompadour, and you may rest assured that in less than a week you will have recovered your freedom." Danry, however, obstinately refused, alleging that he would sooner die than again appeal to "that implacable shrew," and the opportunity was allowed to slip.

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The marchioness died on April 19, 1764, but it was not until twenty years later (March 24, 1784) that Danry finally recovered his liberty. For his continued detention he was himself wholly to blame. Two months after the favourite's death, Sartine, who had become Lieutenant of Police in 1759 and had from the first interested himself in the prisoner, informed Danry of his intention of applying to the Government for his release at the earliest possible moment, and M. Funck-Brentano quotes the following note, dated June 18, 1764, which was found among the lieutenant's papers: "M. Duval (one of Sartine's secretaries)—to propose at the first inspection that Danry be liberated and exiled to his own part of the country."¹ But Danry seems to have conceived the idea that the lieutenant was afraid of him, and thereupon determined not to accept his freedom, unless it was accompanied by substantial compensation for the injustice which had been done him! Instead, therefore, of thanking Sartine for his kindly intentions, he wrote him a violently abusive letter, and rendered himself so insufferable to his guardians, that Chevalier declared that he would "wear out the patience of the saintliest monk."

In September of that year Danry was removed to the keep of Vincennes, in the hope that a period of solitary confinement might bring him to reason, and here it was that he assumed the name by which he is known to history.

He had learnt from a sentinel of the Bastille of the death of a certain Henri Vissec de la Tude, a colonel of a dragoon regiment, which had taken place at Sedan three years before. From that moment he determined

¹ Quoted in *Légendes et Archives de la Bastille*, p. 197.

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that he was the son of the deceased officer. The latter came from his own part of the country, he was a nobleman and rich, and, as he was dead, he was unable to deny the paternity. It is hardly necessary to remark that a more impudent claim has seldom been put forward. The Chevalier de la Tude never knew of the existence of Jeanneton Aubrespy, and when, in later years, Danry asked the children to recognise him as their natural brother, they indignantly refused. Nevertheless, the rascal now took to signing himself "Henri Masers de la Tude," and asserted his claims so unceasingly that people ended by believing his story.

Of course, the Vicomte de la Tude was a very different person from Jean Danry, and had the right to demand very handsome compensation indeed for the wrongs which he had suffered. In a letter to Sartine, the prisoner assesses the amount at 150,000 livres, with the cross of St. Louis thrown in. The Lieutenant of Police ignored his claim, but promised to set him free, "provided he would behave himself quietly for a short time." His liberation, on his own showing, was but a matter of days; he chose, however, to anticipate it, and on November 23 made his escape for the third time.

His *modus operandi*, like that on the occasion of his previous escape from the same fortress, fifteen years before, was simplicity itself. He was taking his daily constitutional on the bank of the moat in charge of a warder. A dense fog came on. Danry turned to his keeper and inquired what he thought of the weather. "It's very bad," replied the man. "Yes; just the weather to escape in," rejoined the prisoner, and disappeared. He made his way to Paris, where, as he

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was without resources, he was constrained to write to Sartine, offering to overlook the past in return for an advance of 10,000 crowns of the 150,000 which he had formerly demanded. In reply he received a letter, instructing him to call at a certain house, where he would find a sum of money awaiting him. Thither he proceeded, and was promptly re-arrested.

He was taken back to Vincennes, where he amused himself for the next ten years in writing abusive letters to Sartine, whom he accused of "swilling down his crimes like buttermilk," and reading books dealing with sorcery, which convinced him that all his troubles had been caused by the perpetual intervention of devils evoked by Madame de Pompadour and her brother, the Marquis de Marigny.

The authorities gradually came to believe that his mind was unhinged, and when, in August 1775, Malesherbes made his celebrated inspection of prisons, he reported that Latude had exhibited "indubitable signs of insanity."

The result of his report was that a few weeks later the prisoner was transferred to Charenton, an asylum which was under the direction of a religious order known as the *Frères de la Charité*, and whither his old companion, Allègre, had preceded him in 1763. Here he behaved himself so well, that on June 5, 1777, he was not only discharged as cured, but given his liberty, on his signing an undertaking to depart immediately for Languedoc.

This undertaking Latude did not trouble himself to fulfil, and the first use he made of his freedom was to introduce himself to a lady of quality and extort a considerable sum by menaces. In consequence, after

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being at large for rather less than six weeks, he was again arrested and conducted to the Châtelet and thence to Bicêtre, the thieves' prison, where he had reason to regret the fleshpots of the Bastille and Vincennes, as the diet consisted principally of bread and water.

Seven years elapsed before his prison doors again opened, but when they did, it was for him to emerge in a positive blaze of triumph. Times had changed; the influences which were to bring about the Revolution were beginning to make themselves felt on all sides; people were full of compassion for the victims of despotic government. Moreover, the circumstances connected with his final release were full of attraction for romantic minds. A drunken turnkey happened to drop a memorial, which Latude had charged him to carry to some Minister or other influential personage, at the corner of the Rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois.¹ A certain Madame Legros, the wife of a small tradesman, picked it up. So moved was this good woman, who doubtless had her full share of the sentimentality of the day, at the harrowing description which the writer gave of his sufferings that she straightway resolved to make it the aim of her life to obtain his deliverance. By degrees one great man after another promised her his support; copies of the prisoner's memorials were circulated in every drawing-room; visitors of the highest distinction began to flock to Bicêtre. Finally, the Queen deigned to interest herself on the unfortunate man's behalf, and, on

¹ Latude was constantly bombarding the King and the Ministers with memorials on every conceivable subject. At one time, it was a suggestion for increasing postal facilities; at another, a scheme for the erection of public granaries; and on a third, a plan of battle for giving unheard-of strength to a column of men three deep.

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March 24, 1784, the captive was released and a pension of 400 livres bestowed upon him.

Latude speedily became one of the lions of Paris; he was invited everywhere; a public subscription was opened for his benefit; President Dupaty gave him a pension of 500 livres, the Duc d'Ayen another of 300, and the notorious Duchess of Kingston, who had fled to France to escape the consequences of her bigamous marriage, remembered him in her will. But it was not until the Revolution broke out that the great man shone forth in all his glory. Then all parties vied with one another to do him honour; his portrait with the famous rope-ladder was exhibited in the Salon; his *Mémoires*—a tissue of calumnies and lies—went through twenty editions in less than three years; a deputation from the principal theatres offered him free admission to all performances, and the Legislative Assembly voted him a pension of 2000 livres, without prejudice to the pension of 400 livres awarded him by Louis XVI.

In September 1793 Latude brought an action for damages against the heirs of Madame de Pompadour, and was awarded 60,000 livres. Several writers have asserted that of this sum the plaintiff only received 10,000 livres, but this was not the case. The balance of 50,000 livres was subsequently paid him in good farm lands situated in La Beauce, and though when the estates of Madame de Pompadour were sequestrated, these farms were taken from him, he managed to induce the Directory to restore them.¹

The remainder of Latude's life was passed in ease and luxury, for what with his pensions, the proceeds of his farms, the sale of his books, and the money brought in

¹ *Légendes et Archives de la Bastille*, p. 228.

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by the exhibition of his rope-ladder, which made the round of the principal towns in both France and England, he was in receipt of a very comfortable income indeed. His long imprisonment does not appear to have affected his health, and at the age of seventy-five we hear of him as "active and gay, and taking long walks every day without experiencing the least fatigue." He died on New Year's Day, 1805, of pneumonia. Few victims of despotism have excited more sympathy than Latude—and few have deserved it less.

CHAPTER VIII

Madame de Pompadour's influence extending to every department of the State—She abuses her patronage—Her apartment in the Château of Versailles—Rigid etiquette observed there—"What an exceedingly comfortable bed, Madame!"—Anecdote of the Marquis de Souvré—Madame de Pompadour's toilette a Court function—Anecdote related by Marmontel—The favourite's household at Versailles—Her passion for building and acquiring landed property—Her purchase of Crécy—The Duchesse de Luynes's description of it—She buys La Celle—A surprise for the King—Her Hermitage at Versailles—Her hôtel at Versailles—She buys the Hôtel d'Évreux in Paris—Her Hermitages at Fontainebleau and Compiègne—She builds the Château of Bellevue—A palace of enchantment—Enormous sums expended by the favourite upon it—Louis XV.'s first visit to the château—Its formal inauguration—Other properties of Madame de Pompadour—Reported negotiations with Frederick the Great for the purchase of the Principality of Neuchâtel.

So with all her enemies subdued, or at least held in check, Madame de Pompadour began to reign in real earnest, and her influence to make itself felt in every department of the State. In the Army, Baron de Montmorency and the Marquis de la Salle, the tenor of the Théâtre des Petits Appartements, were through her intercession appointed respectively governors of Salins and La Marche over the heads of a number of senior officers, including several Maréchals de France. In the

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Diplomatic Service, the Abbé de Bernis, who, soon after his patroness's installation at Versailles, had been rewarded for the assistance he had rendered her in the composition of her love-letters by a pension on the Treasury and free quarters in the Tuileries, was in 1751 sent as Ambassador to Venice. In the Royal Household, she obtained for the husband of her friend and flatterer, Madame de Sassenage, the reversion of the post of First Gentleman of the Bedchamber, in spite of the fact that the Dauphin had solicited the same office on behalf of a member of the Rohan family. In the department of Finance, she is said to have appointed in the space of a few months twelve farmers-general and no less than two hundred *sous-fermiers*; while in that of Police, she caused one Bayle, a distant relative of her own, to be made Governor of the Bastille. That she was not too scrupulous as to the means she employed to push the fortunes of her allies the following incident will show.

Her cousin and assiduous flatterer, Madame d'Estrades, desired the post of *dame d'atour* to the King's daughters, and Madame de Pompadour had promised that she should have it. The then occupant of the post was a certain Madame de la Lande, who had been governess to Louis XV. and the Dauphin, and made it her proud boast that she had been present at the birth of every member of the Royal Family. This old lady was most devotedly attached to the princesses; her whole soul was wrapped up in the duties of her office, and no consideration would have induced her to resign; while the King, who, with all his faults, was kind-hearted, would never have consented to dismiss her, even to please Madame de Pompadour. The favourite and Madame d'Estrades were, therefore, not a little puzzled how to get rid of her,

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until Baron de Montmorency, whom they consulted, told them that he thought he could find a way out of the difficulty, if they would leave the matter in his hands. This they readily agreed to do, and Montmorency, accordingly, went to Madame de la Lande and, representing that he had been sent by Louis himself, informed her that, owing to some changes which were shortly to be made in the Royal Household, it was the monarch's wish that she should resign her post in favour of Madame d'Estrades. He added that, of course, the King desired her to understand that she was under no compulsion to do so, but, at the same time, he (Montmorency) could not disguise from her the fact that a refusal on her part might entail considerable inconvenience on the Royal Family.

The loyal old lady, always accustomed to interpret the slightest wish of her sovereign as a command, and never suspecting for a moment that she was being duped, at once sent in her resignation, although she was nearly heartbroken at the thought of parting from her beloved princesses, and Madame d'Estrades obtained the coveted post; while Montmorency's services were shortly afterwards rewarded by the *ordon bleu*, which he displayed as proudly as if it had been earned by some gallant feat of arms.

It must not be imagined that the gratification of seeing her friends and flatterers occupying lucrative posts in the State and at Court was the only advantage Madame de Pompadour derived from the exercise of her patronage. She had not been born and brought up in the financial circles of Paris for nothing; and the Marquis d'Argenson brings very serious charges against her. He accuses her of selling commissions in the army, orders,

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decorations, and appointments of all kinds, and even passports, whereby the holders were enabled to evade the heavy export duties then in force. He asserts that she received 50,000 crowns from one Bercy for obtaining for him the post of *Intendant des Finances*, 100,000 francs from a merchant of La Rochelle for inducing the Government to settle some heavy claims which he had against them, and no less a sum than half a million francs from the celebrated Dupleix for procuring him the *cordon rouge*. D'Argenson was, of course, bitterly hostile to the favourite, and his statements should, therefore, be accepted with a certain amount of reserve; nevertheless, the fact remains that, whereas Madame de Pompadour came to Court in 1745 with very little capital beyond her beauty and accomplishments, she was a few years later an extremely wealthy woman, so wealthy that she was able to discharge her father's debts, amounting to 400,000 livres; advance a very large sum of money to the impecunious Duc de Chaulnes, as an inducement to him to consent to his son's marriage with her daughter, Alexandrine d'Étioles; maintain an immense staff of servants; purchase town and country houses, and accumulate precious stones and costly works of art. All this could not possibly be done upon the income which the King allowed her, liberal as that was,¹ and it, therefore, follows

¹ M. Le Roi in his *Curiosités historiques* gives some interesting information on this subject. The first year of her "reign" it appears that the marchioness received a monthly allowance of 24,000 livres. During the next four years it varied, but occasionally rose as high as 30,000 livres. After 1749, when the King's passion had cooled, she was paid a regular pension of 4000 livres. From 1746-49 she also received New Year's gifts to a considerable amount, 50,000 in 1747 and 24,000 in 1749, after which they were apparently discontinued, at any rate, they do not figure in her accounts, which she kept with great care.

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that she must have had other and exceedingly lucrative sources of revenue.

Versailles though at this period one of the most magnificent palaces in Europe, was also one of the least comfortable from a residential point of view ; indeed its splendour could hardly have existed save at the expense of its convenience. Even the apartments of the Queen and her daughters were small and ill-constructed, while many of the principal Court officials were forced to put up with *entresols* little better than garrets. But the suite occupied by Madame de Pompadour was the magnificent one formerly inhabited by Madame de Montespan, the mistress of *le Grand Monarque*, and scarcely inferior to that of the King, which lay immediately above it, and with which it communicated by means of a private staircase. Here the haughty favourite insisted that the most rigid etiquette should be observed—etiquette which recalled that in vogue in the early years of the previous reign, the records of which Madame de Pompadour was shrewdly suspected of having studied. A single arm-chair, that occupied by the lady herself, intimated to all who entered that they were expected to remain standing in the presence of the marchioness ; and such was the servility with which the woman whom they had once scorned and ridiculed was now treated by the pliant courtiers, that it was seldom indeed that any one was found bold enough to protest against this arrogant assumption of royal privilege.¹

¹ In October 1752 the King accorded to Madame de Pompadour the honours of a duchess, the most important of which was the privilege of remaining seated in the royal presence. Why she never received the title does not appear to be known.

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On one occasion, however, the Prince de Conti, after Madame de Pompadour had suffered him to remain in the posture of a suppliant for some minutes, walked across the room to her bed, and coolly seated himself upon it, remarking, as he did so, "What an exceedingly comfortable bed, Madame!" The Prince de Conti being one of the princes of the blood, the favourite was compelled to pocket the affront, but when, shortly afterwards, a well-known wit, the Marquis de Souvré, finding himself in a like case, sat down suddenly on the arm of her own chair, and began to chatter away, as was his wont, without being in the least disconcerted by her black looks, her wrath knew no bounds, and she complained to the King that the marquis had grossly insulted her. Louis, to appease her, promised to send for Souvré and reprimand him, and, accordingly, when the latter appeared in answer to the royal summons, began rather awkwardly to represent to him the impropriety of his behaviour. To which the wag replied, "Sire, I was deadly tired, and, as I did not know where to sit down, I sat down where I could." The King, comprehending the absurdity of the situation, burst out laughing, and the matter ended. The favourite, however, did not forget poor Souvré, and when, some time afterwards, that gentleman, hearing that the marchioness proposed taking lessons in German, remarked, with more wit than discretion, that "he was surprised to hear that Madame de Pompadour wished to learn German, as she had not yet left off murdering French," he received an order to retire from Court.

But Conti and Souvré were isolated cases ; no one else seemed in the least inclined to follow their example. People stood on the staircase outside the favourite's apartments awaiting the hour of her toilette, just as they

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thronged the ante-chambers of the Ministers ; even the foreign Ambassadors, by the King's express desire, paid their court to her as they did to the Queen. An episode which Marmontel relates in his *Mémoires* will convey some idea of the importance attached to the slightest mark of favour bestowed by this all-powerful woman :—

“While the manuscript of my play¹ was still in Madame de Pompadour's hands, I appeared one day at her toilette, where I found a crowd of courtiers newly come from the King's levée. She was surrounded by them, and, either because there were some there whom she did not care to notice, or because she was tired of having so many people about her, she exclaimed, immediately she caught sight of me, ‘I have something to say to you’ and, leaving her toilette, went into her cabinet, whither I followed. It was merely to return my manuscript, with her remarks pencilled upon it ; but she was five or six minutes pointing out the places marked, and explaining her criticisms. Meanwhile the whole circle of courtiers stood round the toilette awaiting her return. She again entered the room, while I, concealing the manuscript, went modestly to resume my place. I strongly suspected that so unusual an incident would not be without its effect, but the impression it produced on all present far exceeded my expectations. Every eye was fixed upon me ; little salutations, sweet smiles of friendship were addressed to me from every side ; and before leaving the room, I had received invitations to dinner sufficient to last me for at least a week. What do I say ? A nobleman, a man with a ribbon at his breast, whom I had occasionally dined with at Madame de la Poplinière's, took hold of my arm and whispered,

¹ *Les Funérailles de Sésostris.*

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‘Won’t you speak to your old friends?’ Amazed at his meanness, I bowed and said to myself, ‘Ah! what a fine thing is favour, since its very shadow confers such singular importance.’”¹

It need hardly be remarked that Madame de Pompadour’s household was in full accordance with the almost regal state she had thought fit to assume. An attorney of the Châtelet de Paris, named Collin, who had been her parents’ legal adviser, abandoned the law, in which he enjoyed a considerable practice, to become the majordomo of the King’s mistress, who, more for her own gratification than his, procured for him the cross of Saint-Louis. Her two waiting-women, the chief of whom was Madame du Hausset, to whose *Mémoires* we are indebted for much that we know about the marchioness’s private life, were both members of noble families. The equerry who walked by the side of her sedan-chair, with her cloak upon his arm, ready to cover her shoulders whenever she alighted, was a certain Chevalier d’Henin, a cadet of one of the oldest families in Guienne and a relative of the Prince de Chimay; while the physician whose services she had exclusively retained and who occupied a suite of apartments near her own, was none other than the celebrated Quesnay, surgeon-in-ordinary to the King. In addition to these, her household included a steward, a maître d’hôtel, an overseer, a butler, four footmen, a chef, an under-chef, two assistant cooks, a pastry-cook, a doorkeeper, two head-porters, two under-porters, a concierge, a house-keeper, a wardrobe-woman, three sewing-maids, two clerks to keep the household accounts, an assistant clerk, three coachmen, three postilions, four grooms, and a

¹ *Mémoires de Marmontel* (edit. 1804), i. 334.

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torchbearer. In all, her staff of servants comprised between fifty and sixty persons, who drew in salaries no less a sum than 42,492 livres.¹

We should bear in mind that this sum, large as it is, especially when we take into consideration the price of commodities at this period, represents merely the wages of the servants of the marchioness at Versailles. If to this is added the cost of livery, board, and fuel, the maintenance of her various town and country houses, her frequent journeys, and her entertainments and charities, the *ordinary* expenses of Madame de Pompadour must have amounted to at least one million livres per annum.²

But this prodigality, astounding as it may seem, was trifling in comparison with the enormous sums which the favourite spent in purchasing estates and building hôtels and country houses. Her passion for building, indeed, amounted to almost a mania, and absorbed every franc of her available capital, so that at the time of her death, though possessing in real estate, furniture, works of art, and jewellery a large fortune, *thirty-seven louis* represented the whole of her assets in coin of the realm.

The first property which Madame de Pompadour acquired was the beautiful estate of Crécy, near Dreux, purchased in 1746 for 650,000 livres. No sooner did she enter into possession, than she began to make extensive alterations. Both wings of the château were demolished and entirely reconstructed, while the gardens, which were not laid out in accordance with her taste,

¹ Le Roi's *Curiosités historiques, Les Dépenses de Madame de Pompadour, passim.*

² Campardon's *Madame de Pompadour et la Cour de Louis XV.*, p. 77.

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shared the same fate. The improvements, which were carried out under the superintendence of l'Assurance, the comptroller of the buildings at Marly, and the architect d'Isle, extended over two years and cost the marchioness 700,000 livres, a sum which was considerably augmented by the purchase of four small estates adjoining Crécy, for the purpose of rounding off her property.

The Duchesse de Luynes, who visited Crécy in 1752, gives the following description of it:—

“On entering the château, one finds oneself in a vestibule, leading into a salon which opens on to the garden. To the left of the salon are three rooms, one of which is an assembly room, 49 feet 8 inches long, and 26 broad, and containing six windows. There are two chimney-pieces, both on the same side, and eight pier-glasses, inclusive of those over the chimney-pieces. To the right of the salon which opens on to the garden is the King's suite of apartments, and on the opposite side that of Madame de Pompadour, which consists merely of a bedroom, a study, and an ante-chamber. There is no grand staircase, but several small ones, leading to a corridor in which there are a number of apartments, admirably distributed and beautifully furnished.” The garden, it appears, was not very large, but laid out with exquisite taste, smooth-shaven lawns and beds of lovely flowers alternating with arbours and shady walks.¹

Louis XV. did not at first care much for Crécy; but Madame de Pompadour, by constantly consulting him with regard to the improvements she was contemplating, soon induced him to take an interest in her new

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, xii. 20.

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property, and, as his taste for country life increased, he frequently visited it, and on one occasion held his Council of State there. While at Crécy, the King usually spent the greater part of his time in shooting, and one morning, when he had an attack of gout and was unable to walk, rather than lose his day's sport, he ordered himself to be wheeled about in a kind of bath-chair, and killed on this occasion more than a hundred brace of birds.

At Crécy Madame de Pompadour received on several occasions almost the entire Court, so that a visitor might have fancied himself at Choisy or Compiègne. In September 1751 we find the King arriving there with a suite which included the Duc de Chartres, Prince de Soubise, Maréchals Belle-Isle and Luxembourg, eight dukes, fourteen marquises and counts, and "my lord" Thomond. All wore the Crécy uniform, that is to say, a costume specially designed by Louis in the style of that worn at Choisy, and consisting of a green coat trimmed with lace and adorned with gold buttons. The visit lasted about a week, and every one was charmed with the manner in which Madame de Pompadour acted the part of hostess. A good deal of high play seems to have gone on, and large sums changed hands, the Duc de Chartres losing six hundred louis. The younger members of the party amused themselves with prisoners' base—a game to which the great Napoleon was much addicted, even after he became First Consul—in the gardens; but the agility displayed by the Marquis de Langeron, the intrepid dancer of the Théâtre des Petits Appartements, and M. d'Estissac, both of whom were on the shady side of fifty, quite eclipsed that of their juniors.

The visits of Louis XV. to Crécy, accompanied as he

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generally was by a numerous suite, cost him a great deal of money—d'Argenson reckons that even a stay of a few days would entail the expenditure of 100,000 livres—and when in 1755 the King resolved to reduce his expenses, or rather pretend to do so, as a concession to public opinion, they were reluctantly abandoned. Henceforth Madame de Pompadour seldom visited her estate, but the neighbourhood had reason to be grateful to her, as she built a house for the curé, gave dowries of five hundred livres a-piece to between forty and fifty young couples, and founded a hospital with accommodation for nearly fifty patients.¹

The possession of Crécy and its dependencies, far from satisfying, seems only to have stimulated Madame de Pompadour's desire for lands and houses, for, after purchasing a little château at Montretout, which, however, she soon parted with, she in 1747 bought from Bachelier, one of the King's *valets-de-chambre*, his estate of La Celle, beautifully situated on the summit of some rising ground, with woods on either side of it, about three miles from Versailles.

La Celle, which the favourite alludes to in her correspondence as the "little château," was really a very substantial house, containing nearly twenty guest-chambers, and with the inevitable improvements, without which no residence belonging to Madame de Pompadour would have been deemed worthy to shelter that magnificent lady, cost her between three and four hundred thousand livres. The marchioness made but little use

¹ The Duc de Luynes says that this building cost between 500,000 and 600,000 livres, to provide which the marchioness sold part of her diamonds; and that there was a chaplain and a house-surgeon attached to it.

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of it, notwithstanding its proximity to Versailles, except in summer, when she would sometimes drive out to dine or sup, and now and again, when the weather happened to be exceptionally hot, spend a few days there. On these occasions the King was a frequent visitor, and one evening in August 1748 Madame de Pompadour prepared for him a little surprise.

All the invited guests, among whom were the four Secretaries of State, had received tickets, with "*Bon pour entrer*" inscribed upon them, and just as they were finishing supper, music was heard approaching, and a number of musicians, dressed in fantastic costumes, made their appearance. Thereupon Madame de Pompadour rose and sang a song in praise of the King, each verse concluding with the words, "*Venez, venez, suivez-moi tous!*" after which, the musicians leading the way, the company proceeded to one of the plantations adjoining the house, where, in a little theatre, which had been constructed for the purpose, a number of children, assisted by the indefatigable Marquis de Courtenvaux, the *premier danseur* of the Théâtre des Petits Appartements, performed a ballet for their amusement. Then, the musicians preceding them as before, they made their way to the plantation on the opposite side of the château, to find there a charming little pavilion and all preparation made for a ball. Here, to the strains of an excellent band, dancing was kept up until four o'clock in the morning, the King remaining until half-past three.¹

Madame de Pompadour retained possession of La Celle for two years longer, and then sold it for about the same sum as it had cost her.

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, ix. 88.

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In 1749 the favourite took it into her head that it would be pleasant to have a little house in a quiet part of Versailles, to which she could occasionally retire for a day or two's rest from the strain of Court life; and the King having made her a present of twelve acres of land adjoining what was known as the Little Park, she built there a villa, which she called the Hermitage. The house was small, but exquisitely furnished, while the garden was a perfect bower of roses. At Madame de Pompadour's death, the Hermitage became the property of Louis XV., and was inhabited first by the Duchesse de Villars and afterwards by Mesdames Adélaïde and Victor. Under the Republic it was national property, and was let to a restaurant-keeper, who gave fêtes and masked balls there. It has long since disappeared, but the name is preserved in that of the Rue de l'Ermitage.

At Versailles the marchioness had another house, now the Hôtel des Réservoirs, close to the palace, with which it communicated by means of a passage, thus enabling her to pass to and fro at will. On these two residences the favourite expended nearly half a million livres.

In 1751 Louis had given Madame de Pompadour a suite of apartments on the first floor of the Hôtel de Pontchartrain in Paris, where the Ambassadors Extraordinary and their suites were usually accommodated. This did not content her, however, as she desired to have a residence of her own in the capital, and, accordingly, two years later, she bought, for 65,000 livres, the Hôtel d'Évreux in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, which she partially rebuilt and furnished in the most extravagant fashion, the curtains in the grand salon costing, it is

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said, between five and six thousand livres a-piece.¹ Finding that the trees in the Champs Elysées obstructed the view from her windows, she had a number of them cut down, after which she actually proposed to annex part of the promenade itself, in order to turn it into a kitchen-garden; but, though she obtained the King's permission to do so, the indignation which such a proceeding aroused among the Parisians caused her to abandon the idea.²

In her will Madame de Pompadour left the Hôtel d'Évreux to the King, at the same time expressing a desire that it should be converted into a palace for the Comte de Provence (afterwards Louis XVIII.). The monarch, however, so far from respecting her last wishes, sold it to the financier Beaujon, who, in his turn, disposed of it to Louis XVI. It is now the Palace of the Elysée.

In addition to her Hermitage at Versailles, Madame de Pompadour had two similar residences, one at Fontainebleau, the other at Compiègne. The Hermitage of Fontainebleau was situated on the road to Bouron, opposite one of the gardens of the château called the New Garden. It was an unpretentious one-storied house. On the ground floor were a dining-room and

¹ At the time of the purchase of the Hôtel d'Évreux, Madame de Pompadour wrote to one of her friends a letter which would seem to imply that, whatever might be thought of her extravagance, she looked upon herself as a public benefactress: "People laugh at my passion for building; for myself, I am proud of my so-called madness, which provides so many poor people with bread. I find pleasure not in gloating over my gold, but in distributing it."—*Gazette des Beaux Arts*, August 1859.

² One morning the marchioness discovered that during the night the inscription "Hôtel de Pompadour" had been removed from the portal of her door, and the words "*Regiæ meretricis Aedes*" substituted.

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a salon "large enough to contain six card-tables," while above were two small suites of rooms, one for the marchioness, the other for her then bosom friend, Madame d'Estrades. The size and sumptuousness of the garden, which had been laid out from designs by l'Assurance, more than atoned for any lack of magnificence about the house; and it is, therefore, not surprising to learn that this little retreat cost the favourite upwards of two hundred thousand livres.

The Hermitage of Compiègne, which, like that of Versailles, was built on land given by the King, was much the simplest of the three, and was a comparatively cheap acquisition. Here in 1756 Madame de Pompadour gave a fête on the occasion of the taking of Port Mahon, when ribbons, bonnets, and sword-knots *à la Mahon* were distributed to the guests, and the townsfolk were regaled with fountains of wine.

But all Madame de Pompadour's town and country houses, not excepting Crécy itself, were destined to be completely eclipsed by the splendid mansion which she erected on the slope overlooking the Seine between Sèvres and Meudon. This château, which she called Bellevue—a name which it fully deserved, as it commanded one of the finest prospects to be found in the neighbourhood of Paris—was begun in June 1748, from designs by her favourite architect, l'Assurance, who was subsequently rewarded for his services by the cross of Saint-Michel. The difficulties in the way of its construction were considerable, for the soil was so sandy that it was found necessary to make excavations to the depth of more than one hundred and twenty feet before attempting to lay the foundations; but eight hundred workmen, encouraged by liberal rewards

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from the marchioness, laboured so indefatigably that in a little over two years it was completed.

Such an undertaking so close to the capital naturally gave rise to much speculation, and it was commonly reported to have cost Madame de Pompadour—or the State—a fabulous sum. D'Argenson estimates the expenditure at six million livres, but the actual cost would appear to have been something over two and a half millions. The occasion was, of course, too good for the Parisians to let slip, and the favourite was assailed by a fresh storm of *Poissonades* :—

“ Fille d’une sangsue et sangsue elle-même,
Poisson d’une arrogance extrême,
Étale en ce château sans crainte et sans effroi,
La substance du peuple et la honte du Roi.”

The writer of the above verses, a certain Chevalier de Rességuier, an officer in the Guards, “learned to his sorrow that it is not always wise to speak the truth.” He was degraded from his rank in the army, condemned to twenty years’ imprisonment, and, at the expiration of his sentence, ordered to leave France.

Anything more charming than the Château of Bellevue it would, indeed, have been difficult to imagine ; it was a veritable palace of enchantment. On its interior every resource of art was lavished by Madame de Pompadour. Statues by Adam and Falconnet adorned the vestibule. Oudry’s brush had embellished the dining-room, Pierre’s the music-room, that of the elder Brunetti the staircase. On the walls of the grand salon were six pictures by Vanloo, representing Tragedy, Comedy, Painting, Sculpture, Music, and Architecture. The same painter had decorated the apartments intended for the use of

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the King; Boulogne and Vernet had surpassed themselves in those reserved for the Dauphin and Dauphiness, while in the châtelaine's own suite two exquisite *dessus-de-porte* bore testimony to the genius of Boucher.

The pride of the château, however, was a gallery, which had been designed by the marchioness herself. Along the whole length of this gallery were placed wreaths of flowers, beautifully executed by the sculptor Verbreck, and delicately coloured by Dinant and Du Fort, which served as frames for a series of pictures by Boucher. All the other principal rooms contained paintings by different masters; the furniture was of the most costly kind, carefully selected so as to harmonise with the decorations of the apartments in which it was placed, and the carpets were the richest that the famous manufactory of La Savonnerie could produce.¹

Nor had the exterior of the château been neglected. The gardens, which d'Isle had laid out with infinite taste, abounded with rare flowers and shrubs, to supply which every country in Europe had been placed under contribution, and in the midst of which might be seen examples of the work of the first sculptors of the day—a marble Apollo by Coustou, a statue of Madame de Pompadour as Love by Pigalle, one of Louis XV. by the same artist, and another *Amour* from the chisel of Slodtz.²

Madame de Pompadour's list of expenses show that

¹ This manufactory, which was situated at Chaillot, is no longer in existence, but carpets called *tapis de la Savonnerie* are still manufactured at the Gobelins.

² Hurtaut's *Dictionnaire historique de la ville de Paris et ses environs* (Paris 1779), i. 564 *et seq.* E. and J. de Goncourt's *Madame de Pompadour*, p. 94. Lady Dilke's "French Architects and Sculptors of the Eighteenth Century," *passim*.

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within a space of six years, namely, from 1748 to 1754, she distributed to different artists in payment for paintings and statuary executed for Bellevue 2,983,047 livres. The sum expended upon the gardens is not known, but one writer puts it as high as 800,000 livres. After all this prodigality it is not a little amusing to find the marchioness writing to her friend Madame de Lutzelbourg: "His Majesty has paid three visits to Bellevue. The house, though not very large, is charming, *without any attempt at magnificence.*"¹

The first visit which Louis XV. paid to Bellevue was attended by a series of unfortunate *contretemps*. The King and the gentlemen of his suite arrived clad in the "Bellevue uniform"—purple velvet bordered with gold lace, the united cost of which is said to have exceeded one hundred thousand livres; but if that most severe critic of Madame de Pompadour and her entertainments, the Marquis d'Argenson, is to be believed, the artistic effect was quite spoiled owing to the fact that the *valets-de-chambre* were wearing green liveries. Then, it was intended to celebrate the occasion by the illumination of the château and a magnificent display of fireworks; but Madame de Pompadour, having been informed that an immense crowd of people was coming from Paris to witness the spectacle, and fearing that, in the present state of public feeling, it might be made another cause for complaint against her, countermanded the arrangements at the eleventh hour. Again, it was found impossible for the company to sit down to supper in the dining-room, or, indeed, in any room in the house, as all the chimneys smoked so abominably that the guests were nearly suffocated. In

¹ Quoted in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, August 1859.

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consequence, a move had to be made to an annex of the château, called Le Taudis, a change in the programme which was not effected without considerable trouble and delay. To crown all, the King, from the combined effects of the cold, the smoking chimneys, and a bad attack of *ennui*, was in anything but an amiable mood, and the poor marchioness was ready to cry with vexation.

However, Madame de Pompadour received ample compensation for her disappointment a few days later, when the formal inauguration took place. On this occasion a ballet, called *L'Amour architecte*, was performed in the miniature theatre to which reference has been made in a previous chapter. The first scene represented a mountain in labour, from which proceeded a noise like thunder. Presently it opened and disclosed the Château of Bellevue itself. In the second, the audience found themselves watching the high road to Versailles. A large coach drove across the stage and overturned, discharging a crowd of gaily-attired peasants, who consoled themselves for their mishap by executing a number of dances. This ballet, we are assured, afforded the King infinite pleasure.

Besides the performances in the theatre, which were discontinued after the spring of 1753, Madame de Pompadour gave a number of concerts at Bellevue, at which the first artistes of the day assisted, and in September 1752 a grand fête, to celebrate the Dauphin's recovery from an alarming attack of smallpox, in the hope, apparently, of propitiating that prince, whose aversion to the favourite had only increased with years. In this, however, she was not successful, as, with the exception of the King, who seems to have enjoyed

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himself, none of the Royal Family accepted her invitation to be present.

In process of time the marchioness tired of Bellevue, as she had tired of La Celle; and, accordingly, in 1757 she sold it with all its contents to the King for 325,000 livres, about a seventh part of the sum which its construction alone had cost her, and rented in its place an estate at Saint-Ouen belonging to the Duc de Gesvres, on improving which, notwithstanding the fact that it was not her property, she is said to have squandered in five years half a million.

In addition to the properties which we have enumerated, Madame de Pompadour purchased the manor of Sèvres for 300,000 livres, and also several small estates in the Limousin. In connection with the latter, a curious story is told. It appears that, not long after her installation at Versailles, she became temporarily short of money, and borrowed 10,000 livres from Roissy, the Receiver-General, giving him a charge upon her Limousin property. When the time came for the loan to be repaid, the favourite could not, or would not, meet her obligation. Thereupon Roissy, who appears to have been an independent sort of person, levied a distraint; and the property was put up to auction, and bought by the creditor's attorney, from whom the marchioness shortly afterwards repurchased it. Why Madame de Pompadour preferred to allow legal proceedings to be taken against her rather than discharge so trifling a claim is not stated, but of the truth of the story there can be little doubt.

The last acquisition made by the favourite was the marquise of Menars, in Brie, which she subsequently entailed upon her brother and his heirs. She appears

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to have paid for it by instalments, and it is not known what it cost her. At the same time she bought a little château, called Orillé, not far from Orléans, in order that she and her suite might break their journey on their way to and from Menars; but as she only paid one visit to the latter, it must have been rather a useless purchase. On the occasion in question the marchioness happened to cross the Loire by a bridge which had recently been constructed by the architect Hupot. This bridge had been much criticised on the score of safety; but, the day after the favourite had used it, a wag remarked that no one could any longer doubt its solidity, since it had successfully supported France's heaviest burden.

Madame d'Épinay, the lady who was beloved of Grimm and used to provide Jean Jacques Rousseau with coats and hats, and the publication of whose *Mémoires* drew from Sydney Smith the remark that if all the delicacies and decencies of life were in one scale and five francs in the other, no French bookseller would hesitate a moment in making his selection, asserts that Madame de Pompadour at one time contemplated a purchase beside which Crécy and Bellevue would have seemed the veriest bagatelles. According to her account, the marchioness, fearing that in the event of Louis XV.'s death the Dauphin would at once order her to leave France, opened negotiations with Frederick the Great for the transfer to herself of the Principality of Neuchâtel. However, nothing came of it; probably the bargain which the King wanted to drive was a little too hard even for the prodigal favourite.

CHAPTER IX

Madame de Pompadour and her relatives—Her affection for them one of the best traits in her character—Her father, M. Poisson—His outrageous behaviour a source of humiliation to the favourite—Her letters to him—She obtains for him a patent of nobility—And the *seigneurie* of Marigny—Her brother, Abel Poisson—His amiable character—Madame de Pompadour's letters to him during his absence in Italy—He becomes Director of the Board of Works—His encouragement of the arts—His undeserved unpopularity—The favourite ambitious for his advancement—He is made Marquis de Marigny and Secretary to the Order of Saint-Esprit—His extreme sensitiveness to his sister's position—Madame de Pompadour tries in vain to induce him to make a great marriage—He marries Mademoiselle Filleul—His extraordinary jealousy—Anecdote related by Marmontel—His wife leaves him for the Cardinal de Rohan—His death—Madame de Pompadour's daughter, Alexandrine d'Étioles—Her education at the Couvent de l'Assomption—The favourite's matrimonial projects in regard to her—Sudden death of Alexandrine—Madame de Pompadour's grief.

ONE of the best traits in Madame de Pompadour's character, and one which, indeed, goes far to efface the memory of her faults, was her affection for her relatives. Whatever love that cold and selfish nature was capable of bestowing seems to have been reserved for her kindred, and no sooner was she firmly established at Versailles than she turned her attention to pushing their fortunes. Nor did she confine her good offices

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to the members of her own family circle; the most distant connections—people whom she had never seen and scarcely heard of—came in for a share of her patronage and bounty, and to her credit it must be observed that, however humble their station in life, the marchioness was never in the least ashamed of acknowledging the relationship. On one occasion, she was informed that there was a woman in Paris in very poor circumstances who claimed to be a distant cousin of her own. Madame de Pompadour at once sent her some money to relieve her immediate necessities, while she caused inquiries to be made as to the truth of her statements. On finding them to be correct, she sent for her to come to Versailles, received her with the greatest kindness, gave her a further sum of money, and settled an annuity upon her.

Madame de Pompadour's father must have been a sore trial to her. This man, who had neither education, morals, nor even decency, was a perpetual source of humiliation to all connected with him. His face was red and bloated with drink, his dress grotesque, and his language abominable. He had respect neither for himself nor any one else. One day a new *valet-de-chambre*, who did not know him and was not much prepossessed in his favour, demurred to admitting him to the marchioness's apartments, whereupon he cried out, in a voice which might have been heard from one end of the palace to the other, "You impertinent scoundrel, are you not aware that I am the father of the King's mistress?" On another occasion, when he was dining with some of the leading members of the *haute finance* of Paris, he suddenly burst into a roar of laughter. "Do you know, gentlemen," said he, "what makes me

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laugh? It is at seeing us all here surrounded by such pomp and magnificence. If a stranger were to come in, he would take us all for so many princes. And you, M. de Montmartel, are the son of an innkeeper; you, M. de Savalette, are the son of a vinegar-merchant; you, Bouret, are the son of a lackey. As for myself, every one knows who I am.”¹

And yet, strange as it may seem, this coarse, brutal man worshipped his beautiful daughter—his little queen, his *Reinette*, as he used to call her—and she, though his conduct must have often made her blush with shame, seems to have reciprocated his affection and treated him with unvarying kindness, as her letters abundantly testify. Madame de Pompadour’s little girl, Alexandrine d’Étioles, was a great bond of sympathy between them.

“It is unkind of you, my dear father,” she writes, “not to have given any sign of life for such a long time. I am quite sure that little Alexandrine has driven Reinette from your heart; that is not fair, and I must needs love her very much to be able to pardon her. I send you back her letters, for it appears to me that you set great store by them.”

And again:—

“I went yesterday to visit your Alexandrine at La Muette, my dear father; I found her well. However, you ought to reproach yourself for having given her indigestion. Why is it that grandpapas invariably spoil their grandchildren? I find that she has grown very plain, but so long as she is not positively ugly, I shall be satisfied; for I am very far from desiring for her transcendent beauty. That only serves

¹ *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, iii. 11.

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to make every woman one's enemy, which, when you include their friends, means two-thirds of the world." ¹

In 1747 Madame de Pompadour solicited for her father a patent of nobility, and a patent of nobility was duly granted. The preamble of this document, after enumerating the important services rendered by M. Poisson to the State, and declaring him to have been the victim of a most deplorable miscarriage of justice, thus concludes:—

“But since what he has suffered in fortune and still more in reputation can only be repaired by such marks of our approbation as we are accustomed to bestow upon those of our subjects who devote themselves to the service of the State with the same disinterestedness and zeal as the Sieur Poisson has shown, we are of opinion that we ought to bestow those marks of our approbation upon him, the same being preferred, as he gives us to understand, to all the compensation and recompense which he has the right to claim; and, to this end, we wish to honour him with a title which he may transmit to his descendants, and which may be for them, as it should be for all our subjects, an incentive to emulation and the means of encouraging them to serve the State and the Fatherland.”

Thus was effaced the memory of M. Poisson's delinquencies, and Madame de Pompadour was no longer the daughter of a plebeian.

Four years later, M. Poisson, who probably cared very little whether he was noble or plebeian so long as his wine-cellar was well stocked, received a mark

¹ *Correspondance de Madame de Pompadour avec son père, &c.* (Paris 1878), pp. 14 and 17.

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of the King's favour very much more to his taste in the shape of the *seigneurie* of Marigny, in Brie, the rent-roll of which amounted to nearly eight thousand livres. For the sake of appearances, this estate was first purchased on behalf of the King for 200,000 livres, and, shortly afterwards, transferred to Poisson, "in discharge of the same sum due to him for supplies and moneys furnished to the army"—a transparent fiction which deceived no one.

Poisson, ennobled and enriched through his daughter's dishonour, lived for some years longer, and finally died of dropsy, which he endeavoured to cure by means of the bottle, at the age of seventy. His son, Abel Poisson, succeeded to his estate.

Abel Poisson was a very different kind of person from his bibulous progenitor. He was an extremely handsome young man, of refined tastes and pleasant, though reserved, manners, and entirely devoted to his sister. Soon after Madame de Pompadour's accession to power, the King, who had taken a great fancy to young Poisson and used to call him his "little brother," created him Marquis de Vandières, a title which the wits of the Court forthwith converted into *Marquis d'Avant-hier* (the marquis of the day before yesterday). Louis also purchased for him the *capitainerie* of Grenelle, and in 1749 appointed him to the survivorship of the post of Director-General of the Board of Works, an office which included the supervision of the academies and art collections of France.

French art had for many years been in a sadly neglected state, and Madame de Pompadour, who was a generous patron of both artists and sculptors, and herself an amateur engraver of no mean ability, was

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ambitious that her brother's succession to the directorship—an event which could not be long delayed, as Lenormant de Tournehem, the present occupant of the post, was now an old man and in very bad health—should be signalised by a great revival. She, therefore, arranged that he should make a tour through Italy, in order to prepare himself for his future position, and chose as his companions the architect Soufflot, on the ground that he was “the only architect of taste and genius then in France,” the engraver Cochin, and the Abbé Le Blanc, a prominent art critic and the author of several now forgotten tragedies.

The tour lasted two years, and was a time of serious study for the young man, who then acquired a knowledge of art which he turned to good purpose in later years. By his sister's directions, he lived in a state of great magnificence, kept open house for artists and men of letters wherever he went, and brought back in his portfolios drawings by Cochin of all the finest theatres and other public buildings which he met with in his travels, with a view to constructing similar ones in France. During his absence the marchioness kept up an active correspondence with him, constituting herself his guide, philosopher, and friend.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR *to* HER BROTHER.

“December 28, 1749.

“You have done well, *frerot*, not to bid me adieu, for, although it is very necessary for you to undertake this journey, and although your welfare has long been very dear to me, I should have experienced much pain in

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parting from you. I will not again remind you to send me news of yourself often, for I am very sure you will not fail to do so; but what I would impress upon you, above all things, is to show the greatest courtesy and unvarying discretion, and to prove yourself a man of the world and a gentleman. One ought to be courteous to everybody; for if one confines one's attentions to people whom one esteems, one would be detested by nearly the whole human race.¹ Do not forget the talks which we have had together, and do not imagine that, because I am young, I am incapable of giving you good advice. I have seen so many things in the four and a half years I have been here (*i.e.* at Court), that I am more experienced than a woman of forty. Good-night, dear brother; take great care of yourself, and love me as much as I love you."

MADAME DE POMPADOUR *to* HER BROTHER.

"CHOISY, *January 3, 1750.*

"I have received your letter dated from Lyons, my dear brother, and I should still be in ignorance of where to address my reply had not M. Perrier called upon me this morning. Keep me informed in future as to your movements, so that I may know where to direct my letters. I am quite of your opinion with regard to the feelings one experiences on parting from those whom one loves, and although I believed that I loved you

¹ Compare this advice with that given by Lord Chesterfield to his son in his letter of November 11, 1752: "I paid my court assiduously and skilfully enough to shining and distinguished figures, such as ministers, wits, and beauties, but then I most absurdly and imprudently neglected and consequently offended all others. By this folly I made myself a thousand enemies of both sexes."

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dearly, I did not imagine that your departure would cause me so much pain.

"I am quite sure that you will have nothing but good to say of all the sovereigns whom you will see; but as one cannot observe too much reticence when speaking of kings and their families, if you should chance to conceive one of those foolish notions to which people of your age are so susceptible, take great care to write nothing about it to any one, not even to me, for you may be perfectly certain that the letters of Madame de Pompadour's brother will be opened at Turin. So be very cautious indeed when you have anything to communicate to me which you do not wish known, and do not write to me except by the couriers.¹ It is very remiss of me to have forgotten to warn you about a matter of such importance.

"I have had a little cold in my head, but it has now gone. The King also has a slight cold, but I trust it will not develop into anything serious. Good-night, *cher bonhomme*; I will send you your New Year's gifts when I think that they will arrive safely."

MADAME DE POMPADOUR to HER BROTHER.

"February 6, 1750.

"I have been impatiently waiting news of you, my dear brother, especially since that accident happened to the two Jesuits on Mont Cenis. I should have been still more alarmed had I known all that I have since learned from the account which you have sent my father. Happily, you are at Turin, so you have no more risks to run.

¹ Madame de Pompadour probably means the couriers attached to the French embassies at the various Italian courts, the letters carried by whom were, of course, safe from the eyes of inquisitive officials.

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"I am enchanted at the gracious and kindly manner in which the King of Sardinia¹ and the Duke of Savoy² have received you, and I see that I have not been misled in the report which has reached me concerning these princes.

"I cannot imagine why you have not received my letter. I wrote you one an age ago, and addressed it, as M. Perrier told me, to the care of the French postmaster at Turin.³ I should be annoyed if it has been lost, for it contained some advice of importance to you, which I fancy I omitted to give you. It is to be extremely careful not to write anything likely to be displeasing to the Courts which you will visit, as it is very probable that the people there will be curious to know the impressions of Madame de Pompadour's brother and the reports that he sends to his sister and others.

"The King seems very pleased with the letters you have written me on the subject of the Turin theatre. His Majesty is looking forward to see the plans which M. de Tournehem will send him on your behalf. I must confess that I also am curious to see them.⁴

"You have shown admirable prudence in establishing friendly relations with Comte Alfieri.⁵ Always

¹ Charles Emmanuel III. (1701-73).

² The King of Sardinia's eldest son. He succeeded his father as Victor Amadeus III. in 1773.

³ This was the letter of January 3; it miscarried, and did not reach M. de Vandières until March 25.

⁴ There was some idea of building a theatre on similar lines in France.

⁵ Benedict Innocent Alfieri (1700-67), a celebrated architect and uncle of the famous poet, who describes him in his *Memoirs* as "a very amiable man and very enthusiastic in the cause of art." He designed the superb opera-house at Turin, the façade of St. Peter's at Geneva, and the tower of St. Anne at Asti. Unfortunately, the finances of Piedmont in his day were not in a condition to allow him to give full scope to his genius, and, consequently, his greatest schemes remained unrealised.

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follow that plan; you will find it of great assistance. A conversation with a learned man is often worth more than seeing things for oneself; one has not the time to fathom a thousand matters which may be gathered in the course of a single conversation. . . . Let me know exactly what your movements are to be, so that my letters may no longer go astray.

"I love and embrace you, *mon cher bonhomme*, with all my heart."

MADAME DE POMPADOUR to HER BROTHER.

"April 12, 1750.

"You have seen from my letters, dear brother, that it was not my fault if you did not have news from me. The Infanta¹ will not arrive at Turin until the beginning of June, so I have ordered three summer suits of clothes for you, which are very becoming, that is to say, handsome without being too magnificent. I will send them by M. de la Chétardie, at whose house you will find them on your arrival at Turin. So there is no necessity for you to have any made.

"You have done well wherever you have been; I hope you will continue to do so. You will be well advised to pay your court to M. de Modène, since he has treated you with such kindness.

"Vanloo's portrait is not yet finished, nor the copy of mine; as soon as they are, I shall lose no time in sending them to you. I have not told the King what you think of the statues of the Infanta, for you remark

¹ Louise Elizabeth of France, daughter of Louis XV., married in 1739 to Don Philip, Duke of Parma and Placentia, son of Philip V. of Spain and Elizabeth Farnese. She was at this time on a visit to her father's Court.

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very sensibly that in this world it is not always necessary to say what one thinks.

"I find the sketch abominable. I believe Cochin has been making fun of you all. At least, could I be expected to recognise the Abbé Le Blanc?"

"M. de Nivernois¹ is very pleased with you, with the courtesy which you have shown him, the kindly disposition you evince, your desire to please. Go on as you are doing, you cannot do better, and take his advice, for he is a man of great intelligence, and will counsel you well² for the sake of his friendship for me. His wife³ seems cold at first; but she is a sensible woman, and amiable when one knows her.

"I do not doubt that you have derived great satisfaction from kissing the slipper of the Holy Father, and have been granted any number of indulgences.

"Dornoy⁴ marries to-morrow. I made them give him the post of collector of the *tailles* of Paris, which

¹ Louis Julie Bourbon Mancini-Mazarini, Duc de Nivernois (1716-98). He had lately been appointed French Ambassador to the Vatican.

² Madame de Pompadour's high opinion of the duke was shared by Lord Chesterfield, who, only a few months before, had given very similar advice to his son, Philip Stanhope, who was then in Rome: "I send you here enclosed a letter of recommendation to the Duke of Nivernois, the French Ambassador at Rome, who is, in my opinion, one of the prettiest men I ever knew in my life. I do not know a better model for you to form yourself upon; pray observe and frequent him as much as you can. He will show you what manners and graces are."

³ The Duchesse de Nivernois (*née* Mademoiselle de Pontchartrain) was a sister of Madame de Pompadour's old enemy, Maurepas. The duke, who had married her when he was only fifteen, was devoted to her, and was in the habit of celebrating her charms and virtues in graceful verses, in which she figured under the name of *Délie*.

⁴ A protégé of Madame de Pompadour.

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is a very lucrative one, on condition that he marries the daughter of the late collector. He has fallen madly in love with her: she is young and very pretty. I have given the wedding-present, which is worth 12,000 livres, to please my father, who is very fond of her.

“Good-night, *mon cher bonhomme*; take great care of yourself, and let me have news of you often. You must know how pleased I am to receive it.”

MADAME DE POMPADOUR to HER BROTHER.

“I have received your letter, my dear brother. I hope to inspect your clothes to-morrow and to despatch them at once to Turin, where you will find them.

“I am very pleased and delighted with the reception which the Holy Father has accorded you. The consideration with which people treat me in this country, where every one has, or may have, need of my good offices, does not occasion me any surprise; but I am astonished to find that it has extended so far as Rome. In spite of this agreeable state of affairs, which one must enjoy while it lasts, my head is not turned; and were it not for the happiness of being loved by him whom one loves, which is everything, a private life and one with but little splendour about it would be much more to my taste. I hope that you will think as I do, and that you will not consider yourself of more importance on account of those transient honours, which people pay to a man's position and not to his person.

“But enough of philosophising! I must tell you, therefore, to resume our conversation about the humanities both ancient and modern, that what I have read and heard of Rome had prepared me for your enthusiasm

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over it, and I now believe that you will often thank me for having persuaded you to undertake this journey. The King, as you tell me in your letter, possesses engravings of all the things which you have seen; but as for myself, who have none of them, I should not be sorry to have the little portfolio which you offer me, and I hope M. Cochin will give me the pleasure of working for it. I shall entail it upon my descendants as a precious possession, since it will be the work of so clever a man.

“Good-night, dear little brother; I embrace you with all my heart, and love you as much as ever.”

MADAME DE POMPADOUR *to* HER BROTHER.

“*May 28, 1750.*”

“As I grow older, my dear brother, my reflections become more philosophical. I am well persuaded that in time you will think as I do. Setting aside the happiness of being with the King, which assuredly consoles me for everything, the rest is all a tissue of wickedness, meanness, in short, of all the contemptible acts of which poor human beings are capable. Matter enough for reflection, especially for one, like myself, of a naturally reflective turn of mind.

“To divert your thoughts from this moralising, I must tell you that I find the caricature of you frightful. The King is of the same opinion, and no one would have recognised it, not even one of your relatives. I should have little desire to possess talent like that.¹

“I am very delighted that you are pleased with my portraits; people think them very charming, but

¹ The art of caricature was at this period very little understood in France.

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little like me. However that may be, I have sent it to you, as it was the best I have. There is nothing more to be done with La Tour ; his folly increases every moment.¹

“While on the subject of folly, you will have heard of that of the Parisians. I do not think there has ever been anything to equal the absurdity of the idea that one wished to bleed their children to provide baths for a leprous prince.²

“I have been to visit M. de Tournehem at Étioles, a visit which gave me great pleasure. He was charming.

“I believe that you are in Turin. Give my kind regards to M. de la Chétardie, and love your sister as much as she loves you.”

¹ See p. 264.

² Early in May 1750 the Government gave instructions to the police to seize the little vagrant children of the streets, in order to send them as colonists to the Mississippi. The *exempts* took advantage of the careless wording of the order to abduct a number of children belonging to the *bourgeois* and respectable artisans, so as to oblige their parents to ransom them. On May 16 a riot broke out, when the whole quarter of Saint-Antoine fell upon the police. Suddenly a rumour spread that the King had become leprous, in consequence of his debauchery, that baths of human blood were necessary to cure him, and that it was for this purpose that the children were being taken. The fury of the populace knew no bounds, and on the 22nd and 23rd there were terrible riots. Several *exempts* were put to death by the people ; many of the houses of the police officials were sacked, and the mangled body of one of his spies was deposited on the doorstep of Berryer, the Lieutenant of Police, who lost no time in leaving the city. Madame de Pompadour, who had come to Paris by chance, had a narrow escape, and was only saved from being torn to pieces by the speed of the horses attached to her carriage. So infuriated were the mob that they even talked of going to burn Versailles.—Martin's *Histoire de France jusqu'en 1789*, xv. 435 ; *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson*, iii. 334 *et seq.*

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MADAME DE POMPADOUR *to* HER BROTHER.

“*June 15, 1750.*

“I am very pleased that you find your clothes to your liking ; I thought that you would approve of them, and I was at pains to see that they were elegant without being too magnificent.

“Your letter has found me, as a matter of fact, in the Forest of Compiègne, where I find the Hermitage looking more beautiful than last year. I would willingly spend half my time here. Alexandrine went fifteen days ago to the convent ; she is quite well and delighted to be there.

“The weather leaves much to be desired ; here it rains incessantly, and we are anxious about the wheat, which has already risen in price. However, we have had better weather the last three or four days, and I hope we shall soon have no further cause for anxiety.

“Madame la Dauphine is well and approaching her confinement ; Monsieur le Dauphin arrived here to-day and remains a week. One of his *valets-de-chambre* has been imprisoned in a fortress, for having had the impertinence to declare that Monsieur le Dauphin had charged him to assure M. de Maurepas of his sympathy, a statement false from beginning to end.

“Paris has now quieted down. Neither the King nor any member of the Royal Family has passed through it, in order to punish the inhabitants for their folly.”

MADAME DE POMPADOUR *to* HER BROTHER.

“*August 23.*

“I do not know, my dear brother, if I have thanked you for the pieces of crystal which you have sent me.

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They are very extraordinary and are seldom found in this country. I have had them mounted on a bonbon-box.

"I have seen MM. Bureton and de Quisonas; I received them as persons charged with letters from you. As regards Genoa, I hear that a certain Madame Victorina has been very much in your company, notwithstanding which you are now occupied with another lady, and that you have said of the latter, 'We must always take what the gods send us.' I felicitate you and wish you every success and no cause for repentance.

"We are all in expectation of Madame la Dauphine's confinement. I have a letter ready to send her, in the event of the child being a boy.

"I embrace, *mon cher bonhomme*, with all my heart."

MADAME DE POMPADOUR to HER BROTHER.

"CHOISY, Sunday, September 6, 1750.

"Everywhere where there are human beings, my dear brother, you will find deceit and every vice of which mortals are capable. To live by oneself, however, would be very monotonous, so one must endure them along with their faults and pretend not to notice them.

"I am aware of the article about your marriage;¹ it has appeared in several gazettes. It is, however, a very small grievance; a real one is that Madame la Dauphine has given birth to a daughter, but, as this is the eleventh day, and she is in excellent health, she will give us a prince next year. We must console ourselves with that hope and not think if we can of the little *Madame*. I have seen her to-day for the first time: I could not make

¹ Apparently an unfounded report of M. de Vandières having married, or being about to marry, some Italian lady.

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up my mind to do so before. She is very delicate; I doubt if she will live.

“Alexandrine is well. I shall send for her to come here to-morrow and embrace her once again on behalf of him who, in my turn, I embrace with all my heart.”

MADAME DE POMPADOUR to HER BROTHER.

“FONTAINEBLEAU, *October 19, 1750.*

“The two princes Borghèse were presented yesterday, my dear brother. I have shown them a great deal of civility; thanked them for all the princess, their mother, has shown to you, and begged them to convey to her my acknowledgments. I believe one cannot do more; they do not understand a word of French, which makes conversation difficult, as you can well understand.

“Mesdames Sophie and Louise arrived here yesterday; the King preceded them with Monsieur le Dauphin. In truth nothing is more affecting than their meeting. The tenderness which the King shows for his children is wonderful, and they return his affection with all their hearts. Madame Sophie is almost as tall as I am, very kind-hearted, plump, a beautiful neck, well made, a lovely skin and eyes, in profile as like the King as two drops of water, but in full face not nearly so handsome, since she has an unpleasant mouth; on the whole, she is a fine princess. Madame Louise is insignificant in appearance, a bad figure, with features plain rather than pretty, but with an open countenance, which is much preferable to beauty. We have all been presented to-day.

“My father has been unwell; he treats himself in his own fashion,¹ and, in spite of that, is better. He is truly an astonishing person.

¹ By the bottle.

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"I do not know where to address my letters, presumably you will let me know. I embrace you, *mon cher bonhomme*, with all my heart."

MADAME DE POMPADOUR to HER BROTHER.

"January 18, 1751.

"I calculate you have just this moment arrived in Rome, my dear brother. We have just come from Choisy. There never seems to be any news in Paris to which one can attach any credit; the latest report was the marriage and publication of the banns of the Marquis de Langeron, whom you know, and a waiting-woman of Madame de Sens. I have written to ascertain the truth. The poor devil never dreamed of such a proceeding, and is dreadfully upset at this malicious gossip. In truth they are becoming too deceitful in Paris. I did not believe them to be idiots and liars, but this is going too far. You know, of course, that Bellevue has fallen to the ground, that all the windows and chimneys have been demolished, and that there has been a fire there, after which I sold it to the King for 800,000 livres. The news-mongers would be very disappointed did they know how utterly I despise them, and that they do not cause me the least annoyance.

"I must not forget to mention M. de Tournehem. His nephew wishes to give him a daughter to make *partie carrée* with him.¹ I believe that he (M. de

¹ The nephew was Madame de Pompadour's own husband, poor M. d'Étioles, and the "daughter," who was to make *partie carrée* with M. de Tournehem, was a certain Mademoiselle Rem, an ex-danseuse of the Opera, in whose society M. d'Étioles was endeavouring, not without success, to find consolation for the loss of his wife. After Madame de

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Tournehem) has not long to live; he is very unwell, which troubles me.¹ I must try to find some remedy for his complaint.

“Good-night, *cher bonhomme*; we have at Bellevue a miniature theatre. We shall perform there for the first time on the 26th of this month; we shall only play comedy. I love you and embrace you with all my heart.”

MADAME DE POMPADOUR to HER BROTHER.

“I have been suffering for the last two days, *mon cher bonhomme*, from an attack of fever, brought on by extreme lassitude (*courbature*). I have now got rid of it, so do not worry yourself about my health. I am not at all satisfied, however, with that of M. de Tournehem, which causes me great anxiety.

“Good-night, my dear brother; I embrace you with all my heart.”

MADAME DE POMPADOUR to HER BROTHER.

“May 20, 1751.

“I am very reluctant, *mon cher bonhomme*, to ask the King for what you have spoken to me about, as the house in question is intended to serve as the hôtel of the Director of the Board of Works. I

Pompadour's death in 1764, a report was circulated that the widower intended to espouse this lady, which gave rise to the following epigram:—

“Pour réparer miseriam
Que Pompadour laisse à la France,
Lenormant, plein de conscience,
Vient d'épouser Rem publicam.”

¹ Tournehem died in the following November.

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have come to the conclusion that it would hardly be in good taste to ask for it as your private residence, since it is meant for your office. I have, indeed, rebuked M. de Tournehem for having spoken to the King on the subject. His Majesty has made an arrangement whereby that house and several others are given to M. de la Vallière, and the Hôtel de la Vallière remains the hôtel of the Director of the Board of Works.

" . . . I have not yet seen all the good things you have sent me from Bologna ; I will drink to your health while I eat them.

"I have had such a bad cold that for twenty-four hours I was in a fever ; it is now a little better. I am going down to the salon this evening, which by-the-way, is a diabolical place for colds ; it is so terribly hot there and so cold on going outside, that one hears more coughing than at Christmas time.

"I intend going on Monday to Crécy until Whitsun Eve, and shall return there from the 4th to the 9th. I shall be in despair if the weather is like it is to-day ; it is worse than February.

"I am going to furnish a suite of apartments for your use at Bellevue ; you will be able to occupy them the first time you visit me, as they will be ready in August.

"My father has sent me a letter of yours, which does not surprise me. You have acted very sensibly in the matter in question. When you marry, if it is necessary, you will take the name of your estate, as so many others do, but until that time arrives, I do not see any necessity for you to do so.

"M. de T. (Tournehem) awaits, it is said, your

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return to resign in your favour.¹ I hope that there is no truth in the report, but if there is, I shall do all in my power to prevent him doing so. Although you have acquired some knowledge of your duties, you are only twenty-five years of age; it will be much better for you to retain the survivorship until you are twenty-eight or thirty.

“Good-night, dear brother; I embrace you most tenderly. Your niece, who is staying here for the benefit of her health, embraces you with all her heart.”

MADAME DE POMPADOUR to HER BROTHER.

“CHOISY, June 21, 1751.

“You are perfectly right, *mon cher bonhomme*, since you are in the mood for it, to see all the interesting things there are to be seen in the course of your journey. You cannot acquire too much knowledge in order to merit the generosity of the King.

“M. de T. (Tournehem) is always taking cold; his health, and still more the terribly depressed state in which he is, causes me much anxiety. Take care always to write to him in the kindest possible manner, as he is very sensitive in this respect; it will not cost you any effort, for you surely love him as much as I do.

“Alexandrine is here; I do not know when she will return to her convent. Madame Dornoy is dying of exactly the same complaint which your poor mother died of; it will be a terrible loss for my daughter.²

“We are going to Compiègne for six weeks next Friday. We leave Madame la Dauphine very well and

¹ The Directorship of the Board of Works.

² Madame Dornoy was Alexandrine's *gouvernante*.

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very near her confinement (*un enfant très-remuant*). God grant that the child may arrive safely, and be a boy! I assure you, and you will understand my feelings, that I am weary of seeing nothing but girls.

“Good-night; I love and embrace you with all my heart.

“I embrace my dear little uncle with all my heart.

ALEXANDRINE.”

MADAME DE POMPADOUR *to* HER BROTHER.

“CHOISY, *August 6, 1751.*

“You will possibly receive intelligence of an alarming fall which the King had yesterday. Happily, it is nothing at all serious; he has rubbed some skin off his arm and his head, and bruised his thigh with his gun, but he has had neither pain nor giddiness. In short, it is so trivial a matter that the Faculty did not consider it necessary to bleed him. You will understand that my head is not fit to write much after the shock I have received. Good-night, *bonhomme*.”

MADAME DE POMPADOUR *to* HER BROTHER.

“The King progresses favourably and feels no bad effects from his fall. Madame la Dauphine’s confinement is close at hand, but she is wonderfully well.

“M. de T. (Tournehem) is so ill; I am terribly anxious about him. He has been bled twice. He is better to-day, however; the fever and cough are much less troublesome.

“Good-day, dear brother; I embrace you with all my heart.”

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MADAME DE POMPADOUR to HER BROTHER.

“CHOISY, *August 7, 1751.*

“It is only two days since I wrote to you, *mon bonhomme*, but I was so afraid that the alarming reports which were current in Paris would reach you without contradiction, that I wrote to inform you of the King’s condition without delay. He is going on wonderfully well, and yesterday followed the chase on horseback for five hours, notwithstanding his bruises. The Parisians seemed to have gone mad over his accident, and I can well understand their doing so, for it would be difficult to find in the whole universe a ruler such as he.

“We leave here the day after to-morrow. I shall see Bellevue on Wednesday. I am as delighted as a child at the prospect of beholding it again. I shall also see Alexandrine, who has been there for the last two months.

“You do not propose, then, to go to Languedoc; there is nothing, I think, of any great importance there for you to see, and, besides, I shall be delighted to see you again sooner than I had anticipated. Since you do not intend to make that journey, the sooner the better.

“Good-day, dear brother; I love and embrace you with all my heart.”

The marquis returned to Paris at the end of September 1751, and on the death of Lenormant de Tournehem, which occurred two months later, succeeded him as Director of the Board of Works. He was not long in giving proof that the time spent in Italy had not been wasted, and his tenure of the office was signalised

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by measures which have endeared his memory to all lovers of French art. In spite of the financial embarrassments occasioned by the prodigalities of Louis XV., and later by the necessities of the disastrous Seven Years' War, the arts were never allowed to languish. He raised the price for pictures commissioned by the Crown;¹ gave extensive orders for the manufacture of Gobelins tapestry to encourage historical painting, which had begun to go out of fashion; caused many works of art to be restored, and put the French Academy at Rome on a sound financial basis. Nevertheless, in spite of his amiable character and his efficient and conscientious discharge of his duties, the poor marquis never seems to have really succeeded in living down the early unpopularity which his relationship to Madame de Pompadour had aroused. "He is a man but little understood," said Quesnay on one occasion. "No one talks of his talents or acquirements, nor what he has done for the advancement of the arts; no man since Colbert has done so much in his position; he is, moreover, an extremely honourable man; but people refuse to see in him anything but the brother of the favourite, and, because he is stout, he is thought dull and stupid."²

Madame de Pompadour was far from being content

¹ Tournehem during his tenure of the post had established a tariff for portraits of royalties, according to which all Academicians were to be paid alike, at the same time starting a scheme for direct commissions from the Crown. "The modesty of the sum to be paid for the pictures—1500 francs—was atoned for by the magnificence of the blue morocco portfolio in which the order for the money was enclosed—a delicate attention greatly appreciated by all concerned."—Lady Dilke's "French Painters of the Eighteenth Century," p. 6.

² *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset* (edit. 1825), p. 90.

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with the position and honours she had already procured for her brother. In 1754 she persuaded the King to make the estate of Marigny into a marquissate, and, two years later, to appoint him to the post of Secretary to the Order of Saint-Esprit, in virtue of which office he was entitled to wear the coveted *cordon bleu*. But young Poisson, unlike his sister, had no ambition beyond the advancement of art, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that the latter could persuade him to accept these honours. Modest and retiring to a fault, he was, moreover, keenly alive to the position occupied by the marchioness, and shrank from any appearance of desiring to profit by it. When Marmontel went to congratulate him on the rank which he had obtained in the Order of Saint-Esprit, he replied, "Monsieur Marmontel, the King wipes off the meanness of my birth."¹ "On another occasion," says the author of the *Contes moraux*, "on his return from the play, he told me that he had found himself in an awkward predicament. As he sat in the balcony, thinking only of deriving amusement from the little piece that was being performed, he suddenly heard one of the players, in the character of a drunken soldier, exclaim, 'What! shall I have a pretty sister and make nothing out of her, when so many others raise a fortune by their third cousins?' 'Only imagine,' said he, 'my embarrassment and confusion. The pit fortunately did not notice me.'"²

It was in vain that Madame de Pompadour endeavoured to prevail upon him to accept the survivorship of the office of *Commandeur des Ordres* to the King. The young man was firm in his refusal. "I

¹ *Mémoires de Marmontel* (edit. 1804), ii. 5.

² *Ibid.*

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spare you," said he, "many annoyances by depriving you of a slight satisfaction. The public would be unjust to me, however well I might fulfil the duties of my post. As to M. de Saint-Florentin's place, he may live five-and-twenty years, so that I should gain very little by it. King's mistresses are hated enough on their own account, without drawing upon themselves the hatred which is directed against Ministers."¹ An attempt which Madame de Pompadour made in 1757 after the dismissal of Machault to induce him to follow that Minister at the Marine was equally unsuccessful.

But the question on which Marigny—as we must now call him—and his sister were most frequently at variance, and which threatened more than once to end in an open rupture between them, was that of the former's marriage. Madame de Pompadour dreamed of a grand alliance for her brother, the *éclat* of which should reflect upon herself, and, in turn, suggested a daughter of the Duc de la Vallière, a daughter of Maréchal Lowendal, and a daughter of the Prince de Chimay. She tried to tempt him by the promise that, on the day that he married with her approval, she would make over to him, by way of a wedding present, the magnificent Hotel d'Évreux, which she had purchased in 1753, and by engaging to persuade the King to create him a duke, with remainder to his children; but all to no purpose. To her entreaties and remonstrances Marigny would calmly reply that he valued his freedom above all things, and would never consent to surrender it, except for the sake of a woman whom he could really love.

Sometimes, however, Madame de Pompadour would

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset* (edit. 1825), p. 189.

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become so importunate that, for the sake of peace and quiet, he would promise to give the question further consideration, and now and again to give a sort of half consent, which, however, he never failed to retract before matters were finally arranged. One day, Madame du Hausset tells us, a letter was brought to the marchioness, which she opened with an air of impatience, and, after reading it, angrily exclaimed: "This is from my brother. It is what he would not have dared to say to my face, so he writes. I had arranged a marriage for him with the daughter of a man of title; he appeared to be well inclined to it, and I, therefore, pledged my word. He now writes to me to the effect that he has made inquiries; that the parents are people of insufferable hauteur; that the daughter has been very badly brought up; that he has learned, on unquestionable authority, that when she heard of the marriage that was proposed for her, she spoke of the connection with the most supreme contempt; that he is quite certain on this point, and that I was more contemptuously spoken off than himself. In a word, he begs me to break off this marriage; but he has allowed me to go too far, and now he will make these people my implacable enemies. This has been put into his head by some of his flatterers; they do not wish him to change his mode of life, as very few of them would be received by his wife."¹

Madame de Pompadour made amends to the young lady in question for being thus compelled to break off the match by arranging another marriage for her. A few months later Marigny's rejected bride was involved in a very unpleasant scandal, and the marchioness was

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset* (édit. 1825), p. 46.

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fain to confess that, in this instance at least, her brother had been in the right.

It was not until after the death of his sister that Marigny met his fate in the person of a Mademoiselle Filleul, a very beautiful young lady, whose mother had been the *chère amie* of the financier Bouret, and who was suspected of being a natural daughter of Louis XV. The girl seems to have reciprocated the marquis's attachment, and the marriage under ordinary circumstances should have proved a very happy one. Unfortunately, the very reverse was the case. Marigny had always been of an extremely morbid and sensitive disposition, ever prone to look upon the dark side of any matter, and quick to take offence where none was intended. As a husband, moreover, he showed himself insanely jealous, even resenting his wife's affection for her mother and sister, while the attentions which she received wherever she went goaded him to fury. Marmontel relates that one evening at the Ridotto at Spa, whither he and Madame de Marigny's sister, the Comtesse de Seran, had accompanied the young couple, Marigny, apparently annoyed by the admiration which the marchioness's beauty was arousing, and the pleasure she was taking in the society of her sister, whom she had not seen for several months, after sitting for some time in gloomy silence, suddenly broke out into a torrent of reproaches, declaring that he was convinced that his presence was irksome to his wife, and that she hated and loathed him. Then, jumping up, he rushed out of the Ridotto, and returned to their inn, where he locked himself in his room. By her sister's advice, poor Madame de Marigny went to endeavour to pacify him, in a state of agitation "which would have melted the heart of a tiger"; but

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the marquis refused to admit her, and at daybreak next morning set off by himself for Holland, crying out to Marmontel as he drove away, "Adieu, my friend, pity the most unhappy of men!"¹

Through the intervention of their friends, husband and wife were afterwards reconciled; but other quarrels soon followed, and, eventually, Madame de Marigny transferred her affections to the Cardinal de Rohan, the hero of the Diamond Necklace episode, whom she is said to have followed about in the dress of an abbé. Poor Marigny, overwhelmed with grief, shame, and remorse, fell seriously ill, and, after much suffering, died at the age of fifty-four. He deserved a better fate.

If Madame de Pompadour was anxious for her brother's advancement in life, her projects on behalf of her little daughter, Alexandrine d'Étioles, were even more ambitious. The child was brought up in the Couvent de l'Assomption, where a luxurious suite of apartments was fitted up for her reception, and a lady of quality engaged as her *gouvernante*. Here she was treated with greater consideration than even the daughters of the noblest families in France, and was called by her baptismal name, with the prefix *Madame*, a form of address hitherto reserved for the princesses of the blood. Under these circumstances, it was hardly surprising that the little girl early gave promise of becoming as arrogant and haughty as her mother, and one day, we are told, the peace of the convent was very much disturbed, on account of a violent dispute on a question of precedence between "Madame" Alexandrine and little Mademoiselle de Soubise, afterwards Princesse de Condé.

¹ *Mémoires de Marmontel* (edit. 1804), iii. 83 *et seq.*

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Before this precious child had completed her eighth year, Madame de Pompadour had already begun to look about for a suitable alliance for her—an alliance which should not only confer upon her daughter the ægis of a great name, but should help to consolidate her own position at Court.

We have mentioned that Louis XV. had a natural son by the ill-fated Madame de Vintimille—the Comte du Luc—who bore so extraordinary a resemblance to the monarch that he was called the *demi-Louis*. Although there never was the slightest doubt as to the paternity of the boy, he had been born in wedlock, and was, therefore, heir to the title and estates of Vintimille; and the marchioness determined to arrange a marriage between the little count and Alexandrine, in order, as she confided to Madame du Hausset, that “her grandchildren might blend the resemblance of their grandfather and grandmother.”¹ In furtherance of this scheme, she bribed the boy’s tutor to bring him to Bellevue, where she and Alexandrine met them, as if by accident, and led the way to a part of the grounds to which she knew that the King, who was on a visit to the château, would presently come. When he appeared, she pointed to the children, who were playing together, and remarked what a beautiful couple they would make. Louis inquired the name of the boy, and, on being told who he was, appeared much embarrassed, and though he caressed Alexandrine, studiously avoided taking any notice of her companion. Nor did he seem at all struck with Madame de Pompadour’s matrimonial suggestion, and the marchioness had the mortification of seeing her little castle in Spain crumble away.²

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset* (edit. 1825), p. 87 *et seq.*

² *Ibid.*, p. 88.

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The favourite next cast her eyes upon the young Duc de Fronsac, the son and heir of her former enemy, Richelieu, by which alliance she hoped to attach the marshal entirely to her fortunes. In this project, however, she was again doomed to disappointment. Richelieu, greedy, dissolute, and unscrupulous as he was, was not without redeeming points in his character, and one of these was his jealousy for the honour of his family. He exercised the most vigilant care over the ladies of his house, and no breath of scandal had ever been permitted to taint the fair fame of one of them. He was, therefore, by no means anxious that the blood of Poisson, the absconding clerk, should be mingled with that of the great cardinal; but, unwilling to offend the marchioness, whom he was now as anxious to conciliate as he had formerly been to annoy, he returned an evasive answer, to the effect that, while fully appreciating the honour Madame de Pompadour proposed to confer upon his family and himself, he felt that he must first consult the wishes of the princes of the House of Lorraine, to whom his son was related on his mother's side.¹

Madame de Pompadour was sensible of the finesse of this reply, and turned to another quarter of the Court in search of a son-in-law. Negotiations were, accordingly, opened with the family of Chaulnes, which was poor, and, therefore, more inclined to complaisance; and it was arranged that, on attaining her thirteenth year, Alexandrine should espouse the Duc de Picquigny, the heir to the dukedom of Chaulnes, in return for which the Duc de Chaulnes was to receive the post of governor to the infant son of the Dauphin, and the duchess that of *gouvernante* to that prince's eldest daughter.

¹ *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, iii. 9.

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However these plans were destined never to be realised. In June 1754 the child upon whom Madame de Pompadour's hopes were centred was suddenly taken ill. An express was at once sent off to Choisy, where the Court then was, and Louis, on hearing the news, despatched two of the royal physicians to the convent; but they arrived too late. All kinds of ridiculous reports were spread as to the cause of the little girl's death, one of which was that she had been poisoned by the Jesuits; but there seems to be no doubt that it was due to natural causes.

The marchioness, who seems to have been passionately fond of the child, was overwhelmed with grief, and became so ill that "she had to be bled in the foot." The King did all in his power to console her; while the Queen, who had herself suffered a similar bereavement, sent a page to assure the favourite of her sympathy.

The mortal remains of poor Alexandrine were not allowed to remain long in the choir of the Couvent de l'Assomption, where they had been temporarily deposited. In the following October they were removed, with great ceremony, to the Church of the Capuchins in the Place Vendôme, and interred by the side of Madame Poisson in a vault which the marchioness had purchased some years before from the family of Créqui, and where, as if determined to carry her pomp and magnificence beyond the grave, she had prepared for herself a splendid mausoleum.

CHAPTER X

Insecurity of Madame de Pompadour's position—Attempts to supplant her—Growing enmity between the favourite and the Comte d'Argenson, Minister for War—Reasons for this—They dissemble their hostility—Madame de Pompadour secures the support of Machault, the Comptroller-General—D'Argenson out of favour with the King—Madame d'Estrades—Her treachery to Madame de Pompadour—She conspires with d'Argenson to overthrow the favourite—Madame de Choiseul-Romanet—Madame de Pompadour's kindness to her—Madame d'Estrades persuades her to enter the lists against the marchioness—"I am beloved; she is to be sent away!"—The Comte de Stainville betrays the conspiracy to Madame de Pompadour—Fate of Madame de Choiseul-Romanet—D'Argenson renews his intrigues—The favourite's position again seriously threatened—Mysterious disappearance of a letter written by the King to Madame de Pompadour—The marchioness's diplomacy—Disgrace of Madame d'Estrades—Bernis attempts to reconcile the favourite and d'Argenson—But fails.

NOTWITHSTANDING the fact that Madame de Pompadour's influence seemed to be continually on the increase, notwithstanding the fact that to all appearance her empire seemed unassailable, her dominion assured, the marchioness never allowed herself for a single instant to be lulled into a sense of false security. None knew better than herself on how precarious a tenure her power rested. She made and unmade Ministers, she appointed Ambassadors, she conferred pensions and

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places, she was flattered, she was feared, she was admired. But how long would it all last? That was the question she was asking herself all day and every day, when she rose in the morning and when she retired to rest at night, when the Théâtre des Petits Appartements rang with applause, and when the haughtiest nobles in France came to solicit her patronage. How long would it all last?

And what was the answer? So long, and so long only, as she was able to please the King, to divert him by a constant succession of new pleasures, new recreations, to charm away his *ennui*, to relieve him of care, to sup with him, to travel with him, to be at his beck and call—in a word, to consecrate her health, her tastes, her very will, to amuse a being who was as difficult to amuse as *le Grand Monarque*, and a great deal less worthy of the sacrifice; and all the while to remain fresh, and beautiful, and light-hearted, as if she had not a care in the world beyond the shape of a coiffure or the fit of a gown.

Nor was this all that was required of her. "My life," she said one day to her faithful waiting-woman, Madame du Hausset, "is like that of a Christian, a perpetual conflict." She was surrounded by snares and pitfalls, by open enemies and false friends, she was hated by many, she was envied by all. It was necessary for her to exercise unsleeping vigilance if she hoped to checkmate the machinations of those who were for ever on the watch to compass her downfall; to be ready to meet plot with counter-plot, mine with counter-mine; to see in every whispered conversation between two courtiers the beginning of an intrigue against herself, in every fresh face that for a moment attracted the monarch's

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admiration a potential rival. Never had woman so difficult a task ; never did woman bring to its accomplishment such masterly tact, such unwearied activity, such unflinching courage.

As early as 1747, when a suspicion seems to have arisen that the ardour of Louis's affection was beginning to wane, an attempt was made to supplant Madame de Pompadour by the friends of the beautiful Comtesse de Périgord. In justice to this lady, who was as virtuous as she was beautiful—a combination sufficiently rare in that scandalous age to call for some remark—it should be mentioned that she no sooner became aware of the odious designs of her relatives than she left the Court and retired to the country, where she remained for some years ;¹ and subsequent attempts on the part of the Princesse de Rohan and the Comtesse de la Marck, whose cause was championed by *her brother* the Duc d'Ayen,

¹ “The Comtesse de Périgord was as virtuous as she was beautiful. She became aware, on the occasion of several short visits to Choisy, that Louis XV. paid her an unusual amount of attention. Although she treated the King with as much coldness as was consistent with respect, and avoided him as far as possible, these precautions only served to inflame his ardour, and, eventually, he made her a most impassioned declaration. This estimable woman did not hesitate as to what course she should pursue. As, on the one hand, her honour made it impossible for her to reciprocate the King's passion, and, on the other, her profound reverence for her sovereign enjoined her not to trouble his peace of mind, she voluntarily exiled herself and retired to a country-seat called Chalais, near Barbezieux, where she had not resided for many years, and where, in consequence, the housekeeper's apartments were the only ones fit to receive her. From this place she wrote to the King informing him of the reason for her departure, and here she remained some years before returning to Paris, where fresh distractions had soon brought to Louis the peace of mind for which Madame de Périgord had deemed it her duty to make so great a sacrifice. Some years later the *dame d'honneur* to Mesdames died.

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were easily baffled by the vigilance and address of the favourite.¹

Scarcely, however, had the pretensions of these ladies been satisfactorily disposed of than Madame de Pompadour was called upon to face another, and far more formidable, intrigue, and one which would undoubtedly have been crowned with success had it not been for one of these totally unforeseen occurrences, which so frequently upset even the most deeply laid calculations. This conspiracy had its origin in the growing enmity between the favourite and the Minister for War, the Comte d'Argenson.

Marc Pierre Voyer de Paulmy, Comte d'Argenson, was born in 1696, the younger son of the Marquis d'Argenson who created the secret police and originated the *lettres de cachet*. After serving as Intendant of Touraine and of Paris, he became in 1743 Minister for War, at a time when the fortunes of France had sunk to a very low ebb indeed. The French armies, demoralised by defeat and decimated by disease, were in full retreat

Many great families applied for the post. To none, however, did the King vouchsafe any reply, but wrote to the Comtesse de Périgord: 'My daughters have just lost their lady of honour. That post, Madame, I intend for you, as much on account of your exalted virtues as on that of your family.'—*Mémoires de Madame Campan*, p. 387.

¹ Madame du Hausset mentions another lady, whom she calls the Comtesse de C——, who would appear to have made considerable progress in his Majesty's good graces, since she had actually formulated her terms of surrender. They included "fifty thousand crowns in money, a regiment for one of her relations, a bishopric for another, and the dismissal of Madame de Pompadour within fifteen days." The letter containing these modest requests fell into the hands of one of the King's *valets-de-chambre*, who informed the marchioness of its contents; but the latter only laughed and said, referring to her rival, "She drives too quickly, and will certainly be overturned on the road."

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on the Rhine, and the Croats and Pandours were already plundering and burning in Alsace. Undaunted by difficulties which might well have discouraged a less resolute man, d'Argenson immediately set to work to restore the shattered prestige of his country, and, by his vigour and skilful choice of generals, turned the fortunes of war in a single year, and won for France an honourable, if not very profitable, peace. The war over, he turned his attention to strengthening the military resources of the nation, introducing several much-needed reforms into the army, rebuilding and fortifying the border fortresses, and generally endeavouring to put things in readiness for any renewal of hostilities. A friend and fellow-student of Voltaire, whom he supplied with so many valuable materials for his *Siècle de Louis XV.*, that the author was wont to declare that it had been written in the War Office, he gained an honourable name by his judicious patronage of literature, and it was to him that Diderot and d'Alembert dedicated their famous *Encyclopédie*.

D'Argenson had been a great favourite with the King; indeed, Louis was accustomed to speak of him as "his own Minister"—one wholly devoted to his interests, who could be trusted to take the burden of responsibility off his sovereign's shoulders and spare him those endless petty details of administration which he so detested. D'Argenson, on his part, a born courtier, took every care to render himself indispensable to the monarch, never leaving his side, save when the gout, from which he was a constant sufferer, held him in thrall, and even then always making a point of keeping himself in constant communication with his royal master. He had every hope of one day becoming Prime Minister, and of establishing over the feeble and indolent Louis as

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strong a hold as Fleury had formerly possessed when his plans received an abrupt check through the rise of Madame de Pompadour.

That the War Minister should regard the advent of so formidable a rival in the King's favour with equanimity was hardly to be expected ; and as time went on, and Madame de Pompadour began to interfere more and more in affairs of State, and, in turn, to contrive the fall of Orry, of the count's own brother the Marquis d'Argenson, and of his friend Maurepas, his animosity increased, and, eventually, he began to cast about him for some means of avenging his former colleagues and, at the same time, ridding himself of what he conceived to be the principal bar to his own advancement.

On the lady's side, causes of complaint were not wanting. Whereas, since the dismissal of Maurepas, she had found in the other Ministers pliant enough instruments of her will, d'Argenson had stubbornly refused to surrender his independence. At the time of Orry's disgrace it was in a large measure through his influence that her efforts to replace the dismissed Comptroller-General by a creature of her own and the brothers Pâris had been frustrated. Again, when she had condescended to solicit the lucrative appointment of Intendant of the Post Office for her cousin, M. Ferrand, the amateur musician of the Théâtre des Petits Appartements, d'Argenson, in whose gift the post lay, had ignored her request and nominated another candidate. Finally, he had had the temerity to criticise her arrangements for diverting the King, and even to suggest that some steps ought to be taken to put a stop to the prodigal expenditure which they entailed—a proceeding which, in her eyes, constituted an absolutely unpardonable offence, and decided her to send him to

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join Orry and Maurepas as soon as a favourable opportunity should present itself.

It will thus be readily understood that in this antagonism between the crafty and ambitious Minister and the haughty and vindictive mistress, both equally determined to exercise the controlling voice in the State, and both equally unscrupulous as to the means they employed to attain their ends, there lay all the elements of a very interesting struggle.

Bitter as was the hostility between d'Argenson and the favourite, it must not be imagined that that hostility was allowed to develop into an open rupture. Both parties possessed in a pre-eminent degree those two qualities so highly esteemed by diplomatists—patience and the art of dissimulation—and had, therefore, a natural predilection for subterranean methods of warfare. Moreover, both were fully alive to the fact that if they had much to gain, they had also much at stake, and neither was, in consequence, at all disposed to make any move which, should it fail of its purpose, might leave the aggressor at the other's mercy. Therefore, while fully resolved to leave no stone unturned to achieve their objects, they judged it best to continue to all appearance on terms of friendship and even of cordiality. Thus, soon after Maurepas's disgrace, we find d'Argenson giving a grand dinner-party in honour of Madame de Pompadour, which in the opinion of Versailles effectually disposed of the rumours which had credited him with resenting the dismissal of his colleague; while in December 1750 it was remarked that the War Minister was the only member of the Council who had been invited to spend the night at Bellevue on the occasion of the King's visit to the marchioness's new château.

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But, in the midst of these mutual civilities, d'Argenson was using all his powers of persuasion to induce Richelieu to resume his intrigues against the favourite; while the lady was no less actively engaged in endeavouring to win over Machault, the Comptroller-General.

This Minister had for some time been in doubt as to which cause he should espouse. He was at first inclined to that of d'Argenson, partly out of gratitude for the share the latter had taken in procuring him his post, and partly to please his mistress, Madame de Saint-Florentin, who detested the favourite. He had, however, his price—most statesmen had in those days—and Madame de Pompadour's offer to obtain for him the office of Keeper of the Seals in return for his support was too great a temptation to be resisted. A few days after his appointment the King happened to complain to the marchioness that some private matters on which he had had occasion to consult his consort were being discussed at Court, whereupon Madame de Pompadour adroitly succeeded in casting suspicion upon d'Argenson, who had succeeded Maurepas in the confidence of the Queen and the Royal Family. The consequence was that on the day on which Machault took his place at the Council as Keeper of the Seals, the King said coldly to the War Minister, "Monsieur, you will now have to draw back a little." Such a speech was regarded by all present as a sign that d'Argenson was in disgrace; and this opinion was confirmed a little later when it became known that Machault had been chosen to instruct the young Dauphin in the procedure of the Council—a privilege which, according to all precedent, belonged to d'Argenson, as the *doyen* of the Secretaries of State.

So the first honours of the combat remained with

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Madame de Pompadour ; but it was not long before her adversary had succeeded in more than equalising matters.

We have had occasion to mention several times in the course of this history a certain Madame d'Estrades, who was a cousin by marriage of Madame de Pompadour, and had been one of that lady's sponsors on the occasion of her presentation at Court. She was a little stout woman, with a most unprepossessing cast of countenance, while her mind, according to Marmontel, was "as ugly as her person."¹ Under the plea of kinship and by assiduous flattery she had succeeded in insinuating herself into the confidence of the marchioness, who rewarded her supposed fidelity by obtaining for her the post of *dame d'atour* to the King's daughters, and by frequently inviting her to her supper-parties and the performances of the Théâtre des Petits Appartements. As time went on, however, and the favourite's power increased, Madame d'Estrades's feelings underwent a change, and, while continuing to remain on terms of affectionate intimacy with her relative, to accompany her on all her journeys, and to be the recipient of all her confidences, she, in reality, cherished towards her one of those bitter enmities which people occasionally conceive against those whose only offence, so far as they are concerned, lies in having outdistanced them in the race of life.²

The astute d'Argenson, who had by some means discovered the nature of the sentiments which Madame d'Estrades entertained towards her patroness, was not slow

¹ *Mémoires de Marmontel*, ii. 31.

² Madame du Hausset declares that Madame d'Estrades actually attempted to supplant Madame de Pompadour in the good graces of the King, and relates a story in proof of her assertion, which, however, is a little too *gai* for us to venture upon.

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to recognise the importance of having an ally in the enemy's camp, and forthwith determined to secure her co-operation. In pursuance of this resolution, he paid her the most assiduous court; and succeeded in establishing first friendly and afterwards tender relations with the ill-favoured little countess, a move which his brother, the marquis, characterises as a "masterly stroke of diplomacy."¹

This *rapprochement*, of which Madame de Pompadour, strange to say, does not appear to have had the faintest suspicion, was, of course, of inestimable advantage to the War Minister in his designs against the favourite, as Madame d'Estrades enjoyed the latter's entire confidence and faithfully reported to her lover everything that took place in Madame de Pompadour's apartments, and especially the incessant fear of the marchioness lest the fickle monarch should transfer his affections to some younger woman.

Now there happened to be at Court at this time a certain Madame de Choiseul-Romanet, a very charming girl of nineteen and a niece of Madame d'Estrades. This young lady, like her aunt, was under considerable obligations to Madame de Pompadour, who had not only arranged her marriage, but, by way of a wedding-present, had obtained for her the post of lady-in-waiting to the princesses, and for her husband that of gentleman-in-waiting (*menin*) to the Dauphin. The favourite treated Madame de Choiseul with much kindness, allowing her to come and go as she pleased, and frequently including her in the King's supper-parties.

The girl, who, in addition to her beauty, was bright and witty, and possessed of an inexhaustible flow of animal

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson*, iv. 59.

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spirits, which not even the presence of her sovereign could entirely restrain, soon made a favourable impression on the bored and listless monarch ; but at first he seems to have treated her merely as a spoiled child and to have given Madame de Pompadour no cause for uneasiness. Nor, indeed, would there appear to have been any until the detestable Madame d'Estrades conceived the infamous design of using her young and innocent niece as the instrument for the undoing of their common benefactress. To this end, she deliberately set herself to corrupt the girl, whose head was already a little turned by the attentions paid her by the King ; and succeeded but too well.

Carefully drilled by her aunt, Madame de Choiseul, following the example set her by Madame de Pompadour under somewhat similar circumstances, was heard to declare that "she was incapable of being false to her husband ; that she detested all the young men she had met at Court ; and that she would be proof against every one, save the King himself." This speech Madame d'Estrades and d'Argenson, who was, of course, a party to the conspiracy, took care should reach the ears of the King, who rose to the bait so artfully prepared for him and soon passed from harmless banter to serious love-making.

Here, however, he encountered unexpected opposition. Madame de Choiseul's advisers were far cleverer than those of Madame de Pompadour's earlier rivals ; and, acting under their instructions, the girl resolutely refused to be made the victim of an ephemeral passion, and, though the King heaped favours upon her and her relatives, accorded nothing in return.

So matters continued for some time, the monarch

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growing daily more ardent in his wooing, the lady remaining inflexible. At length, after Louis had injured his knee in creeping down the staircase in the dark, with the intention of paying a surprise visit to the object of his admiration, Madame d'Estrades and d'Argenson decided that the farce had gone on long enough, and that it was time that the virtue of Madame de Choiseul should succumb. Accordingly, having carefully impressed upon the girl the importance of insisting on the immediate dismissal of Madame de Pompadour as the very first condition of her surrender, they awaited with impatience the result of an interview between Madame de Choiseul and the King, at which they had reason to believe the matter would be definitely settled.

We will let Dubois, d'Argenson's private secretary, who was in his master's confidence, relate what followed:—

“The rendezvous was granted; the young lady had gone to it; and the interview still continued, while M. d'Argenson, Madame d'Estrades, Quesnay, and myself were together in the Minister's closet. We two were silent witnesses; but M. d'Argenson and Madame d'Estrades were intensely excited and very anxious as to the issue. After we had been waiting a considerable time, Madame de Choiseul enters, with her hair dishevelled, and in a state of excitement which announced her triumph. Madame d'Estrades flies to meet her with open arms, and inquires if she has gained her point? ‘Yes,’ replied she. ‘I have gained it; I am beloved; he is happy; she is to be sent away; he has given me his promise.’ At these words there was a burst of joy in the cabinet. Quesnay alone remained unmoved. ‘Doctor,’ said d'Argenson to him, ‘there will be no change so far as you are concerned, and we hope you

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will remain.' Quesnay rose and coldly replied, 'Monsieur le Comte, I have been attached to Madame de Pompadour in her prosperity and shall be equally so in her disgrace'; and he immediately left the room. We were astounded, but no one felt the least mistrust. 'I know him,' said Madame d'Estrades, 'he is not a man to betray us.'"¹ And, indeed, it was not from the honest doctor, but from a totally unexpected quarter that Madame de Pompadour learned what was going forward, and was thus enabled to outwit the conspirators at the very moment that their triumph seemed assured.

The dismissal of Madame de Pompadour was by no means the only condition which Madame de Choiseul had sought to impose upon her royal lover. The value she set upon her charms was an exalted one. She had already obtained for her husband—"the greatest brute at Court," the Marquis d'Argenson calls him—the post of *inspecteur* of the forces, and she now demanded that the Choiseul family should be recognised as of the royal blood, and treated as cousins, in virtue of a marriage which one of their ancestors had contracted with a princess of the House of Bourbon. To this preposterous demand the King not unnaturally demurred, and wrote to the lady, pointing out the difficulty of acceding to her wishes and suggesting a compromise. Uncertain as to what answer she should make, Madame de Choiseul decided to take counsel with one of her male relatives, and, accordingly, laid the King's letter before her cousin, the Comte de Stainville (afterwards the Duc de Choiseul), who was well known to be one of Madame de Pompadour's most bitter enemies, and had even gone so far as to dub himself "*le chevalier de Maurepas*," in

¹ *Mémoires de Marmontel*, ii. 32.

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order to show how keen were his sympathies with the exiled Minister.

Now, unfortunately for the success of Madame de Choiseul's plans, it happened that the count, who was extremely ambitious, had lately been seriously considering whether it would not be advisable for him to abandon his attitude of hostility to the favourite, seeing that without her support, or at any rate her neutrality, all avenues to advancement must inevitably remain closed to him. After a short mental struggle, ambition gained the day, and at the very moment of his cousin's visit he was racking his brains to devise some means whereby he might hope to appease an animosity which his own folly had provoked.

No sooner did Madame de Choiseul inform him how matters stood, than he recognised that here was an opportunity of gaining by one stroke what years of assiduous flattery might fail to accomplish. (He had, it should be mentioned, no love either for d'Argenson or Madame d'Estrades, and very little faith in his volatile cousin's ability to retain the King's affections for any length of time.) Accordingly, under the pretext of requiring time for reflection before advising the lady as to what form her reply should take, he induced her to leave the letter in his hands until the following day, and then, going straight to Madame de Pompadour's apartments, boldly requested an interview.

He was admitted, and, anticipating the marchioness's inquiry as to the reason of this most unexpected visit, exclaimed, "Madame, you look upon me as one of your enemies. You are unjust enough to believe that I am a party to the intrigues that are going on to discredit you with the King. Pause! Read this, and then judge me!"

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With these words, he handed her the letter which Louis had written to Madame de Choiseul, declaring that though he had no love for the favourite, he was full of esteem for the woman; that a frivolous girl like his cousin, did she succeed in her endeavours to supplant her, would only abuse the privileges of her high position, and that, in taking the step he had, he was actuated solely by his desire for the welfare of the State, and regard for the happiness of his kinsman, M. de Choiseul. Then, without waiting for Madame de Pompadour's thanks, he bowed and withdrew, to receive not long afterwards the post of Ambassador to the Vatican, as an earnest of still greater favours to come.

Once aware of the plans of the conspirators, Madame de Pompadour had little difficulty in counteracting them. The danger to her had lain in the secrecy with which her enemies had conducted their operations. As soon as they found themselves confronted with the necessity of giving battle in the open, they ceased to be formidable, more especially as d'Argenson and Madame d'Estrades did not dare to avow their connection with the affair. What passed between the marchioness and the lover who had been so ready to cast her off never transpired. It is probable, however, that the favourite, with her usual tact, affected to believe that the King had been the unwilling victim of a designing woman, and that the pusillanimous monarch, who would have sacrificed half his kingdom to avoid an hour's bickering, did not attempt to contradict her, and abandoned his new enchantress without the semblance of resistance.

As for that misguided young person, her fate was soon decided. She was denounced as "a little serpent whom I have nourished in my bosom"; accused of having

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been the mistress of a certain Chevalier de Bissy; forbidden to present herself at the royal supper-parties, and, as soon as her week of attendance on the King's daughters was over, ordered to return at once to Paris, "as a forward minx, who had misconducted herself and ogled the King."¹ She did not long survive her discomfiture, as she died six months later; and just as Madame de Montespan had formerly been accused of having poisoned her rival, Mademoiselle de Fontanges, so now the same odious charge was brought against Madame de Pompadour, equally, of course, without foundation.²

Madame de Pompadour, though perfectly well aware that this affair had been in reality the work of Madame d'Estrades, aided by the counsels of d'Argenson, did not for the moment feel herself strong enough to take any active steps against that intriguing lady, still less against the crafty and powerful Minister. She, therefore, affected to ignore the part which they had played in the matter, and contented herself with forbidding Madame d'Estrades to receive her niece at Court, and admitting the Duchesse de Brancas to the place in her confidence which the countess had formerly occupied.

Meanwhile d'Argenson, who was one of those men upon whom failure only acts as a stimulus to renewed exertions, had, by a series of dexterous moves, recovered much of the ground which he had recently lost, and had

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson*, iv. 121.

² Referring to these charges, the Marquis d'Argenson, who was, of course, almost as hostile to the favourite as his brother the War Minister, says: "They are merely groundless rumours, emanating from malicious courtiers, and repeated by the foreign journals."—*Mémoires*, iv. 142.

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become a rallying-point for all who, for one reason or another, were disaffected towards the favourite or her supporters. He had, by specious promises, won over to his side the brothers Pâris, who considered that their interests were threatened by the financial schemes of Machault, and also the Marquis de Puisieux and the Comte de Saint-Séverin, the negotiator of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, both of whom felt themselves aggrieved by the contemptuous manner in which Madame de Pompadour had lately treated them. Furthermore, he had succeeded in gaining the goodwill of the *Rigoristes*, as the party of the Queen and the Dauphin was called, by artfully pretending to share their pious horror of the King's criminal connection with a married woman, and that of the clergy, by espousing their cause in the quarrel between them and the Parliament of Paris. Thus, he now had at his back a most powerful party—the financiers of the capital, the priesthood, the Jesuits, the Queen, the Dauphin, and the Royal Family, including the Prince de Conti, the only one of the princes of the blood who had free access to the King and was permitted to speak his mind without restraint.

Madame de Pompadour, thoroughly alarmed at the course matters were taking, and, particularly, at the favour with which d'Argenson was regarded by the Royal Family, strove to counteract his influence, and, with this object, persuaded Louis to give Madame Adélaïde a suite of apartments communicating with his own, which she knew the princess had long desired to possess, but which the King until then had always refused to let her have. So far, however, from being grateful for this concession, Madame Adélaïde used her increased opportunities for conversation with her father

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to poison his mind against the favourite, and, together with her sisters, habitually spoke of her by a sobriquet which is rather too coarse for modern print.

The temporary pacification of the Parliament of Paris in the summer of 1754—an event largely due to the intervention of d'Argenson—brought that Minister once more into high favour with his royal master; while, about the same time, the marchioness perceptibly lost ground, owing to the King's annoyance at the reports which reached his ears of the prodigal magnificence which the lady was maintaining in her various town and country houses. It is only fair to Madame de Pompadour to observe that these reports were, for the most part, untrue, and seem to have originated in the fertile brain of the malicious Madame d'Estrades.

Emboldened by their successes, d'Argenson and his accomplice now took but little trouble to disguise their intentions. "My brother is closeted four hours a day with the d'Estrades woman," writes the Marquis d'Argenson; "they are moving heaven and earth to bring about the dismissal of Madame de Pompadour." He adds that the War Minister is so much occupied in plotting against the favourite, that he is neglecting the duties of his department, and prophesies that no good will result from all these miserable intrigues.

Once more Madame de Pompadour's position seemed seriously menaced, and once more Fortune declared itself on her side, and, by a singular coincidence, it was again a letter which was destined to be the instrument of her enemies' discomfiture.

At the beginning of August 1755 the King wrote a confidential letter to Madame de Pompadour, in reference to a meeting of the Parliament of Paris, and enclosed

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therein a report which he had that morning received from Berryer, the Lieutenant of Police. The marchioness, who happened to be rather unwell, and who had, in consequence, remained in bed until late in the day, placed the letter, after reading it, on a table by her bedside. In the course of the morning Madame d'Estrades, with whom, as we have said, the favourite still kept up some show of friendship, called to see her, and, taking a seat close to the bed, remained for some time in conversation with her former patroness. After she had taken her departure, Madame de Pompadour told her waiting-woman to bring her the King's letter; but it had disappeared from the table where it had lain, and all attempts to find it were unsuccessful.

When Louis arrived to pay his usual morning visit, the marchioness at once told him of the loss of the letter and of her suspicions, and urged him to mark his sense of such outrageous conduct by ordering Madame d'Estrades to leave the Court. The monarch, though extremely annoyed at the idea of the letter falling into the hands of people for whom it was not intended, hesitated to punish Madame d'Estrades on merely circumstantial evidence, and pleaded that his daughters were greatly attached to their *dame d'atour*, and would be inconsolable if she were sent away. Thereupon Madame de Pompadour, who was aware that there was a temporary coldness between Madame Adélaïde and the countess, assured the King that he must be mistaken, and, begging him to excuse her for a few moments, hastened to the princess's apartments, and obtained from her, in an unguarded moment, the confession that "she was tired of Madame d'Estrades." Armed with this admission, she returned to the King, and after some further resistance

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on his part, to overcome which the favourite did not scruple to employ tears and reproaches, gained her point.

Shortly before his visit to Madame de Pompadour, Louis had sent an invitation to Madame d'Estrades to join his supper-party that evening. As no time was mentioned in the invitation, and as the lady had an engagement in Paris in the afternoon, she again repaired to Madame de Pompadour's apartments and inquired at what hour she must return for supper.

"At the usual hour, Countess," answered the triumphant favourite, with a smile.

Madame d'Estrades, accordingly, started for Paris, but on her return journey she was met by a courier, who handed her a letter from Saint-Florentin, the *Commandeur des Ordres* to the King, informing her, on behalf of his Majesty, that her services as *dame d'atour* to the princesses were dispensed with, and forbidding her to return to Versailles. She was permitted, however, as some compensation for her abrupt dismissal, to retain the emoluments of her office.

A few months after the dismissal of Madame d'Estrades, Bernis returned from his embassy to Venice. Madame de Pompadour hastened to pour her troubles into her old friend's sympathetic ear, and the abbé, who appears to have been honestly shocked at the lamentable condition in which he found the Court and the country,¹ represented to his patroness the disastrous consequences

¹ "No men-of-war to protect our commerce; our army, though so large, inefficient and insubordinate; our frontier-fortresses ill-provisioned and partly dismantled; no unanimity in the Council; open war between M. d'Argenson and M. de Machault; the Prince de Conti, although holding no office, meddling in every department of the State and at

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of these miserable quarrels and implored her to sacrifice her own personal feelings to the welfare of the State and be reconciled to d'Argenson. Although at first very reluctant to follow his advice, she eventually consented, and accepted his offer of mediation. D'Argenson, however, interpreted these friendly overtures as a confession of weakness on the part of his enemy, and haughtily refused to even consider them, alleging that the dismissal of Madame d'Estrades had been a direct insult to himself. So Bernis's well-meant endeavours to bring about a better understanding came to nothing, and the War Minister continued his machinations against the favourite, with what result we shall presently see.

variance with Madame de Pompadour; the King endeavouring to hold the balance between the contending parties; scandalous extravagance at Court; the people in a state of misery; no capacity, no patriotism, no commanders either military or naval, though we are on the eve of war (with England).”—*Mémoires et Lettres du Cardinal de Bernis*, i. 205.

CHAPTER XI

The Parc-aux-Cerfs—Conflict of opinion in regard to its situation—The mystery solved by M. Le Roi—History of the old deer-park of Versailles—No. 4, Rue Saint Médéric—A secret agent of Louis XV. purchases it, in his own name, on behalf of the King—Exaggerated reports as to the character of this establishment—*La petite Morfil*—The King's attentions to her—Madame d'Estrées intrigues with her against Madame de Pompadour—*La petite Morfil* is sent away—The King assumes an incognito when visiting the Parc-aux-Cerfs—Madame du Hausset receives a commission—The young lady in the Avenue de Saint-Cloud—The "Polish count"—Madame de Pompadour's conduct in this matter considered.

IF Madame de Pompadour feared titled rivals and had recourse to every means in her power to prevent them approaching the King, she, on the other hand, was full of indulgence for the frailties of her royal lover, always provided that his choice happened to fall upon women of humble birth, who cared for nothing but money or what money could purchase. She did even more than close her eyes to the dissolute monarch's continuous infidelities, and there have not been wanting those who have gone so far as to accuse her of encouraging and even consenting to play the degrading rôle of *entremetteur* in the obscure amours, for which the notorious Parc-aux-Cerfs was the rendezvous.

There is no circumstance which has rendered more

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odious the name of Louis XV., and which, at the same time, has given rise to such diversity of opinion among both contemporary chroniclers and historians as the mysterious establishment known as the Parc-aux-Cerfs. The best informed writers appear to have been ignorant as to its locality. Some, misled by its name, asserted that it was an old hunting-lodge surrounded by gardens and woods, which Louis XV. converted into a kind of little palace; others confounded it with the Hermitage of Madame de Pompadour; while a few even denied the existence of any such place and affected to regard it as one of those myths in which French history is so prolific.¹ In fact, no one was able to pronounce with any degree of certainty where it had been situated until about forty years ago, when, thanks to the investigations of M. Le Roi, the Librarian of Versailles, the mystery was at length solved.

In order, however, to enable the reader to understand the importance of M. Le Roi's discovery, it will be necessary to say a few words about the early history of Versailles.

When Louis XIII. bought the *seigneurie* of Versailles and built thereon the little hunting-lodge which was afterwards transformed into the famous palace, it was with the primary object of enjoying greater facilities for the chase, of which he was passionately fond, as the manor was situated in the midst of a densely wooded country. Accordingly, one of his first cares was to take measures for the rearing and preservation of the animals

¹ To this last class belongs that redoubtable champion of the Bourbons, M. Cœffé, who declares that the whole story was an impudent fabrication of the philosophers, invented with the object of discrediting the monarchy. His arguments are ingenious, but unconvincing.

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most frequently hunted, particularly deer, and, for this purpose, he enclosed the whole of the land which now lies between the Rue de Satory, the Rue des Rossignols, and the Rue Saint-Médéric, and gave to it the name of the *Parc-aux-Cerfs*.

During the greater part of the succeeding reign this *Parc-aux-Cerfs* was suffered to remain intact, and the city then consisted of old Versailles and of the new town, forming together a single parish—that of Notre-Dame. But towards the end of the seventeenth century the rapid growth of Versailles determined the King to sacrifice the deer-park ; and so, in 1694, the walls were pulled down, the trees uprooted, the keepers' lodges destroyed, the ground levelled, and streets and houses began to spring up on all sides.

After the death of Louis XIV., the importance of Versailles, wholly dependent as it was on the presence of a luxurious Court, declined greatly, and building operations were for a time almost entirely suspended. However, with the decision of Louis XV. to reside there, as his predecessor had done, and the return of the Court, came a renewed lease of prosperity ; the population, which had been about 80,000 at the close of the previous reign, was soon doubled, and so many houses were constructed on the site of the old *Parc-aux-Cerfs*, and that quarter of the town became so crowded, that the authorities decided to divide the city into two parts and to create a new parish, forming what is now the parish of Saint-Louis.¹

But to come to the mysterious establishment of Louis XV.

When *le Grand Monarque* decided to sacrifice the old

¹ *Le Roi's Curiosités historiques*, p. 230.

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deer-park, the land was distributed among a number of people, the majority of whom were attached to the Royal Household. Thus it was that the ground now occupied by Nos. 2 and 4 Rue Saint-Médéric came into the possession of a certain Jacques Desnoues, one of the King's *valets-de-chambre*, who built there a house surrounded by a garden, which, in 1712, he sold to another of Louis's personal attendants, who, in his turn, disposed of it to a citizen of Versailles named Crémer. This Crémer, for the sake of greater privacy, walled in the property, in such a way as to block the Rue des Tournelles and the Rue Saint-Médéric and form two blind alleys; and, on his death, which occurred in 1740, bequeathed the house and part of the garden to his son and the remainder to his widow, who utilised it to build for herself another house, now No. 2 Rue Saint-Médéric.

In 1755 when the confidential agents of Louis XV. were in search of a house where the King could carry on his amours secure from all fear of publicity, they fixed upon Crémer's (No. 4), which, situated as it was in a retired quarter of the Parc-aux-Cerfs, at the bottom of a *cul-de-sac*, and without any other houses in the immediate vicinity, save that of the widow Crémer, whose windows, however, did not command a view of the approach to her son's residence, was exactly suited to their requirements.

There was, however, a difficulty in the way. If the King himself, or his agents, who were well known, treated directly for the purchase of the house, secrecy would no longer be possible, and the use to which it was intended to be put would very quickly be suspected. The negotiations were, therefore, entrusted to a third party, one Vallet, a tipstaff of the Châtelet de Paris,

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who bought the house in his own name, and himself discharged the rates and taxes as they became due. These proceedings no doubt account for much of the mystery which for more than a century surrounded this establishment, for no one, of course, had the least suspicion that under the name of this Vallet was concealed that of the King of France. Crémer himself was completely hoodwinked and believed Vallet to be the *bonâ-fide* purchaser of his property, but that worthy, as soon as the sale had been completed, repaired alone to a notary's office and directed him to draw up the following declaration, which was discovered by M. Le Roi in the Archives of Versailles, where it had long lain without any one suspecting the interest which attached to it :—

“To-day there has appeared before the undersigned counsellors of the King, notaries to the Châtelet de Paris, the Sieur François Vallet, bailiff of the aforesaid Châtelet de Paris, there residing, Rue des Déchargeurs, parish of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, who has made a declaration to the effect that he neither has nor claims to have any interest whatsoever in the purchase which has just been made in his name, from Jean-Michel-Denis Crémer and his wife, of a house situated at Versailles, Rue Saint-Médéric, parish of Saint-Louis, with its dependencies, by contract approved by the aforesaid notaries, of whom M^e Patu, being one of them, has this day received the draft ; but that the purchase is *for and to the use of the King, the price having been paid with money belonging to His Majesty furnished for that purpose*. That is the reason why he makes this declaration, consenting that His Majesty should enjoy, use, and dispose of the said house in full ownership, without payment for the same, such payment

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being made in the name of the said person here present, of the rights of assignment, and sale, and *centième denier*, and the enjoyment and collection of the rents, which may also be made in his name, *without prejudice to the rights acquired by His Majesty in the said house and its dependencies*. And he further declares that the copy of the said contract of purchase and the titles set out therein have been delivered by him into the hands of His Majesty's *chargé des ordres*, and have been accepted on behalf of His Majesty by the undersigned notaries.

“Executed at Paris, this 25th of November 1755,
and signed,

“VALLET—PATU-BROCHANT.”¹

“This,” says M. Le Roi, “was without a doubt the little house of the Parc-aux-Cerfs which so long remained undiscovered. It was here that from 1755 to 1771 were successively installed the young girls whom the infamous ministers to the royal pleasures offered to the jaded senses of Louis XV.”²

The ignorance of the situation of this establishment, which, prior to M. Le Roi's investigations, existed even

¹ Le Roi's *Curiosités historiques*, p. 236. In May 1771, when Madame du Barry held undisputed sway over the heart of Louis XV., this house was sold to a man named Sévin, an usher in the household of Madame Victoire, the King's daughter, for 16,000 livres. In the deed of sale, the King, and *not* Vallet, appears as owner of the property, and the royal signature is affixed to the document.

² Le Roi's *Curiosités historiques*, p. 237. By a singular coincidence, a year or two after M. Le Roi had published the result of his investigations, the *Nouveaux Mémoires du Duc de Richelieu* appeared, which confirm his statements in every particular, save that the duke, possibly through a slip of the pen, puts the date of Vallet's purchase of the house as November 1757, instead of November 1755.

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among usually well-informed writers, extended also to its character, and gave rise to the most exaggerated stories of what took place there. For example, in d'Angerville's *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, published in 1781, which, in spite of a number of minor inaccuracies, is a work of considerable value, we find the following passage:—

“Independent of the injury which this abominable institution inflicted on morality, it is dreadful to contemplate the enormous sums which it must have cost the State. In fact, it would be impossible to estimate the expenses of that series of agents of all kinds, principal and subordinate, who were being constantly employed in scouring the kingdom in search of recruits for this establishment. When to this is added the sums given to those whom, although they did not have the happiness to find favour in the eyes of the sultan, it was nevertheless necessary to indemnify for their services, their discretion, and, above all, for his contempt; the rewards given to those more fortunate nymphs who gratified the temporary desires of the monarch, and the pensions paid to those who bore him children, we may conclude that there was not one of them who has not been a charge of a million livres at least to the public treasury. Let us only reckon that two in a week passed through this sink of infamy, that is to say, a thousand in ten years, and we shall arrive at a total of a *thousand million livres* (£40,000,000).”¹

Lacretelle, too, a serious historian, from whom one might have expected better things, speaks of the number of young women who at different times inhabited the Parc-aux-Cerfs as “immense,” and asserts that numbers

¹ *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, iii. 12.

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of them were "kidnapped" by the agents of the King.¹

The utter absurdity of such statements as these will be understood when we mention that, according to Le Roi, the house in the Rue Saint-Médéric was so small that it was hardly possible to accommodate more than one lady at a time, with her duenna and the servant who waited upon them.²

The secrets of the Parc-aux-Cerfs were so carefully guarded that very little authentic information with regard to its various inmates has come down to us. There was, however, one young lady who achieved a certain amount of notoriety—the one, in fact, for whose accommodation the house was originally taken. This was a girl of the name of Murphy, commonly called "*la petite Morfil*," whose sister was a well-known artists' model, and who had herself sat to Boucher for the head of the Virgin in a picture of the *Holy Family*, which hung on the walls of the Queen's oratory, and "which the pious Marie Leczinska adored without troubling herself

¹ Lacretelle's *Histoire du Dix-Huitième Siècle*, iii. 169.

² Le Roi's *Curiosités historiques*, p. 238. This is confirmed by Madame du Hausset in her *Mémoires*: "A commissioner of the Navy, named Mercier, who had had some share in the education of the Abbé de Bourbon (a son of Louis XV. by Mademoiselle de Romans) was better acquainted with this establishment than any one else, and this is what he told one of his friends: 'The house was very unpretentious in appearance; there was as a rule only one young lady there. The wife of a clerk in the War Office acted as companion and played cards or did tapestry-work with her. This woman used to say that she was her niece and when the King was away from Versailles, used to remove with her into the country.'" And Madame du Hausset says herself: "There were hardly ever more than two ladies there, and very often only one. Sometimes the Parc-aux-Cerfs was empty for five or six months at a time."

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about the original.”¹ The Marquis d’Argenson says that she was the daughter of a cobbler, but other writers assert that her father was an Irish Jacobite officer of good family. She was about sixteen years of age, extremely beautiful, and with manners superior to her station in life. Lebel, the King’s *valet-de-chambre*, had found her in Paris, where she was apprenticed to a dressmaker, and, having bribed her parents and her employer, had brought her to his master, upon whom she made so favourable an impression that he installed her in a little house at Versailles, “with a *gouvernante*, a lady’s maid, a cook, and two men-servants.” This was before the days of the Parc-aux-Cerfs, to which, however, she removed as soon as it was acquired by the King.

At first this affair was kept a profound secret, but after she had borne the King a daughter, the relations which existed between them soon became public property, and the lady visited him at the château and had a suite of apartments reserved for her use at Fontainebleau. Indeed, Louis’s attentions to her at this period appear to have been so marked, that we find Cardinal Durini, the Papal Nuncio, informing the Vatican that “the new Irish star” is daily growing in favour; that the King is loading her with costly presents, and that the reign of Madame de Pompadour is drawing to a close.

This seems, also, to have been the opinion of Maréchale

¹ *Nouveaux Mémoires du Duc de Richelieu*, iii. 389. From this Soulavie has evolved an altogether improbable story, which is quoted, in all seriousness, by the brothers De Goncourt in their *Madame de Pompadour*, to the effect that Madame de Pompadour, presumably with the intention of weaning the King from some titled rival, had caused this picture to be painted. Louis was taken to see it, and after falling in love with the picture, fell in love with the original.

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d'Estrées,¹ a bitter enemy of the favourite, who, in consequence, having succeeded in gaining Mademoiselle Murphy's confidence, urged her to aspire to the position of acknowledged mistress and to lose no opportunity of speaking disparagingly of Madame de Pompadour when alone with the King.

The girl proved only too apt a tool; and on the very next occasion on which the monarch came to visit her, inquired, in a rather flippant manner, on what terms he now stood with the marchioness, at the same time applying to that lady an epithet the reverse of respectful.

Louis, like so many other persons whose rank is their sole claim to the regard of mankind, was extremely tenacious of his dignity, and never permitted even his favourites to forget what was due to his exalted position. He was, therefore, much incensed at the girl's conduct, and, suspecting that she had not asked the question on her own initiative, ordered her to tell him immediately who had incited her to speak in the way she had. With many tears and entreaties for pardon, she confessed that it was Madame d'Estrées. A few days later, Madame de Pompadour having in the meantime learned what had passed, Maréchale d'Estrées received a peremptory order to retire from Court, and Mademoiselle Murphy was informed that a husband had been found for her.²

After the dismissal of "*la petite Morfil*," Louis XV.,

¹ She was the wife of Maréchal d'Estrées, who distinguished himself at Fontenoy and in 1757 defeated the Duke of Cumberland at Hastenbeck.

² "Morphise (*sic*) has been married in Auvergne: she has espoused a M. de P——, a lieutenant in the regiment of Beauvoisis. They have given M. de P—— 50,000 livres and Morphise 200,000 livres and a magnificent trousseau. M. de Soubise and M. de Lujac (the colonel of the bridegroom's regiment) arranged the marriage. Morphise's daughter has

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either because he feared that, like her, the inmates of the Parc-aux-Cerfs might become the centre of Court intrigues, or more probably because he was unwilling that any particulars with regard to these shameful amours should get abroad, preserved the strictest incognito on the occasion of his visits to the house, and none of the successors of Mademoiselle Murphy were allowed to suspect his identity. Henceforth, the secrets of the little seraglio were known only to two or three confidential servants, and to Madame de Pompadour, who carried her complaisance to the length of aiding her faithless lover to conceal all trace of his infidelities.

“One day,” says Madame du Hausset, “Madame called me into her cabinet, where the King was pacing up and down, looking somewhat perturbed. ‘You must,’ said she to me, ‘go and spend some days in the Avenue de Saint-Cloud, in a house to which I shall send you. You will find there a young person about to lie in.’ The King said nothing, and I was dumb with astonishment.

“‘You will be mistress of the house,’ she continued, ‘and preside like one of the fabulous goddesses at the accouchement. Your presence is necessary, in order that everything may pass off according to the King’s wishes and in perfect secrecy. You will be present at the baptism and give the names of the father and mother.’

been placed in a convent. The King makes her an allowance and has settled upon her an annuity of 8000 livres.”—*Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, xv. 325.

D’Argenson says that the husband’s name was d’Ayat; that he was killed at the battle of Rossbach, and that his widow married a certain François Lenormant, a relative of Madame de Pompadour’s husband.

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"Here the King began to laugh, and said, 'The father is a very honest man.'

"'Beloved by every one and adored by all who know him,' rejoined Madame, who then took from a small cupboard a little box and, opening it, drew out an aigrette of diamonds, at the same time saying to the King, 'I have my reasons for it not being finer.'

"'It is but too much so,' replied the King, who then embraced Madame, exclaiming, 'How kind you are!'

"She, on her part, wept with emotion, and, putting her hand on the King's heart, said, 'This is what I wish to secure.'

"The King's eyes then filled with tears, and I also began weeping without knowing why.

"Then the King said to me, 'Guimard¹ will call upon you every day to assist you with his advice, and at the critical moment you will send for him to come to you. But you must say nothing about the sponsors. You will merely mention that you are expecting them, and immediately afterwards you will pretend to have received a letter informing you that they will be unable to be present. Then you will affect to be very much embarrassed, whereupon Guimard will say that the only thing to be done under the circumstances will be to take the first comers, and you will take the servant belonging to the house and some beggar or chairman, to whom, however, you must only give twelve francs, in order not to excite attention. . . . Guimard will tell you the names of the father and mother. He will be present at the ceremony, which should take place in the evening, and will make the usual presents. It is but fair that you should also

¹ One of Louis XV.'s confidential servants.

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receive yours,' and he handed me fifty louis, with that gracious air which he knew so well how to assume."

After Madame du Hausset had made a suitable acknowledgment of the royal munificence, the monarch continued, "You will take care of the *accouchée*, will you not? She is a very good child, who has not invented gunpowder, and I shall leave her in your care with every confidence: my chancellor will tell you the rest," and, with a motion of his hand towards Madame de Pompadour, he quitted the room.

As soon as the door closed behind the King, the favourite said to Madame du Hausset, "Well, what think you of the part I am playing?"

"It is that of a superior woman and an excellent friend," that discreet lady hastened to reply, thinking of all the pretty things she could buy with the King's fifty louis.

"It is his heart I wish to secure," rejoined her mistress, and then, after a pause, added contemptuously, "And all those young girls, who have had no education, will not take that from me."

Madame de Pompadour then proceeded to give her *femme-de-chambre* further instructions, in the course of which it transpired that none of the young ladies of the Parc-aux-Cerfs, whence the one in question had come, had any suspicions as to who their lover really was. They were informed that he was a wealthy Polish nobleman, a relative of the Queen, Marie Leczinska, who was obliged to conceal his amours, in deference to the well-known prejudices of his royal kinswoman. This story had, it appeared, been invented on account of the *cordons-bleu*, which the King had not always time to lay aside when he went to the Parc-aux-Cerfs, because, to

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do so, it was necessary for him to change his coat, and, also, for his having rooms in the palace, where the ladies occasionally visited him.¹

Madame du Hausset then goes on to relate that she went to the house in the Avenue de Saint-Cloud, where she found a woman named Bertrand, who had formerly been in the service of Lebel, the King's *valet-de-chambre*, and now had charge of the fair inmates, and Guimard, who had, of course, for the time being, discarded his royal livery. The household consisted of two elderly men-servants and a girl, "who was something between a housemaid and a waiting-woman." The young lady to whom Madame du Hausset was accredited she de-

¹ On one occasion, however, the King's incognito failed to protect him. At the time of his attempted assassination by Damiens, a young girl, for whom Louis had manifested "more tenderness than was usual with him," was found by the woman who had charge of the Parc-aux-Cerfs—"la mère abbesse," Madame du Hausset calls her—prostrate with grief. Questioned as to its cause, she confessed that she had discovered that the Polish count and the King of France were one and the same person. She had, it appears, taken from Louis's pockets two letters, one of which was from the King of Spain, the other from the Abbé de Broglie. The woman at once communicated with Lebel, the King's *valet-de-chambre*, who informed his master. The latter was much embarrassed, and resolved not to see the girl again, but continued to visit another young woman who was in the house at the same time. The poor abandoned girl, however, having ascertained the hour at which the King usually came to see her companion, was on the watch, and, as soon as Louis entered the room where her rival was, rushed in, and, throwing herself at his feet, exclaimed, "Yes, you are the King of all the realm, but that would matter nothing to me if you were not the king of my heart. Do not forsake me, my beloved sovereign: I was nearly mad when your life was attempted." Louis calmed her as best he could, and departed with some vague promises. A few days later the unfortunate girl was taken to a madhouse, and there detained some time.—*Mémoires de Madame du Hausset* (edit. 1825), p. 95.

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scribes as "extremely pretty, and very elegantly dressed, though not too remarkably." She was greatly delighted with the diamond aigrette, which the *femme-de-chambre* had brought with her, and seemed well content with her lot. She asked her visitor for news of "the count" (as she called the King), adding, "He will be very sorry not to be with me now, but he was obliged to set out on a long journey. He is very handsome, and loves me with all his heart. He promised me an allowance; but I love him disinterestedly, and, if he would let me, I would follow him to Poland." She then told Madame du Hausset that her mother, who was a widow, had formerly kept a large grocer's shop and had got into financial difficulties; but that "the count" had come to her assistance, and now allowed her a pension of 15,000 livres.

A few days later the young lady gave birth to a child, who, however, was immediately taken away from her, and soon afterwards she was told that it was dead, "in order that no trace of its existence might remain for a certain time." It was, eventually, to be restored to its mother, who, as soon as she had recovered, was sent back to the Parc-aux-Cerfs.

On Madame du Hausset's return to the palace, she was sent for by the King, who gave her "a large gold snuff-box containing two rouleaux of twenty-five louis each," but did not say a word about the service on which she had been employed. Madame de Pompadour, however, was more communicative; asked a great many questions about the young lady, and "laughed heartily at her simplicity and at all she said about the Polish nobleman."

"He is disgusted with the Princess (the Queen, Marie

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Leczinska, who was Princess of Poland),” she added, “and I think will return to Poland for good and all in a couple of months.”

“And the young lady?” inquired Madame du Hausset.

“She will be married in the country,” answered her mistress, “with a dowry of forty thousand écus (£8000) at the most, and a few diamonds.”¹

The circumstances related by Madame du Hausset are in all probability the true story of Madame de Pompadour’s connection with the Parc-aux-Cerfs. That she was acquainted with much that went on in the houses in the Rue Saint-Médéric and the Avenue de Saint-Cloud, and now and again, as in the case just mentioned, aided Louis XV. to conceal his identity and so prevent scandal, it would be idle to deny; but there the matter, so far as she was concerned, began and ended. To assist a person to conceal his follies or his crimes—to become, in short, *an accessory after the fact*—is undoubtedly wrong; but, at the same time, it is a very different thing from deliberately inciting him to commit them, and throwing temptation in his path, which is the charge which has been so frequently brought against Madame de Pompadour. In any case, there is not a shred of evidence to prove that she was responsible for the presence at the Parc-aux-Cerfs of even one of the young women who were brought there from time to time; and Madame du Hausset implicitly denies that her mistress had any dealings whatever with its inmates. The fact that Lebel, the King’s *valet-de-chambre*, “who had the management of these affairs,” was well known to be devoted to the interests of Madame de Pompadour, and the knowledge

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset* (edit. 1825) p. 91 *et seq.*

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that on at least one occasion the attractions of the house in the Rue Saint-Médéric had saved Louis from falling a victim to the machinations of some titled dame, coupled with the readiness of both the courtiers of Versailles and the people of Paris to believe anything to the detriment of the woman they so much feared and hated, are in a large measure responsible for an accusation, which would appear to be almost as devoid of foundation as that of her having poisoned Madame de Choiseul-Romanet.

CHAPTER XII

The sermons of Father Griffet—Prayers for the King's conversion—Change in Madame de Pompadour's relations with Louis XV.—The advantages of platonic friendship—The favourite desires to be reconciled with the Church—Father Sacy becomes her confessor—Edifying behaviour of Madame de Pompadour—Impressions of the Court—Opinion of the Jesuits—Her return to her husband the price of absolution—Chagrin of the marchioness—The Queen refuses her the post of *dame du palais*—Madame de Pompadour's letter to her husband—His reply—Madame de Pompadour obtains absolution—And becomes *dame du palais*—Her letter to the Pope.

“*MARCH 11, 1751.*—Devotion is all the talk of the Court, which follows with ardour the sermons of Father Griffet, who thunders against the morals in fashion. In his Lenten sermon, preached at Versailles, he chose for his text the woman taken in adultery.”

“*MARCH 20.*—The King has had some devotional conferences with Father Griffet, the Jesuit who is preaching the Lenten sermons at Versailles; this makes the marchioness tremble.”

“*MARCH 24.*—Great noise about some *oremus* which have been printed to be said at Saint-Roch during Lent. I have seen the prayers; they ask God *positively* for the conversion of the King, for whom Heaven has performed so many miracles, but who has shown himself so ungrateful to God by his scandalous amours. The

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reason why the King did not attend Father Griffet's last discourse was because it was the Jesuit's intention to preach about the duties of each class—a sermon in which he sharply attacked the loves of the King and the favourite.”

“*March* 28.—The Jesuits have fifteen masses said every morning for the conversion of the King, and boast of it.”

From which observations of the omniscient d'Argenson it will be seen that, with whatever complaisance the Court may have come to regard the influence of the favourite, the Church, and particularly the Jesuits, was by no means disposed to abandon the struggle.

Now, whether Madame de Pompadour was really conscience-stricken, as Mademoiselle de La Vallière, Madame de Montespan, and Madame de Mailly had been before her—which seems doubtful—or whether she had decided, foreseeing that the day could not be far distant when she would cease to find favour in the eyes of the lover as distinct from the friend, that it would be a wise step to anticipate the inevitable, and, by so doing, deprive her most implacable foe, the Church, of all excuse for attacking her,—which is far more probable,—it is certain that in the course of the year 1752 it began to be remarked by the intimates of the King and the marchioness that a change had taken place in their bearing towards each other, and that there was no longer anything but friendship between them.¹

¹ “There is no longer anything but friendship between them,” writes d'Argenson in 1753; “so she has had executed for Bellevue a statue where she is represented as the Goddess of Friendship.” This statue, which was executed by Pigalle, seems to have taken the place of the

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One would naturally have supposed that the termination of their intrigue would have been followed by the decline of the lady's influence over the monarch. Such was very far from being the case. Madame de Pompadour's power had rested in but small part on her physical attractions. Her aim had been to captivate the mind rather than the senses of the King, and in this she had been eminently successful. Love might indeed be dead; but habit—the habit that Louis had contracted of turning to her for amusement when he was bored, for advice when he was in perplexity, for consolation when matters were going wrong—remained as potent as ever, and rendered her empire immovable.

Nor was the new rôle which she aspired to play without its advantages. No longer dependent upon the caprices of passion, she would be in a position to realise the political ambitions which she had always cherished, even when encouraging Louis to think lightly of the duties of sovereignty, and affecting to treat public affairs with contempt. The friend—the intelligent, clear-headed, disinterested friend—without consulting whom the King never ventured to take any important step,

Amour, by the same sculptor, which we have already spoken of. The Duc de Luynes relates that when the Queen visited Bellevue in the spring of 1758, her attention was directed to it by the gardener with these words: "This used to be the grove of Love, now it is that of Friendship."

This statue is not only a most exquisite piece of workmanship, but is believed to bear a most perfect resemblance to the marchioness, who, clad in flowing draperies, stands with her right hand pressed upon her heart, and the left extended, as if in friendly greeting. It was purchased in 1786 by "Philippe Égalité," and, after belonging to various owners, came into the possession of the Marquis of Hertford, who bequeathed it, along with his other art treasures, to Sir Richard Wallace.

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would command respect in quarters where the mistress had aroused nothing but derision and disdain; and she already saw herself the power behind the throne, mediating between the contending parties in the Council, between the Parliament and the clergy, and between Louis and the Royal Family, and even controlling and directing the foreign policy of France.

But, in order to play this rôle and attain to this authority, it was essential that she should first rehabilitate her reputation, become reconciled to the Church, and receive its absolution. Accordingly, she began to look about her for an accommodating confessor, who might be disposed to grant her absolution on easy terms, and fixed her eyes upon a certain Jesuit, one Father Sacy, "a man well versed in all the trickeries of repentance," whom she had known in her obscure and more reputable days, and whom she judged it would not be difficult to bend to her will. Him she summoned to ghostly consultation, and the Jesuit came and used every endeavour "to place God within reach of the marchioness, and reconcile the things of the world with those of Heaven."

The lady on her part was not backward in showing her appreciation of the good Father's efforts for her salvation. We read that she is spending great part of the day in prayer; that she even gets up in the middle of the night to perform her devotions; that she attends mass with commendable regularity; that she fasts, and that she has had the passage between her apartments and those of the King blocked up.¹

All this, of course, aroused much comment at Court, and the general opinion seems to have been that the

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, xv. 324. *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson*, iv. *passim*.

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marchioness was sincere in her professions of penitence. "Madame de Pompadour," writes the Duc de Luynes, "certainly has the appearance of acting in good faith, and says herself that she does not feel that inclination and taste for devotion that she would desire to have, but that that is a favour which she hopes to obtain by fervent prayer. . . . It only remains to hope that the ardour which has characterised her first religious exercises will continue, and that it will make a lasting impression upon the mind of the King." And the duke sorrowfully adds, "But the time has not yet arrived ; mistresses continue to come and go."¹

Now it would appear that the excellent Father Sacy, in his anxiety to make so distinguished a convert, had undertaken the task without consulting his superiors, who were anything but delighted when they discovered what was going on. The Jesuit leaders hated Madame de Pompadour, partly because of her sympathy with the philosophers, and partly because they were aware that as long as she remained the King's mistress, so long would their chance of obtaining influence over the superstitious Louis and using that influence to crush their enemies, the Jansenists, be hopeless. They would, therefore, have been willing enough to facilitate her return to the fold, hoping that it would not be long before the King would follow such an edifying example, and possibly signalise his conversion by some repressive measures against the followers of Jansenius,² had they not been exceedingly sceptical as to the sincerity of the lady's

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, xv. 324.

² "The Jansenists say," writes d'Argenson, "that if the King becomes devout, he will persecute them as they were persecuted in the time of Louis XIV."

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repentance. They foresaw that, unless the conditions imposed by Sacy were such as to leave no doubt as to the contrition of the penitent, and at the same time deprive her of all political power in the future, they would not only be giving great offence to the Dauphin and his devout friends, over whom their influence had hitherto been supreme, but who were already crying out against the unheard-of leniency of Father Sacy, who was permitting his convert to use rouge and indulge in other worldly practices, but would actually be placing a weapon in the favourite's hands which might render her more formidable than ever.¹

Under these circumstances, they decided to instruct Sacy to inform the marchioness that the fact of her living at Court apart from her husband constituted a public scandal which rendered absolution impossible. If she desired to be reconciled to the Church, there was no alternative open to her but to leave Versailles and return to her husband. Such a proposition was, as may be imagined, not at all to the taste of Madame de Pompadour, who had not the least intention of quitting her post. She dismissed the confessor in anger, and from that time we may date her hostility to the Jesuits, which was to have no small share in bringing about their banishment from France.

This rebuff was all the more galling to the favourite

¹ Bernis says that soon after Madame de Pompadour became the King's mistress, she endeavoured, on the advice of a prudent friend (presumably himself), to conciliate the Jesuits, who would be able to influence the clergy in her favour; but that the Fathers refused to "sign a treaty with her," because they feared that by so doing they would offend the Dauphin, upon whose accession to the throne they were building great hopes. They preferred to sacrifice present security to future advantage.

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as, believing herself certain to triumph over the scruples of Father Sacy and desirous of having a regular standing at Court, she had some little time before applied for the post of *dame du palais* to the Queen. To her request, which was made through the King himself, Marie Leczinska demurred, remarking that it was scarcely decent to give such a post to a woman "fraudulently separated from her husband." She added that his Majesty might order what he liked and that she would regard it as her duty to obey him; but that she sincerely hoped that he would in this instance have too much regard for the Royal Family to put such an affront upon it, as the place in question was too delicate a one to be filled by a lady labouring under excommunication, and who did not even dare to present herself at the communion-table at Easter. Such a line of argument was, of course, unanswerable, and Louis did not attempt to press the matter.

Madame de Pompadour, however, was nothing if not a woman of resource, and, as such, was not one to allow herself to be easily foiled. The Jesuits had given her a very instructive lesson in their own peculiar methods of warfare. She resolved to profit by it and to turn their weapons against themselves. She, accordingly, sat down and indited a long letter to her husband, in which she informed M. d'Étioles that she had wept for the wrong she had done him and now sincerely repented of all the irregularities of her life. "I recognise my crime," she concludes, "and I desire to make reparation for it. Already the substance of my sin has ceased, and it only remains to put an end to the appearance of it—a consummation which I ardently desire. I am resolved by my future conduct to make atonement for my past behaviour.

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Take me back ; you will find me desirous only of edifying the world by the harmony in which I shall live with you, as much as I have scandalised it by separating from you.”¹

But, before writing this touching epistle, she had sent the Prince de Soubise, one of the most obsequious of her courtiers, to Paris, to inform M. d'Étioles that his wife in a fit of penitence had announced her intention of writing him a letter entreating him to receive her back, and to warn him as a friend not to take her at her word, on pain of incurring the King's displeasure.²

Now M. d'Étioles had long since ceased to regret his faithless wife and had not the slightest desire to resume their former relations. He had found consolation, as we have mentioned, in the society of a Mademoiselle Rem, formerly a *danseuse* at the Opera, with whom he had become so infatuated that when, at Madame de Pompadour's suggestion, with the object of getting him away from Paris and so mitigating scandal, he had been offered the post of Ambassador to the Porte, he had declined, as its acceptance would have involved separation from his beloved. Soubise, accordingly, found him perfectly resigned to the wishes of the King, and in his reply to his wife's letter, while according her a full pardon, he firmly refused to receive her back into his bosom.

¹ Soulavie's *Mémoires historiques et anecdotes pendant la faveur de Madame de Pompadour*, p. 90.

² The Duc de Luynes says that Madame de Pompadour, fearing that the intercession of Soubise might not be sufficient, sent Machault to warn her husband not to send “too embarrassing an answer.”

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M. LENORMANT D'ÉTOILES to MADAME DE POMPADOUR.

“PARIS, Feb. 6, 1756.

“I have received, madame, the letter in which you inform me of your intention to return to me and your determination to surrender yourself to God. I cannot but be edified by such a resolution. I can well understand that it would be very painful for you to appear before me, and you can easily judge that my feelings would be the same. Your presence can only serve to intensify painful memories. Thus, the only course open to us is to live apart. Whatever cause for dissatisfaction you have given me, I am willing to believe that you are jealous for my honour, and I should regard it as compromised were I to receive you in my house and live with you as my wife. You are yourself aware that time can effect no change in what honour prescribes.

“I have the honour to be, madame, your very humble and very obedient servant,
LENORMANT.”¹

This adroit manœuvre completely turned the tables on both the Jesuits and the Queen. The former had refused the marchioness absolution, unless she returned to her husband; the latter the post of *dame du palais*, because she had not received absolution. She had now done all in her power to comply with the directions of her spiritual adviser; the onus of her failure rested upon her husband's shoulders, not upon hers. Madame de Pompadour soon found a priest—not a Jesuit this

¹ *Particularités relatives à l'Histoire de Madame de Pompadour, Cabinet historique*, September 1880.

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time—willing to reconcile her with the Church, and the same day the Queen received a letter from the King, containing a peremptory order to nominate the ex-mistress a supernumerary *dame du palais*, which meant that, while she would enjoy the privileges of the post, she would be excused from discharging its duties, except upon rare occasions.

“I have a King in Heaven, who gives me the strength to endure my calamities, and a King on earth, whom I shall always obey,” was the poor Queen’s dignified reply, and on February 8, 1756, Madame de Pompadour was formally presented by the austere Duchesse de Luynes, whom she had induced to believe that she had only sought the post under the advice of her confessor, and attended her Majesty at supper in a magnificent toilette.

Some time afterwards, with the twofold object of removing any misapprehension under which the Head of the Church might be as to the position which she now occupied with regard to his Most Christian Majesty, and of striking a blow at the Order which had endeavoured to thwart her, Madame de Pompadour sent to the Pope, by a trusted agent, the following letter :—

MADAME DE POMPADOUR to POPE BENEDICT XIV.

“Early in the year 1752, determined by motives, which it would serve no useful purpose to enumerate, to henceforth retain for the King nothing but sentiments of gratitude and the purest affection, I informed his Majesty of my resolution, at the same time entreating him to order the doctors of the Sorbonne to meet in consultation, and to send word to his confessor to confer with others, to the end that some means

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might be devised whereby, such being his wish, I might be allowed to remain near his person, without running the risk of being suspected of a sin of which I was no longer guilty. The King, knowing my character, felt that there was no hope of my repenting of my resolution, and complied with my wishes. He made the doctors meet in consultation, and wrote to Father Pérusseu, who demanded of him a complete separation. The King replied that he would by no means consent to such a proposal; that it was not for his own sake that he wished an arrangement to be made which should leave the public no grounds for suspicion, but for my satisfaction alone; that I was necessary to his happiness, to the proper conduct of his affairs; that I was the only person who dared to tell him the truth, so useful to kings, &c. The good Father, in the hope of shaking the King's determination, invariably gave the same reply. The doctors (of the Sorbonne) would have returned answers which would have made an arrangement possible, but the Jesuits refused their consent. I spoke at that time to several persons who were anxious for the welfare of the King and religion, and warned them that if Father Pérusseu refrained from putting a check upon the King by admitting him to the sacraments, he would abandon himself to a mode of life which would scandalise every one.¹ I failed in my endeavours to persuade them, and it was seen very shortly afterwards that I had not been mistaken. Then, after long reflections on the calamities which had pursued me, even at the summit of my fortunes,² the certainty that the

¹ This refers to the Parc-aux-Cerfs and other scandals, for which she is here endeavouring to make the Jesuits responsible.

² The deaths of her mother, father, and her little daughter, Alexandrine.

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good things of this world would not bring happiness, seeing that I had lacked none of them and yet had failed to attain it; my indifference to the diversions which had formerly afforded me most pleasure, all contributed to inspire me with the belief that there is no happiness save in God. I addressed myself to Father Sacy as to a man deeply impressed with that truth; I opened my whole soul to him; he privately put my sincerity to the proof from the month of September until the end of January 1756. He then proposed that I should write a letter to my husband, of which I possess the draft that he himself wrote out. My husband refused to see me again. The Father made me apply for a post in the Queen's Household, for the sake of appearances; he made me remove the staircase which gave admission to my apartments, and the King no longer entered except through the ordinary ante-chamber; in short, he prescribed for me a rule of conduct, which I observed implicitly. These changes made a great stir both at Court and in the town. The busybodies of every class took upon themselves to interfere. Father Sacy was attacked, and informed me that he should refuse me the sacraments so long as I remained at Court. I represented to him all the tests which he had imposed upon me, the different character which my relation with the King had assumed, according to his own admission. He concluded by informing me that people had mocked at the King's confessor when the Comte de Toulouse¹ was brought into the world, and he had no desire to find himself in a similar predicament. I had no answer to make to such a line of reasoning, and when, urged on by the desire of fulfilling my duties,

¹ Louis XIV.'s son by Madame de Montespan.

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I had exhausted every argument that I thought most likely to convince him that I was actuated by religious, and not by intriguing, motives, I saw him no more. The abominable 5th of January¹ arrived, and was followed by the same intrigues as in the previous year. The King did everything in his power to convince Father Desmarets² of the sincerity of his religion. The same motives were at work ; the answer was the same ; and the King, who ardently desired to fulfil his Christian duties, was deprived of them, and fell back, after a brief interval, into the same errors, from which he might have been rescued had they acted in good faith.

“In spite of the extreme patience which I had shown for eighteen months under Father Sacy, my heart was, nevertheless, torn by my condition ; and I took counsel with an honest man in whom I had confidence. He was touched, and cast about him for some means of putting an end to my unhappiness. An abbé, one of his friends, as learned as he was intelligent, explained my position to a man, like himself fully competent to give an opinion upon it. Both decided that my conduct did not merit the penance which they would have compelled me to undergo. In consequence, my confessor, after a fresh period of probation, put an end to the injustice by permitting me to approach the sacraments ; and, though I feel in secret some pain that it is necessary to be on my guard lest my confessor should give heed to the atrocious calumnies which are circulated about me, it is a great consolation for my soul.”³

¹ The attempted assassination of Louis XV. by Damiens.

² Father Pérusseu had died in 1753 ; Father Desmarets had succeeded him as confessor to the King.

³ *Clement XIV. et les Jésuites*, p. 104.

CHAPTER XIII

Madame de Pompadour and men of letters—Her protection of them not entirely disinterested — Her relations with Voltaire — Crebillon *père*—Louis de Boissy — Rousseau — Buffon — Montesquieu—Marmontel—The Abbé Le Blanc and Piron — Duclos—Diderot and d'Alembert—The *Encyclopédie* brought in at a supper party at Trianon—Madame de Pompadour's library—The favourite orders an edition of Corneille's *Rodogune* to be printed for her.

IN spite of the intoxication of power and the cares of State, Madame de Pompadour did not forget that some of the happiest days of her youth had been spent in the society of men of letters, and, whatever exception may be taken to her influence in other directions, literature has every reason to cherish her memory.

In order to appreciate the importance of the patronage and protection of a woman in the position of Madame de Pompadour, we must bear in mind the peculiar circumstances under which literary work was carried on at this period. In the middle of the eighteenth century the profession of letters in France was not only so unremunerative, owing in a great measure to the wholesale piracy which prevailed, that it was difficult for even a writer of established reputation to earn a modest com-

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petence,¹ but it was hampered by all kinds of irritating restrictions. In theory nothing was supposed to be published until it had been approved by the censor, and though, of course, this regulation was constantly evaded, the author did so at his peril. Any book which reflected upon the established order of things in Church or State, which presumed to criticise any highly placed official or member of the Court, or which, though perfectly unobjectionable in itself, happened to emanate from some person who was out of favour with the authorities, was liable to be seized and confiscated, while its author not infrequently found himself in Vincennes or the Bastille.² Nor was the activity of the police by any means confined to works which had seen the light of day. Whenever they scented game—to borrow the expressive phrase of a contemporary writer—they thought nothing of invading the suspected writer's house and carrying off any manuscripts which they chanced to find there. One day during Diderot's absence from home, his daughter found a police officer in the philosopher's study engaged in ransacking his desk. Presently he came across a bulky manuscript, and coolly remarking, "This is what I am looking for," stuffed it into his pocket and walked off. Poor Diderot thought himself very fortunate when, some years later, his friend Malesherbes being Director of the Press, his manuscript was returned to him. Under such

¹ In 1745 Diderot for a translation of Stanyan's "History of Greece" in three volumes was only paid 120 crowns. Mr. Morley computes that the remuneration he received for his work upon the "Encyclopædia" did not exceed £400 a year in money of to-day.

² The booksellers seems to have been much more severely punished. We read of an unfortunate man who for selling a prohibited work was branded, whipped, and sent to the galleys for five years.

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conditions, it is, indeed, amazing, not that that epoch should have produced a succession of literary giants of which France had never before and probably never will again behold the like, but that any man of genius should have been found willing to consecrate his talents to a calling at once so unremunerative and so fruitful in humiliation and disappointment.

It was not only her taste for literature and for the society of men of letters which led Madame de Pompadour to surround herself with poets and historians and philosophers, to pension them, to lodge them in the royal palaces, to save them from the Bastille, to open the way for them to the Academy ; she had another and less disinterested motive for the favours she so freely bestowed: she needed their help as they needed hers. She was ambitious to play a great part—a part beside which that played by the Sorels and d'Estrées and Maintenons should seem small and insignificant indeed ; to be spoken of by future generations as men spoke of Sully, of Richelieu, and of Mazarin, and she was intelligent enough to perceive that it is the pen, and the pen alone, which makes and unmakes reputations.

Madame de Pompadour's first literary protégé was Voltaire—Voltaire who had sung her praises so charmingly and so opportunely in the first flush of her success in the summer of 1745, and had confirmed the good impression he had then created by many other verses in the same strain. All this flattery deserved some recognition, and, in due time, it came in the shape of a commission from the favourite to write a farce in celebration of the Dauphin's second marriage. This production, *La Princesse de Navarre*, was set to music by Rameau and proved a stepping-stone to the posts of Historio-

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grapher of France and Gentleman-in-ordinary of the Bedchamber, with permission to sell the latter office while retaining the title and privileges.¹ Moreover, she supported him vigorously in his candidature for the Academy, and the poet, having disarmed the Bishop of Mirepoix and other ecclesiastical adversaries by inducing the Pope to accept the dedication of his *Mahomet*, and by publicly announcing, in a letter to Father Latour, the head of his old college of Louis-le-Grand, his affection for religion and his esteem for the Jesuits, they triumphed, and Voltaire was admitted of the forty.²

The new Academician thanked his patroness in the way most likely to be acceptable to her :—

“ Ainsi donc vous réunissez
Tous les arts, tous les goûts, tous les talents de plaire ;
Pompadour, vous embellissez
La cour, le Parnasse et Cythère.
Charme de tous les cœurs, trésor d’un seul mortel
Qu’un sort si beau soit éternel ! ”

Voltaire, it may be observed, was under no delusion as to the merits of his *Princesse de Navarre*, and, while thus flattering Madame de Pompadour, he could not resist the temptation of poking fun at himself and, at the same time, of reproaching Louis XV. for having ignored his earlier works, so much more worthy of recognition than this “ farce of the fair ” :—

“ Mon *Henri Quatre* et ma *Zaïre*
Et mon *Américaine Alzire*,

¹ There was a salary of 2000 livres attached to the office of Historiographer, and Voltaire is believed to have sold his post in the Bedchamber for a considerable sum.

² Morley’s “ Voltaire,” p. 159.

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Ne m'ont valu jamais un seul regard du roi.
J'avais mille ennemis avec très peu de gloire.
Les honneurs et les biens pleuvent enfin sur moi
Pour une farce de la foire.”¹

His patroness, however, persuaded him to take a nobler revenge—to compose a play in eulogy of the King; and he accordingly wrote *Le Temple de la Gloire*, in which Louis was represented under the guise of Trajan. This piece met with a good deal of adverse criticism, as did the conduct of its author, who, finding himself at the conclusion of the performance near the King, took the liberty of asking, “Is Trajan satisfied?” Trajan, surprised and indignant that any one should have the impertinence to interrogate him, vouchsafed no reply.

But, alas! the Court sun soon ceased to shine. For this several reasons have been assigned. Some say that the favourite took offence at an epigram which Voltaire perpetrated at her dinner-table, and which was represented by other flatterers, who were jealous of the poet, as a piece of extreme impertinence. Others maintain that the pretty lines in which Voltaire, addressing Madame de Pompadour, says of her and Louis XV.:—

“Soyez tous deux sans ennemis
Et tous gardez vos conquêtes”—

¹ The following is a contemporary translation :—

“My *Henriade* and my *Zaire*,
My fair American *Alzire*,
Were all unnoticed by the King ;
I'd many foes and very little fame.
Honours and wealth now plenteous spring
From a foolish thing,
A farce that scarce deserves a name.”

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gave great offence to the King's daughters, who persuaded their royal father that a comparison between his military successes and the marchioness's conquest of his heart was most indecorous. A more probable explanation is that Voltaire was at best but a poor courtier; that his favour in high places had exasperated his enemies without procuring him any real friends; and that Madame de Pompadour, with the best intentions in the world, was powerless to protect him, save at considerable risk to herself.

But, whatever the true reason may have been, we find the marchioness, in 1748, interesting herself in Voltaire's rival, the elder Crébillon, a preference which so irritated the author of *Mahomet* that he retired in high dudgeon to Cirey, to be consoled by the divine Emily. For several years after this Voltaire seems to have cherished the hope of a renewal of Court favour, and in 1750, when he went to Berlin, was charged by the favourite to convey her compliments to Frederick the Great, who, as every one knows, received them with the famous "*Je ne la connais pas*"—rash words which he lived to regret. As time went on, however, and Madame de Pompadour made no effort to induce him to return to Court, Voltaire changed his tone, and in that most odious burlesque of a most heroic theme, *La Pucelle*, we find that the "divine d'Étioles" and the "true and tender Pompadour" has become a "lucky *grisette*," and other things, which we forbear to mention.¹

However, with that strange inconsistency in small matters, which was in such marked contrast to the stead-

¹ The poet subsequently repudiated these verses, and in the authorised edition of *La Pucelle*, which appeared in 1762, they were omitted; but the disclaimer came a little too late in the day to be accepted.

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fastness with which he prosecuted his campaign against the Infamous, the poet eventually veered round once more, dedicated his *Tancredé* to Madame de Pompadour, and would appear to have sincerely regretted her death. "Be assured, dear brother," he writes to Damilaville, "that true men of letters, true philosophers, ought to mourn for Madame de Pompadour. Her opinions were in harmony with ours; no one knew it better than myself. She is in truth a great loss." And to Cideville he says: "I am greatly afflicted at the death of Madame de Pompadour; I weep when I think of it. It is very absurd that an old scribbler like myself should be still alive, and that a beautiful woman should have been cut off at forty in the midst of the most brilliant career in the world. Perhaps if she had tasted the repose which I enjoy, she would be living now."¹

Crébillon, the poet who had supplanted Voltaire in the good graces of Madame de Pompadour, was in 1748 a light of other days. Unquestionably the leading dramatist in France during the first two decades of the eighteenth century, he had now fallen entirely into neglect and into the direst poverty. The favourite heard of his unfortunate condition by chance, and was genuinely shocked. "What do you say?" she cried. "Crébillon poor and forsaken!" and, remembering that when she was a young girl he had given her lessons in declamation, she immediately obtained for him a pension of a thousand livres and a lodging in the Louvre. Marмонтel relates that when the poet called to thank his benefactress, she was unwell and in bed. Nevertheless she ordered him to be admitted, and at the moment when he was stooping to kiss her hand, the door opened

¹ *Œuvres de Voltaire* (edit. Beuchot), lxi. 407 and 428.

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and Louis XV. walked in, whereupon the witty old man exclaimed, "Ah, madame, the King has surprised us; I am lost!"—a jest at which the monarch laughed heartily.

Madame de Pompadour did not rest content with relieving Crébillon's immediate necessities. Although he was at this time over seventy, and had written practically nothing for twenty years, she persuaded him to take up his pen again and to compose a tragedy called *Catiline*, which was extremely well received, and occupied the stage for twenty successive nights, a run which was then accounted highly satisfactory. She also appointed him tutor to her little daughter, Alexandrine, and had a sumptuous edition of his works printed at the expense of the Treasury, an honour which Voltaire had solicited in vain. Finally, when he died in 1762, she induced the King to build for him a magnificent mausoleum in the Church of Saint-Gervais, the execution of which was entrusted to the celebrated sculptor Lemoine.¹

Louis de Boissy, the author of several excellent comedies, notably *Le Français à Londres* and *L'Homme du Jour*, was another playwright whom Madame de Pompadour rescued from extreme poverty. The remuneration he had received for these and other works had not been at all in accordance with his deserts, and his pride, which led him to dress in the height of fashion, even

¹ Claude Crébillon, the dramatist's younger son, who acquired great popularity as a writer of prose fiction, was far from sharing his father's favour with the marchioness; and in 1750 she was so shocked at the indecency of one of his tales, *Le Sopha*, that she caused him to be banished from Paris. He was allowed to return in 1755, when he was appointed to the Censorship, apparently on the principle that a reformed poacher makes the best gamekeeper.

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when in want of the common necessities of life, deceived those who might otherwise have assisted him. He and his wife and child had actually resolved to destroy themselves, when a friend, who had accidentally discovered their lamentable condition just in time to frustrate the attempt, brought the case to the notice of Madame de Pompadour, who procured for Boissy the patent of the official literary organ, the *Mercure*. Unfortunately, the change from want to comparative affluence was too much for poor Boissy, and the excesses in which he indulged shortened his days. It was in the *Mercure* while under his management that the first of Marмонтel's *Contes moraux* appeared.

Madame de Pompadour would fain have attached Rousseau to her interests, as she had Voltaire, but all efforts to tame him proved unsuccessful. She was enthusiastic over his opera, *Le Devin du Village*, which was produced at Fontainebleau in the autumn of 1752, and had fully intended to present him to the King; but the composer who, in order to show his independence, had arrived "with a beard of several days' growth and an uncombed wig," seems to have felt ashamed of himself when he saw with what magnificence every one else was attired, and fled before the fall of the curtain. The same evening he received a message from the Duc d'Aumont, requesting him to return to Fontainebleau the following day, as the King had expressed a desire to see him. Louis, it appears, had been as much pleased with the opera as Madame de Pompadour, and Rousseau would certainly have received a pension had he obeyed the royal command; but, either through shyness or perversity, or both, he preferred to ignore it. Nevertheless the *Devin* was performed in the little theatre at

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Bellevue the following spring, on which occasion the favourite sent Rousseau a present of fifty louis.

When Malesherbes, the Director of the Press, was looking over the proofs of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, he came across the following sentence: "The wife of a charcoal-burner is more worthy of respect than the mistress of a king." This he pointed out to the author might be offensive to Madame de Pompadour, and must, therefore, be either altered or erased. Rousseau "swore by all his gods" that nothing was further from his thoughts than to hurt the feelings of the marchioness, and begged to be allowed to retain the phrase, but, out of respect for the favourite, eventually consented to substitute the word "prince" for that of "king." This alteration, however, brought down upon him the wrath of Madame de Boufflers, who was the Pompadour of the Prince de Conti, and it was only with great difficulty that the philosopher succeeded in convincing the lady that no reflection upon her was intended.

Madame de Pompadour, it appears, did not care much for *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. She had not even sufficient patience to finish it, and declared that Julie was "an insipid creature."¹ The ladies of Paris and Versailles, however, were of a very different opinion, and "became infatuated with the book and the author to such an extent that there were few, even among the highest circles, whose conquest he could not have made had he been so disposed."²

Rousseau was not the only writer who declined to be patronised by Madame de Pompadour. The famous naturalist Buffon also rejected her friendly advances, not,

¹ *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, August 1759.

² Rousseau's "Confessions" (Eng. translation, 1896), ii. 290.

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however, out of any spirit of independence, but through his attachment to the Queen. The favourite had another grievance against him, inasmuch as in his *Histoire naturelle* he had declared that in love the physical element alone is of importance. This theory Madame de Pompadour, who, since the change in her relations with the King, naturally desired to see platonic friendship extolled, begged him to modify in future editions of his work, assuring him that it was entirely fallacious; and meeting Buffon one day in the park at Marly, tapped him lightly with her fan, exclaiming, in a tone of reproach, "*Vous êtes un joli garçon!*" Buffon did not see his way to oblige Madame de Pompadour in this matter, nevertheless the latter always entertained a high opinion of the naturalist, in proof of which she, at her death, confided to his care her dog, parrot, and monkey. Buffon, it is needless to say, proved worthy of the trust reposed in him, and the favourite's beloved pets were sent to his country house at Montbard, where they passed the remainder of their days in ease and comfort.

If Rousseau and Buffon were, for different reasons, unwilling to owe anything to the favourite's protection, Montesquieu, the author of *Les Lettres Persanes* and *L'Esprit des Lois*, was glad enough to avail himself of it. Like Voltaire, the president, in spite of his philosophy, was extremely sensitive to hostile criticism, and soon after the publication of the latter work, hearing that the well-known financier Dupin and his wife, a lady of considerable literary attainments, were preparing a refutation of the theories he had advanced in his book, he hastened to Madame de Pompadour and besought her to use her influence to get the hostile publication suppressed. This she promised to do; and as soon as Dupin's work

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appeared, the police pounced upon it and confiscated the whole edition, with the exception of half-a-dozen copies, which the printer managed to conceal.¹

But among all the men of letters of that time Marmontel was the one who was most indebted to the patronage of Madame de Pompadour; indeed, but for her, he might have languished in poverty and obscurity to the end of his days, and the world would have been the poorer for the *Contes moraux* and the ever-delightful *Mémoires*.

The son of poor parents in the Limousin he was educated by the Jesuits at Mauriac, and afterwards became a teacher in their colleges at Clermont and Toulouse. The Fathers endeavoured to persuade him to enter their Order, but the youth had literary aspirations, and in 1746, at the age of twenty-three, set out for Paris, Orry, the Comptroller-General, having promised to provide for him. He arrived in the capital with a translation of Pope's "Rape of the Lock" in his pocket, but very little besides, only to find that Orry had been disgraced and was no longer able to provide for anybody. However, he sold his poem to a bookseller for a hundred crowns, after which, on the advice of Voltaire, with whom he had opened a correspondence before coming to Paris, he began writing for the stage and composed several tragedies, which brought him some praise, but little money. One of them failed through the leading actress having presumably toasted its success a little too

¹ Voltaire was on one occasion guilty of a similar meanness. Being informed that a rival poet was about to issue a parody of his tragedy *Sémiramis*, he wrote to the Queen demanding its suppression, on the ground that, as his play extolled virtue, it was entitled to protection. Such an argument naturally appealed to Marie Leczinska, and the parody was promptly confiscated.

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enthusiastically before appearing on the stage; while another, called *Cléopâtre*, was spoiled by a still more unfortunate *contretemps*.

Vaucanson, the celebrated mechanician, had manufactured for the occasion a wonderful asp, which writhed and hissed as if it were alive. Expressions of dissent were at this period strictly interdicted in the auditorium, and when the hissing commenced, the soldiers, who were present to maintain order, at once hurried forward to discover and apprehend the supposed offenders, with the result that the curtain descended on the dying Queen amidst uproarious merriment. "What think you of the play?" cried one wag to another. "I am of the asp's opinion," was the reply, and the fate of *Cléopâtre* was sealed.

Poor Marmontel was getting heartily tired of the Parisian Grub Street, when Fortune in the shape of a messenger from Madame de Pompadour knocked at his door. The lady's attention had been attracted by some verses containing very flattering allusions to the King and herself, and had resolved to take the writer under her protection. At her instigation, Marmontel wrote two other tragedies, in one of which, *Les Funérailles de Sésostris*, his patroness made so many additions and alterations that it would appear to have been almost as much her work as his own. Both the plays were entire failures,¹ but the favourite consoled the author by per-

¹ The second tragedy was not an original one, but a new version of Rotrou's *Venceslas*. The celebrated actor Lekain, who played the principal part, was so indignant at what he considered the mutilation of one of the masterpieces of French dramatic literature, that, instead of declaiming the lines Marmontel had put into his mouth, he insisted on speaking those of Rotrou. The result may be imagined. Surely no playwright was ever so unfortunate as poor Marmontel!

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suading her brother, the Marquis de Marigny, to appoint him his secretary at the Board of Works. On Boissy's death she procured him the direction of the *Mercure*, and when he lost that post, owing to a satire on the Duc d'Aumont, apparently not his own, for which he also suffered a short imprisonment in the Bastille, a pension in its place, and finally in 1763 induced the Academy to receive him into its bosom.

Madame de Pompadour was not so successful in her endeavours to "immortalise" two more of her protégés, the Abbé Le Blanc, who had accompanied her brother on his Italian tour, and Piron, the author of *La Métromanie*. The abbé, though a very worthy person in other respects, had never done anything to warrant such a distinction; and when the Academicians represented to the favourite that if he were elected, it would be solely out of respect for her, she had the good taste not to press the matter further. Piron was, of course, a much more suitable candidate, but the King refused his sanction on the ground that he was an infidel; so Madame de Pompadour procured for him a pension of a thousand livres, while she consoled Le Blanc for his disappointment by reviving in his favour the post of Historiographer of Public Buildings which had been abolished by Orry.

To the names we have mentioned must be added that of Duclos, the historian, for whom she obtained the office of Historiographer of France on Voltaire's resignation in 1750, and those of the famous editors of the *Encyclopédie*, Diderot and d'Alembert.

Sharing as she did the opinions of the philosophers, Madame de Pompadour would fain have endeavoured to combat the hostility which the publication of that

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portentous work had aroused, but her position was too insecure at that time for her to run counter to the prejudices of the orthodox, so she was reluctantly compelled to confine herself to expressions of sympathy. When the publication of the *Encyclopédie* was stopped, d'Argenson tells us that the marchioness tried to persuade Diderot and his colleague to resume their task, avoiding as much as possible controversial topics; but the editors did not see their way to fall in with her suggestion, and replied that they must write freely or not write at all.

Voltaire relates an entertaining story, which serves to show the interest which the *Encyclopédie* excited in high places, and Madame de Pompadour's admiration for it.

"A servant of Louis XV. told me that one day when the King, his master, was supping at Trianon with a small party, the conversation happened to turn first upon the chase and then upon gunpowder. Some one said that the best powder was made of equal parts of saltpetre, of sulphur, and of charcoal. The Duc de La Vallière, who was better informed, maintained that to make good gunpowder you required one part of sulphur and one of charcoal to five parts of saltpetre.

" 'It is curious,' said the Duc de Nivernois, 'that we should amuse ourselves every day in killing partridges at Versailles, and sometimes in killing men and getting killed ourselves on the frontier, and yet be ignorant of how exactly the killing is done.'

" 'Alas!' said Madame de Pompadour, 'we are all reduced to that about everything in the world. I don't know how they compound the rouge I put on my cheeks, and I should be vastly puzzled if any one were to ask me how my silk stockings are made.'

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“ ‘Tis a pity,’ said the Duc de La Vallière, ‘that his Majesty should have confiscated our *Encyclopédies*, which cost us a hundred pistoles apiece; we should soon find there an answer to all our difficulties.’

“The King justified the confiscation; he had been warned that the one-and-twenty folios that were to be found on every lady’s table constituted the most dangerous thing in the world for the kingdom of France; and he intended to find out for himself whether this was true or not before allowing people to read the book. When supper was over, he sent three lackeys for the book, who returned each staggering under the weight of seven volumes.

“It was then seen from the article ‘Powder’ that the Duc de La Vallière was right; while Madame de Pompadour learned the difference between the old rouge of Spain with which the ladies of Madrid coloured their cheeks and the rouge used by the ladies of Paris. She found that the Greek and Roman ladies were painted with the purple that came from the murex, and that, therefore, our scarlet is the purple of the ancients; that there was more saffron in the rouge of Spain and more cochineal in that of France. She saw how they made her stockings by loom, and the machine transported her with astonishment.

“ ‘What a splendid book!’ cried she. ‘Sire, you have confiscated a perfect storehouse of useful things. If one possesses it, one has at one’s command all the wisdom of your realm.’ ”¹

When Frederick the Great, hearing of d’Alembert’s poverty, offered him a pension of 1200 livres, Madame de Pompadour implored Louis XV., for the honour of

¹ *Œuvres de Voltaire* (edit. Beuchot), xlvi. 57.

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France, to bestow one of double that amount on the philosopher, in order that he might not be under the necessity of accepting the bounty of a foreign prince; but the bigoted monarch, who looked upon d'Alembert's religious opinions with horror, refused to do so.

Madame de Pompadour possessed a splendid library—a library mainly composed of French works or French translations, a proof that her books were purchased for use and not for exhibition. Nearly one-third of the catalogue¹ is occupied by history, political economy, civil and canon law, and other subjects upon which any one who, like herself, aspired to be a ruler of men would find it necessary to be well informed. History is responsible for over eleven hundred volumes, which include the works of Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Livy, Polybius, Cæsar, Tacitus, and Sallust; histories of almost every European country—England being represented by Hume, Burnet, and Swift—and that of “ecclesiastical councils, popes and cardinals, monastic and religious orders, and heresies.”

Philosophy and poetry are also strongly represented, from Plato and Aristotle to Rousseau and Montesquieu, and from the *Odyssey* and the *Æneid* to the *Dunciad* and the *Henriade*.

Several pages are devoted to theological treatises and works of devotion, among which we may note Corneille's translation of the *Imitatio Christi*, Mademoiselle de La Vallière's *Réflexions sur la miséricorde de Dieu*,

¹ *Catalogue des livres de la bibliothèque de feu Mme. la marquise de Pompadour, dame du palais de la reine* (Paris, 1765, 8vo.). A rare and valuable work, of which a copy, containing the prices, in manuscript, realised at the sale of her books, is preserved in the British Museum.

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Massillon's Sermons, which, it is said, Louis XV. during his periodical fits of penitence used to insist on reading to the marchioness, and an *Office de la sainte Vierge pour tous les jours de la semaine* (Imprimerie Royale, 1757, 2 vol. 12mo., blue morocco with gold clasps). This book, which contained eight illustrations by Boucher, was purchased at the sale of Madame de Pompadour's library for 253 livres. It would be interesting to know its present value.

Fiction, as one might expect in the library of a lady, has not been forgotten. There are love tales of France, Spain, and Italy; romances of chivalry—of the deeds of derring-do performed by King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, and by Charlemagne and his twelve paladins; romances “heroic, historical, satyrical, comical, facetious, marvellous, and fantastic”; while under the heading *Nouvelles* we find Decamerons and Heptamerons gorgeously bound in red morocco, Pamelas, Clarissas, and Julies, Marmontel's *Contes moraux*, and a work bearing the sub-title, *La nécessité d'être inconstant*, by the wife of a distinguished statesman, who is said to have preferred the philosophic Diderot to her lawful spouse.

But undoubtedly the feature of the library was its magnificent collection of French dramatic works. This was divided into five sections. The first included the plays from the time of the Passionists to that of Jodelle; the second those from Jodelle to Garnier; the third from Garnier to Hardy; the fourth from Hardy to Corneille; and the last from Corneille to the marchioness's own day, in addition to which she possessed all the ballets of the Opera, the Théâtre Italien, and the Opera Comique.

In all, Madame de Pompadour's library comprised

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3561 volumes, and when sold, the year after her death, realised 41,940 liv. 8 sols. The books are now much sought after by bibliophiles, and command high prices. A few years ago a copy of "Daphnis and Chloe," with illustrations by Cochin and Eisen (Paris, 4to, 1757, red morocco), was sold for £150, and as the purchaser parted with it soon afterwards, it is probable that he realised a substantial profit upon his outlay.¹

Madame de Pompadour carried her love of books so far as to cause an edition of Corneille's tragedy of *Rodogune* to be printed for her at Versailles, and actually to print a few pages of one copy with her own hands. "There is nothing," says Sainte-Beuve, "very remarkable about these books, but they bear witness to the literary predilections of the woman who once declared that she would have loved François I."²

¹ Mr. Andrew Lang, in his "Books and Bookmen," says that this volume changed hands about thirty years ago in a village in Hungary for ten francs.

² *Causeries du Lundi*, ii. 389. .

CHAPTER XIV

Madame de Pompadour's patronage of Art—Boucher—Pigalle—Jacques Guay—Portraits of Madame de Pompadour—The pastel by La Tour—Anecdote of the first sitting—Madame de Pompadour as an amateur—Her engravings in the Bibliothèque Nationale—Porcelain—The favourite's efforts to encourage the industry in France—Establishment of the manufactory at Sèvres—*Le rose Pompadour*—Her project for the creation of the École Militaire—Difficulties with which she has to contend—Her generosity—The School is completed—Its constitution.

MEN of letters were not the only protégés of Madame de Pompadour. The favourite was a passionate lover of the arts, and painters, sculptors, engravers, and architects all came in for a share of her patronage. With one or two exceptions, however, she does not appear to have treated them with the same consideration which she extended to literary men, and her very outspoken criticisms must have been sometimes rather hard to bear, as, for instance, when she exclaimed, on beholding *The Three Graces* of Van Loo, "Do you call those creatures Graces?"

On the other hand, she was in a position to do far more for the encouragement of art than for literature, at a time, too, when such encouragement was sorely needed. Whereas a poet or a playwright finds, as a rule, his patrons among all classes of the community,

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a painter or a sculptor must of necessity depend largely for support upon the great and wealthy; and unfortunately the great and wealthy in France at this period exhibited the most profound indifference to the claims of art. If now and again a great personage was found with artistic sympathies, it was usually some foreign prince, who took advantage of the apathy of his neighbours to possess himself of the treasures which they failed to appreciate. Of course, there were always Court commissions to be executed, but the poor artists would in many cases have gladly dispensed with them, as it would appear that payment was not always forthcoming. Lady Dilke in her interesting work, "French Painters of the Eighteenth Century," quotes a letter from Nattier to the Marquis de Marigny in which the painter confesses his inability to execute a commission with which he has been favoured by the Infanta (Madame Elizabeth) for a portrait of her sister, Madame Adélaïde, "unless you have the kindness to send me an order for 20,000 crowns at least, on account of my pictures . . . completed and delivered by me to the Court during the past five years. I have had," he continues, "the honour of submitting a memorandum for the current year, which amounts to 20,000 livres, and does not include the two portraits of the Duc de Bourgogne ordered by M. le Dauphin last year, but not yet finished."¹ The marchioness, however, seems to have paid not only liberally but promptly, and, in consequence, the most famous artists of the day vied with one another for her patronage.

Madame de Pompadour's favourite painter was undoubtedly Boucher, whose knowledge of the stage

¹ Lady Dilke's "French Painters of the Eighteenth Century," p. 151.

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rendered his advice and assistance invaluable in connection with the costumes and scenery of the Théâtre des Petits Appartements. Her patronage of Boucher seems to have begun with her reign. In 1746 she obtained for him a commission to paint two *dessus-de-porte* for the Cabinet des Médailles, and about the same time induced Louis to give him the lodgings in the Louvre left vacant by the death of the sculptor Coustou. The following year he was employed at Marly, where he executed his *Les Forges de Vulcain*, as a *dessus-de-porte* for the King's bedchamber, and in 1753 his patroness purchased from him his magnificent twin pictures, *Le Lever du Soleil* and *Le Coucher du Soleil*, now in the Wallace Collection at Hertford House. His work at Bellevue we have spoken of in a previous chapter.

Boucher was not only the protégé, but the intimate friend of Madame de Pompadour. He initiated her into the mysteries of etching, for which lessons, according to his biographer, M. Mantz, he received in payment "nothing but smiles and thanks," designed her furniture and even her fans, and is said to have discussed with her not only matters connected with art and virtuosity, but her tastes and plans generally.

Among the sculptors Madame de Pompadour's favourite appears to have been Pigalle. In addition to the statues we have already mentioned, Pigalle executed for the marchioness a beautiful group entitled *L'Amour et L'Amitié*, which had a most adventurous career. Bought back by the sculptor on his patroness's death, it remained in his *atelier* until 1780, when it was sold to the Prince de Condé. When the Revolution came, the prince took up arms against the new Government, and all his art treasures were confiscated by the Directory, who placed

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Pigalle's group in the Luxembourg. When the Bourbons returned in 1814, Condé, of course, recovered his property, but *L'Amour et L'Amitié* could not be found, in spite of the most diligent search. Nor was it until 1879 that M. Waddington, then Minister for Foreign Affairs, identified the missing group as one that had stood for many years in the gardens of the Palais Bourbon, where it had suffered so much from exposure to the weather as to be hardly recognisable.¹ At the late Paris Exhibition a statue of Madame de Pompadour was shown which is also believed to be the work of Pigalle. The lady is represented as a nymph of Diana, with a dog by her side and a hunting-horn in her hand.

The marchioness also bestowed her patronage upon Jacques Guay, the engraver in precious stones, for whom she secured the post of *graveur de pierres fines* to the King. For her were executed some of Guay's finest works, including the *L'Amour et L'Amitié*, which he engraved on one of the faces of Madame de Pompadour's seal, now to be seen in the Bibliothèque Nationale, the engraving representing the victory of Lawfeldt, and the celebrated Triomphe de Fontenoy, both of which the favourite presented to the King. They are now in the Cabinet des Médailles.

Nearly all the masters of the French School of her day painted the portrait of Madame de Pompadour Boucher, as one would naturally expect from his intimacy with the favourite, is responsible for several portraits. Of these the chief is the large full-length picture known as the "*Marquise sur la chaise longue*," painted in 1758, and now in the possession of M. Adolphe de Rothschild.

¹ Lady Dilke's "French Architects and Sculptors of the Eighteenth Century," p. 86.

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"The remarkable force of character," says Lady Dilke, "which enabled this woman to hold out so long in the difficulties of her extraordinary position, is written with a firm hand in the structure and forms of the head and face, and the gorgeous dress and accessories are handled with a freedom which does not exclude an appropriate stateliness of treatment, and which gives dignity to the decorative magnificence of the general effect."¹ Another well-known portrait by the same artist is that of the "*Marquise au jardin*," now in the Jones Bequest Gallery at the Victoria and Albert Museum, which shows us the favourite, gowned in white and with white lace at her throat, sitting beneath a tree with an open book on her knees and her left arm resting upon others at her side. A third portrait by Boucher may be seen in the Wallace Collection at Hertford House. The marble group in the background of this picture resembles Pigalle's celebrated statue *L'Amour et L'Amitié*. Other portraits by the same hand are in the collection of Miss Alice de Rothschild and in the National Gallery of Scotland.

Drouais is believed to have painted the marchioness on four occasions. One of his pictures, which represents the lady in her cabinet working at a loom, surrounded by her books, painting materials, and music, and with a little King Charles spaniel by her side, was preferred by Grimm to any portrait of Madame de Pompadour. It is now in the museum at Orléans. Another portrait by Drouais is at Hampton Court.

Carle Van Loo is credited with three portraits. Two of these are full-length paintings, in each of which the marchioness appears as a sultana. In one, we see her reclining on a pile of cushions in the act of taking a

¹ Lady Dilke's "French Painters of the Eighteenth Century," p. 55.

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cup of coffee from the hand of a black girl slave; in the other, engaged upon tapestry work. At Madame de Pompadour's death these pictures passed into her brother's possession, and when he himself died in 1781, were sold for 1900 livres. They are now in the Louvre. The third portrait by Van Loo is the half-length one known as "*La belle jardinière*," which represents the favourite in peasant costume, wearing a large straw hat, with a basket on her arm and a bunch of hyacinth in her hand. It is, or was until recently, in a private collection at Montpellier.

At an exhibition of portraits in Paris some years ago, a painting of Madame de Pompadour by Nattier was on view. This is believed to have been executed at an earlier age than any of her other portraits, in all probability prior to her installation at Versailles, and was greatly admired. She is depicted as "a goddess of Olympus, leaning against an urn from which water is pouring. The *chemisette* she is wearing reveals the roundness of her throat; her chin is resting upon her upturned right hand; she has a very small mouth, a delicate little straight nose, and mischievous eyes. . . ."¹ The picture was then the property of M. de Beauvais.

But of all the portraits of Madame de Pompadour the most celebrated, as it is also the best, is the pastel by La Tour in the Louvre. This beautiful picture is thus finely described by Sainte-Beuve: "She is represented sitting in an arm-chair, holding in her hand a sheet of music, her left arm resting on a marble table, on which are a globe and several books. The largest of the books—that nearest the globe—is the fourth volume of the *Encyclopédie*; while by its side lie a copy of the *Esprit des*

¹ E. and J. de Goncourt's *Madame de Pompadour*, p. 338.

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Lois, the *Henriade*, and *Pastor Fido*, evidence of their owner's tastes, at once serious and romantic. On the table again, at the foot of the globe, we see a blue volume, which bears on its back the title *Pierres Gravées*—it is a work of her own. One print, which has become separated from the rest, and hangs over the side of the table, represents an engraver at work, with the words *Pompadour sculpsit*. On the ground, close to the table, is a portfolio of engravings, stamped with her arms (three towers); and between the feet of the pier-table a vase of Japanese porcelain—why not of Sèvres?—while behind her chair, and facing the table, is another chair or ottoman, on which lies a guitar.

“But it is the woman herself—that woman so striking in her perfect grace, her gentle dignity, and her exquisite beauty, that rivets our attention. Holding the music-book lightly and carelessly in her hand, she seems to have been suddenly disturbed, to have heard a sound that has caused her to turn her head. It is very likely the King, who is approaching, and is about to enter the room. She has the air of a person waiting for some one whom she is expecting, and listening with a smile. With her head turned thus, she affords us a view of the profile of her neck, aureoled by a halo of little curls, delightfully wavy and flaxen in hue, as one may perceive through the *demi-poudre* which covers them. The head stands out in relief against a background of pale blue, which is the prevailing hue of the picture. It is altogether a pleasure and a delight to behold; melody, perhaps, rather than harmony. There is nothing in this enchanted boudoir which does not do homage to the goddess—nothing, not excepting the *Esprit des Lois* and the *Encyclopédie*. The gown of flowered satin which she wears gives place at

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the curve of the bosom to several rows of those bows of ribbons, which are called, I believe, '*parfaits contentements*,' and which are of a clear lilac colour. She herself has the tint and the complexion of a lily lightly touched with azure. That bosom, those ribbons, that gown, everything, in short, blends into one harmonious—or rather voluptuous—whole. It is beauty glittering in all the splendour of its maturity. The figure is still youthful; the temples have retained their youth and their freshness; the lips are also fresh, and have not yet become bloodless, as it is said they afterwards became, from her too frequent habit of biting them in her efforts to stifle her anger when annoyed. Everything in her physiognomy and in her pose is expressive of grace, of taste ineffable, of affability and dignity rather than gentleness. The air of a queen, acquired indeed, but which seems none the less natural, and to be sustained with but little effort. I could continue and enlarge upon many charming details, but I prefer to check myself and send those whose curiosity I have aroused to the model itself: they will see there a thousand things which I dare not touch upon."¹

Madame de Pompadour had some difficulty in persuading La Tour to undertake this portrait. The great artist had the strongest objection to leaving his studio, and when the marchioness sent for him to come to Versailles, replied brusquely, "Tell madame I never work in a town." His friends, however, persuaded him to reconsider the matter, and eventually he accepted the commission, but with the proviso that no one should be allowed to enter the room during the sittings. When he reached the favourite's apartments, he reminded her

¹ *Causeries du Lundi*, ii. 396.

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of this condition, and then asked permission to put on his "working dress." His request was granted, whereupon he proceeded to unfasten the buckles of his shoes, and loosen his garters and his collar, after which he removed his wig and hung it upon a chandelier. He then took from his pocket a little silk cap, which he put upon his head, and announced himself ready to begin. He had not, however, been at work more than a quarter of an hour when the door opened and the King walked in. La Tour could not conceal his annoyance at being thus interrupted, and, raising his cap, exclaimed, "You distinctly promised, madame, that no one was to be admitted!" The King laughed heartily at the painter's anger and his comical appearance, and begged him to go on with the portrait. "It is quite impossible for me to obey your Majesty," replied La Tour. "I will return when madame is disengaged." With this, he took up his wig and garters and went into another room to dress, remarking several times as he moved away, "I do not like to be interrupted." The favourite had no easy task to induce him to complete the portrait, so indignant was he at her breach of faith.¹

Madame de Pompadour was not only a liberal patroness of the arts, but an enthusiastic amateur. In the Cabinet des Estampes in the Bibliothèque Nationale there is a collection entitled *Suite d'estampes gravées par madame la marquise de Pompadour d'après les pierres gravées de Guay, graveur du roi*, and comprising upwards of sixty engravings. They deal for the most part either with allegorical subjects intended to commemorate important events of the time or with celebrated personages. Among

¹ *Éloge de Latour, Almanach littéraire, 1792. Les Maîtresses de Louis XV.*, ii. 106.

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the first, may be mentioned the victories of Fontenoy, Lawfeldt, and Lutternberg, the Preliminaries of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, the Birth of the Duc de Bourgogne, and the Franco-Austrian Alliance of 1756, which represents France and Austria clasping hands over the altar of Fidelity, and treading under foot the torch of Discord and the mask of Hypocrisy.

Among the latter, are portraits of Louis XV., the Dauphin and Dauphiness, Augustus III., Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, Crébillon *père*, and the marchioness's faithful ally, the Maréchale de Mirepoix.

Opinions differ somewhat with regard to the merit of her work, but it is generally conceded that it hardly does justice to the admirable taste which she always exhibited in matters connected with art, and it would, moreover, appear that she received a good deal of professional assistance.

The favourite also seems to have tried her hand at that most difficult art in which Guay was such an adept, and three of the prints in the collection just mentioned bear a note in that engraver's writing to the effect that the original stones were "almost entirely the work of Madame de Pompadour."

Besides her patronage of men of letters and artists, Madame de Pompadour has another claim upon the gratitude of her countrymen, and one which ought not to be forgotten: it is to her that France is indebted for the establishment of the world-famous porcelain manufactory of Sèvres.

The favourite, who loved to surround herself with pretty things, had often wondered at the inferior quality of the porcelain manufactured in France, and the high prices which that imported from China and Saxony

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commanded, and not long after her installation at Versailles she made up her mind to see whether something could not be done to encourage the native industry. Her motives seem to have been partly disinterested and partly selfish. Her patriotism was stirred at the thought that a country which manufactured the finest tapestry and carpets in Europe should be dependent upon the foreigner for its porcelain; but she was also ambitious to enter into competition with Augustus III. (the father of the Dauphiness), who had taken the Dresden manufactory under his special protection, and had directed that every piece produced should bear the royal arms.

She, accordingly, represented to the King how desirable it was that an effort should be made to prevent the large sums that now went every year to China and Dresden from leaving the kingdom, and to create, if possible, a foreign demand for French porcelain; and easily persuaded him to promise his co-operation. This he did the more willingly, as the germ of an institution such as the marchioness recommended already existed. In 1741 a manufactory had been established at Vincennes; but it had not received adequate support from the Government, and, in consequence, had fallen into the most deplorable state of inefficiency, and contented itself with producing the commonest sort of pottery. However, the favourite soon succeeded in galvanising it into renewed activity. A company was formed to finance it with a capital of 250,000 livres, to which the King added a further 100,000, and in 1749 the Vincennes manufactory employed over a hundred men working either by the piece or the day.

In 1756 Madame de Pompadour, doubtless finding that Vincennes was too far from Versailles, and wishing

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to supervise the progress of the art which she herself had practically created, caused the manufactory to be transferred to Sèvres, where an immense building had been erected for the purpose. The industry had by this time become of such importance that it gave employment to no less than five hundred men, who were lodged in the building itself. Of these about sixty were painters, some of whom earned as much as a louis a day.¹ Four years later Louis XV. purchased the establishment from the company, and it has continued to be national property through all fluctuations of Government to the present day. The monarch appointed the chemist Jacques Boileau director, at a salary of 2000 livres; Duplessis, goldsmith to the King, composed the models for the vases; and the celebrated landscape painter Bachelier superintended their decoration.

Until about the year 1761 all the porcelain manufactured in France was artificial or soft (*pâte tendre*). The oldest colour was the beautiful *bleu du roi*, a deep ultramarine. In 1752 Helbot discovered the charming blue ground colour, obtained from copper, known as *bleu turquoise*; and a few years later a man named Xhrouet invented a bright pink, which, as it happened to be Madame de Pompadour's favourite colour, he baptized *le rose Pompadour*. Other colours in use appear to have been a bright yellow, a violet, and three shades of green, combinations which, entering as they did into the delicate composition forming the *pâte tendre*, rendered the pieces so produced the most exquisite that could be imagined.² One of the choicest, a vase, which the Duc

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, xvi. 77.

² See Mr. Litchfield's "Pottery and Porcelain," p. 264; and Mr. J. H. Middleton's article in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," xix. 600.

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de Luynes describes as "three feet high, mounted on a bronze pedestal, and containing a bouquet of four hundred and eighty porcelain flowers, so closely resembling nature as to deceive the onlooker,"¹ was sent to Augustus of Saxony, as a gentle hint that Dresden no longer enjoyed a monopoly in Europe.

But, beautiful as were the early specimens of Sèvres porcelain, and far superior to either Dresden or Chinese in regularity of shape and beauty of colouring, according to the testimony of French contemporary writers, the desire to equal the Saxons in their hard paste, and also to imitate the durability and utility of the Chinese and Japanese porcelain, caused continued experiments to be made; and in 1761 Pierre Hanung, the son of the Frankenthal potter, having sold the secret of the hard-paste porcelain to the directors of Sèvres, and the necessary kaolin having been accidentally discovered near Limoges, the manufactory henceforth devoted itself to its production, to the exclusion of the *pâte tendre*, a change which modern connoisseurs have never ceased to deplore.²

Madame de Pompadour was in the habit of paying a weekly visit to the manufactory, often in company with the King, and invariably made large purchases. She also conceived the idea of holding an annual exhibition in the Château of Versailles. On these occasions she might be seen going from one courtier to another expatiating on the beauties of the different pieces exposed for sale, and entreating them to buy;³ and when

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, ix. 329.

² "Pottery and Porcelain," 267.

³ Luynes says prices ruled 25 livres a vase, 50 livres for a plate, and 2 louis for a coffee-cup.

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purchasers were slow in coming forward, she would exclaim, "It is the duty of a good citizen to spend as much money on this porcelain as he can possibly afford."¹

Another undoubted service which the favourite rendered to France was the establishment of the Military School (*École militaire*). It was the institution founded by Madame de Maintenon at Saint-Cyr which first suggested to her the idea of establishing a school where the sons of noble but impoverished families who wished to enter the army might receive a military education free of all cost to themselves. Accordingly, after consulting her friend Pâris-Duverney, who had once cherished a similar project, and now readily promised her his support, she approached the King on the subject. At first she met with little encouragement in that quarter, for Louis disapproved of enterprises the good results of which were likely to be far distant, nor was he at all moved by the picture of a grateful posterity, which the favourite painted in glowing terms; but Madame de Pompadour returned again and again to the charge, and at length in 1750 wrung from him a reluctant consent.

For some months after the creation of the Military School had been decided upon the project was kept a profound secret—a secret so well guarded that most historians give the credit of its conception to d'Argenson, the Minister for War; but there cannot be the slightest doubt that the honour belongs to Madame de Pompadour and, after her, to Pâris-Duverney, as the following letter from the marchioness to the financier will show:—

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson* (edit. Rathery), viii. 212.

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“We went yesterday to Saint-Cyr. I cannot tell you how much I was affected by what I saw there. People have said to me that a similar institution ought to be founded for the benefit of men, which has made me inclined to laugh, for they will believe when our scheme is known that it is they who have given us the idea.”

Although the King had been won over, the Ministers who, after the manner of statesmen, were inclined to look askance at any scheme, however beneficent, which did not originate with themselves, were by no means enthusiastic, and we find Madame de Pompadour writing to Duverney, entreating him to bring all his influence to bear upon them, and expressing her anxiety for the matter to be publicly announced, “because after that it will be impossible to turn back.” When this was done, the promoters found themselves the object of much adverse criticism. Some sneered and prophesied that the School would turn out nothing but dandies, as Saint-Cyr did nothing but prudes, while others contended that it was iniquitous to squander money on an institution of the kind when the finances were in such a deplorable condition. These expressions of opinion were not without their effect on the Government, who seemed disinclined to take any further steps in the matter; but at last Madame de Pompadour and Duverney succeeded in persuading them to put a tax on cards, in order to provide the initial expenses, and in May 1751 building operations were commenced on the banks of the Seine, near Grenelle.

But soon fresh difficulties arose. Duverney, who had financed the undertaking to a considerable extent, wished to superintend the construction of the buildings; but the Marquis de Marigny claimed this right, in virtue

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of his post as head of the Board of Works. A violent quarrel ensued, and Marigny went the length of calling the banker a swindler, upon which the latter refused to have anything more to do with the affair and demanded the return of the money he had advanced. Had he persisted in his resolution the whole scheme must have collapsed; but Madame de Pompadour, by the exercise of great tact and patience, managed to soothe his ruffled feelings, and he consented to overlook the insult he had received from her brother. Moreover, as the work proceeded it became evident that the expense had been greatly underestimated, and the question was seriously discussed whether the project had not better be abandoned altogether. Madame de Pompadour, however, threw herself into the breach and wrote to Dûverney the following letter:—

MADAME DE POMPADOUR to PÂRIS-DUVERNEY.

“Most assuredly, *mon cher nigaud*, I will not allow this establishment, which ought to immortalise the King, render his nobility happy, and make posterity recognise my attachment to the State and the person of his Majesty, to perish in port. I have to-day told Gabriel¹ to make arrangements for sending back to Grenelle the workmen required to finish the business. My income for this year has not yet been remitted to me, but I shall employ the whole of it to pay the workmen. I know not whether I shall find any sureties for its

¹ Jacques Ange Gabriel (1710-81), the architect to whom the construction of the School had been entrusted. He was a member of a family of celebrated architects. His father had built the Town Halls at Rennes and Dijon, and his grandfather the royal château of Choisy.

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repayment, but I am quite certain that I shall spend a hundred thousand livres with great pleasure for the benefit of these poor children."

So much perseverance did not go unrewarded, and on July 18, 1756, the building was finally completed. It had accommodation for five hundred pupils, who were divided into ten companies of fifty each. None were admitted who could not prove "four generations of nobility at least." The sons of officers who had fallen in battle, or who had died of their wounds, and the children of those whose fathers and grandfathers had fought for their country were given the preference over the *noblesse* without service. On leaving the School the boys received commissions in the army and pensions of 200 livres apiece, to enable them to support their rank.

The École Militaire lasted until 1793, when it was suppressed by the Convention, who replaced it by the École de Mars. During the twenty-seven years of its existence it gave to France many distinguished officers and a sovereign—Napoleon.

CHAPTER XV

Madame de Pompadour's responsibility for the Seven Years' War—The Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle a temporary settlement only—The Empress Maria Theresa resolved on the humiliation of Prussia—Kaunitz—His character and eccentricities—He advocates an alliance with France against Frederick the Great—Frederick's indiscretions—" *Je ne la connais pas* "—Kaunitz goes as Ambassador to Paris—And wins over Madame de Pompadour to the side of Austria—The French Government as yet unfavourable to his schemes—He returns to Vienna and is succeeded by Stahremberg—Divergent colonial interests of England and France—The home governments indifferent to the maintenance of peace—Incapacity of their representatives in London and Paris—Lord Albemarle and his "Lolote"—Hostilities break out in North America—Refusal of Austria to renew her alliance with England—England opens negotiations with Frederick—Austria and Prussia both offer their alliance to France—Vacillation and imbecility of the French Ministry—Madame de Coislin endeavours to supplant Madame de Pompadour—Stahremberg in a dilemma—Discomfiture of Madame de Coislin—Maria Theresa and Madame de Pompadour—Present of a lacquer escritoire to the favourite—Madame de Pompadour's letter to the Empress—The favourite induces Louis XV. to treat with Austria—Bernis the intermediary between the two Courts—His objections to the Austrian alliance—The conference at *Babiole*—Stahremberg's proposals—Bernis suggests a compromise—The Duc de Nivernois sent to Berlin—"A piece of my own composition"—Indignation of Louis XV. at the Convention of Westminster—First Treaty of Versailles (May 1, 1756)—"It is to Madame de Pompadour that we owe everything"—Kaunitz's letter to the favourite—Frederick invades Saxony.

THE peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, which in April 1748

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brought to a close the long War of the Austrian Succession, was very far from pacifying Europe. Frederick the Great, who had won the stake he had played for, was no doubt content enough; so, too, in a less degree was England, which, according to Chesterfield, it had come just in time to save from bankruptcy. With France and Austria, however, the case was very different. The French were highly indignant at the treachery of the Prussian King, who had requited the efforts and sacrifices which had helped him to secure possession of Silesia by coolly abandoning them at the first opportunity and concluding peace on his own account; while the restoration of Cape Breton seemed to them but poor compensation for their failure to reap any permanent advantage from their victorious campaigns in the Austrian Netherlands.

But France's dissatisfaction with the terms of the treaty was as nothing in comparison with that of the haughty Empress-Queen. Maria Theresa never for a single moment allowed herself to forget the intolerable wrong she had suffered at the hands of Frederick, who, without pretext or provocation, and in defiance of his most sacred engagements, had attacked the young orphan whom he had pledged himself to defend, and wrenched from her "the fairest jewel of her crown." It was only with the greatest difficulty that she had been brought to consent to what she regarded as the dismemberment of her empire; and scarcely was the ink dry upon the parchment of the treaty than she set to work to array against Prussia a coalition such as Europe had never seen. "Nothing would content her," says Macaulay, in picturesque, if slightly exaggerated, language, "but that the whole civilised world, from the

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White Sea to the Adriatic, from the Bay of Biscay to the pastures of the wild horses of the Tanais, should be combined in arms against one petty state.”¹

But, before this project could be realised, it was necessary to overcome the reluctance of her own Ministers. Austria was heartily tired of war; and when in the autumn of 1748 the Empress summoned a meeting of her Council to discuss the future policy of the country, she found that its opinion, including that of the Emperor, her husband, was in favour of adhering to the traditional policy of the monarchy—alliance with the maritime powers, England and Holland—and strongly against any attempt to recover Silesia.

There was, however, one notable exception, a young diplomatist, Count von Kaunitz, who when only in his thirtieth year had attracted the favourable attention of his sovereign, and, after being employed on diplomatic missions to Rome, Florence, and Turin, had been sent to represent Austria at Aix-la-Chapelle.

Vain and supercilious, ludicrously affected, foppish in dress, and a confirmed valetudinarian, Kaunitz was notwithstanding a man of wonderful discretion and tenacity of purpose, patient, crafty, resourceful, and a master of the art of dissimulation. Carlyle thus amusingly portrays him :—

“Kaunitz is a man of long hollow face, nose naturally rather turned into the air, till artificially it got altogether turned thither. A man sparing of words, sparing even of looks; will hardly lift his eyelids for your sake,—will lift perhaps his chin, in slight monosyllabic fashion, and stalk superlatively through the other door. King of the vanished Shadows. A determined hater of Fresh Air;

¹ Essay on Frederick the Great.

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made the very Empress shut her windows when he came to audience; fed, cautiously daring, on boiled capons; more I remember not—except also that he would suffer no mention of the word *Death* in his presence. A most high-sniffing, fantastic, slightly insolent shadow-king. . . . An exquisite diplomatist this Kaunitz; came to be Prince, almost to be God-Brahma in Austria, and to rule the Heavens and the Earth (having skill with his Sovereign Lady too) in an exquisite and truly surprising manner. . . . Sits like a God-Brahma, human idol of gilt crockery, with nothing in the belly of it (but a portion of boiled chicken daily, very ill-digested); and such a prostrate worship from those around him, as was hardly seen elsewhere.”¹

Kaunitz's contention was that, whereas Austria had hitherto had two enemies to deal with—France and

¹ Carlyle's "Frederick the Great," vi. 161 and 294. Many interesting details about this remarkable man are related by Wraxall. He tells us that Kaunitz in his later years wielded almost absolute power at the Austrian Court; that he treated the highest nobility, and even members of the Royal Family, with supercilious contempt; that, on the other hand, he was exceedingly affable and condescending towards artists, musicians, and men of letters; that he spoke Italian and French with ease and fluency, but was rarely heard to utter a word in his own language; that if he accepted an invitation to dinner with any person, however exalted his rank, it was only on condition that the wine, bread, and even the water should be sent from his own house and the principal dishes dressed by his own cook; that when he dined at home, "even in company with the first persons of both sexes," he was accustomed to spend at least a quarter of an hour "in the disgusting occupation of cleaning his teeth, which he performed with all the minute ceremonies of the toilet"; and that, like Madame de Pompadour, he had a passion for building, and was perpetually pulling down, altering, and repairing his houses.—Wraxall's "Memoirs of the Courts of Berlin, Dresden, Warsaw, and Vienna" (edition 1799), ii. 458-478.

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Turkey—she had now three, and that of these the King of Prussia was by far the most to be dreaded; that Austria would never be safe until Frederick was crushed, and that, therefore, the recovery of Silesia was an object never to be lost sight of. At the same time, he was careful to point out that it would be most imprudent to attempt any aggressive measures, until Austria had formed an alliance so powerful as to reduce the possibility of failure to a minimum. Russia and Saxony could no doubt be gained over without much difficulty, but that would not be enough; for Russian foreign policy, wholly subservient as it was to the whim of the sovereign, was too inconstant to be depended upon, while Saxony was valuable chiefly as a base for operations. England, he considered, would be but little inclined to join an enterprise from which she had practically nothing to gain, and he, therefore, recommended that every effort should be made to secure the co-operation of France, by cessions in Italy, or even by the sacrifice of the Netherlands.¹

These views, harmonising as they did with the wishes of the Empress, ultimately prevailed, and it was resolved to send Kaunitz as Ambassador to Paris, to give him an opportunity of realising the most important part of his scheme by establishing more cordial relations between the Courts of Vienna and Versailles, and so to pave the way for an offensive alliance.

At first sight, it seemed an almost hopeless task to detach the French Court from that anti-Austrian policy which it had steadily pursued since the days of Henry Quatre—alike under Richelieu and Mazarin, Louis XIV. and Fleury, who had combated the pretensions of the

¹ Longman's "Frederick the Great and the Seven Years' War," p. 80.

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House of Hapsburg from the Baltic to the Adriatic. Nevertheless, there were not wanting cogent arguments in favour of a change. The obstinately contested and ruinous struggles between the two redoubtable antagonists had served only to exhaust and enfeeble themselves and to aggrandise one or other of the smaller states, such as Savoy or Brandenburg. Moreover, times had changed. Austria was no longer a great military power menacing the independence of Europe, as she had been in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Successive wars had deprived her of Spain, of the two Sicilies, of part of the Netherlands, and of Silesia. No one now but the most conservative of statesmen, who refused to leave the beaten paths of French diplomacy and persisted in seeing in the territories of Maria Theresa the vast empire of Charles V., could deny that great advantages might accrue to France from an alliance with her ancient enemy, whereby, in return for assisting to humble the upstart Hohenzollern, concessions might be obtained in Belgium or Italy and a check put to the growing power and influence of Great Britain.

But it is open to question whether these considerations, weighty as they undoubtedly were, would have sufficed to turn the current of feeling, which for nearly two centuries had flowed steadily in the opposite channel, had it not been for the conduct of the King of Prussia. The perfidy with which that monarch had acted towards his ally in the late war had aroused the deepest resentment at the French Court; and to this had since been added other, and far less pardonable, offences. Frederick, great general, shrewd diplomatist, and able administrator as he was, had one unfortunate weakness—that of exercising his powers of satire at the expense not only of private

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individuals, but of his brother potentates, their Ministers, and their mistresses. He said undutiful things about his royal uncle of England, whom, fortunately for him, political exigencies compelled to forgiveness, and absolutely unprintable ones about the Czarina Elizabeth, whom he thus converted from a warm friend into a bitter enemy. He made coarse jokes about Augustus III.'s little eccentricities, and his favourite Minister, Count Brühl's wardrobe, and lost whatever chance he may have had of Saxon support. Nor were his Most Christian Majesty and Madame de Pompadour forgotten. Of Louis, Frederick always wrote and spoke with the most withering contempt as of a new Sardanapalus, and Louis not unnaturally resented such comparisons; while Madame de Pompadour had even graver cause for complaint.

The marchioness had at first professed great admiration for the Prussian hero, and when Voltaire went to Berlin in 1750, had charged him with all sorts of flattering messages, which, however, received only sarcastic replies. "When I," wrote the poet to his niece, Madame Denis, "was starting for Berlin and took my leave of Madame de Pompadour, she bade me present her respects to the King of Prussia. It was impossible to give a commission more agreeable, or in a more charming manner. She did it with the greatest modesty imaginable, saying, 'If I might venture,' and 'If the King of Prussia will pardon my taking such a liberty.' I suppose that I must have delivered this message amiss. For I, as a man full of respect for the Court of France, felt assured that such compliments would be well received; but the King answered me, drily, 'I do not know her (*Je ne la connais pas*). This is not the land for swains and shepherdesses.' Nevertheless, I shall write to Madame de Pompadour

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that Mars has welcomed as he ought the compliments of Venus.”¹ Which he, accordingly, proceeded to do:—

“ Dans ces lieux jadis peu connus,
Beaux lieux aujourd’hui devenus
Digne d’éternelle mémoire,
Au favori de la Victoire.
Vos compliments sont parvenus :
Vos myrtes sont dans cet asile
Avec les lauriers confondus
J’ai l’honneur de la part d’Achille
D’en rendre grâces à Vénus.”²

But three years later when he left Berlin, with feelings of bitter mortification and anger against Frederick, he took care that these and other injudicious speeches should be faithfully reported. For the famous “*Je ne la connais pas*” was by no means the only delinquency. Frederick could not refrain from scoffing in the most public manner at a lady so frail and a throne so degraded. A favourite lap-dog, which sat on a chair at his side by day and slept in his bed at night, received from him the name of “Pompadour,” and he was wont to remark with a chuckle that she did not cost him quite so much money as the other Pompadour did his brother at Versailles. He used to speak of Madame de Pompadour’s domination, in allusion to that of Madame de Châteauroux, as “the reign of Petticoat the Second.” Finally, to put the *comble* upon everything, while all the other Ambassadors at Paris were vying with one another for the favour of the haughty marchioness, the Prussian alone—Baron von Knyphausen—received express orders from his master to abstain from visiting her.

¹ Voltaire to his niece, Madame Denis, August 11, 1750.

² *Œuvres de Voltaire* (edition Beuchot), iv. 446.

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"As Frederick," says Lord Stanhope, "affected no peculiar austerity of principles—as he sneered at the Christian faith—as his own morals were, to say the least, not beyond suspicion—we cannot vindicate these sallies on the plea of offended virtue. We can only wonder that a prince always so wary and politic in his conduct should have been thus reckless and unguarded in his conversation. Endowed by nature with splendid genius for war and with brilliant powers of satire, these gifts appeared to counteract each other; it needed during seven most perilous years the utmost exertion of the first to repair and retrieve the ill effect of the second."¹

Kaunitz arrived in Paris at the end of October 1750, and took in the situation of affairs at a single glance. He saw that it was Madame de Pompadour who held in her hand the success or failure of his plans, and to her, accordingly, he at once began to pay his court. He seems to have made a favourable impression on the lady from the very first. "The Comte de Kaunitz, Ambassador of the Empress, presented his credentials to-day," she writes to her brother. "He is said to be charming, and seems to me a very polished person."² And a few weeks later we find Kaunitz writing to his Court, "I have not forgotten to pay my addresses to Madame de Pompadour. I know that the King is much gratified, and that she herself is not insensible to my attentions."

The crafty diplomatist, indeed, soon succeeded in gaining not only the goodwill, but the confidence of the favourite, and allowed no opportunity to slip of

¹ Stanhope's "History of England," iv. 75.

² Madame de Pompadour to her brother, the Marquis de Vandières, November 2, 1750.

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flattering her vanity, and stimulating the desire she had long cherished of playing a great rôle and earning the applause of her contemporaries and the admiration of posterity.

But while thus dexterously paving the way for an understanding between the two Courts, Kaunitz took every precaution to disguise the real object of his presence at Versailles; and few would have believed that in the vain, effeminate dandy who on his return from a hunting-party, was wont to smear his face with the yolk of an egg to prevent its becoming sunburnt, and at his toilette had four *valets-de-chambre* to throw hair-powder in all directions, while he ran about that he might only catch the superfine part of it,¹ they saw the man who was destined to revolutionise the policy of France.

Before many months had passed, Madame de Pompadour had been completely won over to the Austrian side and had promised the Ambassador every assistance in her power. On sounding some of her friends in the Council, however, she found that opinion there was far from favouring her views, and, therefore, advised him that it was necessary to exercise patience, as the Prussian alliance was as yet too fresh in men's minds. Kaunitz was far too astute to attempt to hasten matters, and, accordingly, in 1753 he returned to Vienna, and was succeeded by the Count von Stahremberg,

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset* (edit. 1825), p. 210. The lady adds that one day when some one tried to cast ridicule upon the Ambassador on account of this eccentricity, Madame de Pompadour exclaimed, "Aye, just as Alcibiades cut off his dog's tail, to give the Athenians something to talk about and to divert their attention from the things he wished to conceal."

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who could be trusted to reap the fruit of the seed his predecessor had so industriously sown the moment it should have ripened.

If the animosity of Maria Theresa against Frederick the Great was the most disturbing element in European politics, the rivalry between England and France, which arose out of conflicting colonial interests, was an almost equally important factor. In two opposite hemispheres the English and French found themselves face to face. In India, the open war between them, which had been stayed for a brief space by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, quickly broke out again in a new form, the troops of the two nations appearing as "auxiliaries" on opposite sides in the struggle between Anwár-ud-din Khán and Chanda Sahib for the nawábship of the Karnátic. In North America, the outlook was still more threatening. The English settlers along the eastern coast of what is now the United States and the French in Canada and Louisiana were continually at variance, the former determined to push their settlements inland, the latter equally resolved to possess themselves of the valleys of the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi, unite their two provinces, and pen the English up within the Alleghany Mountains. Under such circumstances, it was impossible for peace to be maintained for any length of time, and almost equally certain that when the conflict began, it would not be confined to the colonists.

It is conceivable, however, that hostilities might have been postponed for some time longer than was actually the case had the Government of either country showed any real desire for a better understanding. But the Whig oligarchy in England and the Ministry at Versailles were too much occupied in quarrelling among

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themselves to exercise the slightest control over their unruly colonists; while, by an unfortunate coincidence, their incapacity and indifference were reflected in their representatives in London and Paris. The French Ambassador at the Court of St. James's, during the years immediately succeeding the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, was the husband of Madame de Pompadour's bosom friend, the Maréchale de Mirepoix. This nobleman appears to have been so fascinated with the beauty of the English ladies, that we are told he spent most of his time in "dancing and love-making," and had none to spare for other matters; while our representative at the French Court was even more worthless from a diplomatic point of view. The post, indeed, according to Horace Walpole, was merely kept up for the benefit of George II.'s favourite, William Keppel, Earl of Albemarle, "the spendthrift earl." The sentimental Marmontel speaks of him as "the perfection of what one would call a gentleman and a man of honour," and declares that he "united what is best and most valuable both in the French and English characters."¹ These

¹ *Mémoires de Marmontel* (edit. 1804), i. 342.

Lord Chesterfield in a letter to his son holds him up as an encouraging instance of the honours and emoluments which his favourite Graces can confer. "Between you and me, for this example must go no further, what do you think made our friend, Lord Albemarle, Colonel of a regiment of Guards, Governor of Virginia, Groom of the Stole, and Ambassador to Paris; amounting in all to sixteen or seventeen thousand pounds a-year? Was it his birth?—No; a Dutch gentleman only. Was it his estate?—No; he had none. Was it his learning, his parts, his political abilities, and application? You can answer these questions as easily, and as soon, as I can ask them. What was it then?—Many people wondered, but I do not, for I know, and will tell you. It was his air, his address, his manners, and his graces."—Lord Chesterfield to his son, May 27, 1752.

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admirable qualities did not prevent him from wasting the time which he should have devoted to his duties, and the money which should have gone to benefit his wife and numerous family—he had eight sons and seven daughters—on a certain fascinating Mademoiselle Gaucher, a lady “whose figure combined the majesty of the cedar with the pliancy of the poplar, and to whom he gave the childish and tender appellation of Lolote.” Albemarle was blindly devoted to this woman, who, not content with ruining him in fortune,¹ is said to have sold his secrets to the French Government. He died suddenly at his post in December 1754, by which time the breach between the two countries had widened beyond all hope of reconciliation.²

Hostilities, indeed, had already broken out in America, where Duquesne, the Governor of Canada, had despatched troops to seize the territory of the Ohio, and the English Government had sent orders to the Virginians and Pennsylvanians to resist them. The situation became more serious; a body of regulars sailed from England to the assistance of the colonists, while privateers fell upon the French shipping and inflicted considerable damage.

War was now plainly inevitable. George II.'s fears for his beloved Hanover were at once aroused, and the Ministry applied to Austria for a renewal of their alliance,

¹ Marmontel relates that one evening, seeing the lady gazing somewhat earnestly at a star, the earl exclaimed, “Do not look so much at it, my dear, for, alas, it is not in my power to give it you!” After Albemarle's death, the fascinating Lolote married Comte d'Hérouville, the Governor of Montauban, whom she had nursed through a severe illness, and died, it is said, of mortification at the refusal of the *beau monde* of Paris to receive her.

² Stanhope's “History of England,” iv. 45.

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by which the latter was to strengthen its forces in the Netherlands, in order to oppose the threatened advance of the French. Now the relations between the Courts of St. James and Vienna had been somewhat strained since the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, not that that would have stood in the way of their co-operation had their interests been still identical. Such, however, was no longer the case. England thought only of using Austria against France; Austria's one idea was to crush Frederick, with whom England had no quarrel. The result was that the Imperial Government replied that the despatch of an army to Belgium would leave their territories exposed to an invasion from Prussia; and the long alliance between England and Austria, which the ambition of Louis XIV. had called into being, was at an end.

Nothing now remained for the English Government but to make overtures to Prussia—to Prussia whose monarch had said of George II. that he “deserved the galleys.” Necessity, however, knows no law, and, accordingly, Lord Holderness was despatched as Envoy to Berlin, with instructions to come to terms with Frederick with as little delay as possible.

While these negotiations were proceeding, the Ministry at Versailles was in a hopelessly chaotic state. As soon as the news arrived of the English attacks upon their commerce, Stahremberg, the Imperial Ambassador, had formally offered the Austrian alliance to the French Court. A contradictory proposal was made almost at the same moment by the Prussian representative, Knyphausen, who suggested that France should unite with Frederick against England and Austria, the French invading Belgium and the Prussians Bohemia. Stah-

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remberg's offer does not appear to have found at this moment any support in the Council, but the question of an alliance with Prussia was long and angrily debated. D'Argenson, the War Minister, urged the acceptance of Frederick's proposition, maintaining that a Continental war was now inevitable, and that in such a struggle Prussia, with a well-filled treasury and the greatest general of the age in command of its troops, was a far more valuable ally than Austria, destitute alike of money and capable leaders. Machault, now Minister of Marine, denied that war upon the Continent must necessarily ensue, protested against any offensive alliance, and urged that hostilities should be confined to the sea. The discussion was, in reality, nothing but the continuation of the rivalry between the heads of the army and navy which had been going on ever since the latter had thrown in his lot with Madame de Pompadour, each Minister advocating the kind of warfare which would increase the importance of his own department. The Council was divided; some supported d'Argenson and others Machault. As for the King, he appeared incapable of forming an opinion one way or the other.

Eventually, a sort of compromise was effected, whereby it was resolved to abandon all idea of an offensive alliance with Prussia against Austria, but to proceed with the proposed invasion of Hanover, an attack upon which it was fondly imagined would cause England to capitulate with regard to the maritime interests. Such an assumption might have been justified if George II. had been as absolute as Henry VIII., or if the English people had cared more for the foreign possessions of their unpopular sovereign than for their own commercial supremacy; as matters stood, it was the height of fatuity. Almost

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equally ridiculous was the resolution to invite Frederick to co-operate against Hanover, while France was not to be required to pledge herself to support him against Austria, which, as Martin justly observes, was to treat the Prussian monarch like a *condottiere* in French pay.

Meanwhile Kaunitz was urging Stahremberg to return to the attack, and to induce Madame de Pompadour to bring her influence to bear upon Louis; for up to this moment, owing to the strong opposition to the Austrian alliance evinced by nearly all the Ministers, the marchioness had not ventured to broach the subject to the monarch. The Ambassador replied that matters were now very complicated at Versailles—the King had fallen in love! The new enchantress was a certain Madame de Coislin, who aspired to become *maîtresse-en-titre*, and whose pretensions to that exalted post were supported by the Prince de Conti, the prince who, on a certain memorable occasion, had found Madame de Pompadour's bed such an excellent substitute for an arm-chair. Conti was not a Minister, but he was a great favourite of the King. He conducted the monarch's correspondence with his secret agents at the various European Courts, which makes French diplomacy at this period an almost trackless labyrinth; took upon himself to interfere in every department of the State, to the intense disgust of the different Ministers, and was continually at variance with Madame de Pompadour.¹

Stahremberg informed his Government that if Madame de Coislin was destined to supplant Madame de Pompadour, it would be useless to attempt to carry on their negotiations through the latter, and that the wisest

¹ *Mémoires et Lettres du Cardinal de Bernis*, i. 205.

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course would be to make overtures to the Prince de Conti. If, on the other hand, the Coislin affair was merely a *galanterie*, they might do their cause irreparable harm by slighting the marchioness. He confessed that he was at a loss how to proceed, and awaited instructions from Vienna.

Kaunitz replied that the Ambassador, as he was on the spot, was in the best position to judge whether the new liaison was likely to prove a permanent one, and that he must use his discretion in the matter. Stahremberg, accordingly, after some further hesitation, decided in favour of Madame de Pompadour, and the issue justified his choice.¹

This Madame de Coislin, whose appearance upon the scene occasioned the Austrian Ambassador so much uneasiness, seems to have been a source of equal disquietude to Madame de Pompadour. For a time she made rapid progress in the good graces of the impressionable monarch; so much so, indeed, that, at length, she began to treat the marchioness with considerable hauteur. "I never saw her (Madame de Pompadour) in such a state of agitation," says Madame du Hausset, "as one evening on her return from the salon at Marly. Angrily throwing down her cloak and muff the moment she entered the room, she began to tear off her clothes, and then, having dismissed her other women, she said to me, 'I do not think I have ever met anybody so insolent as Madame de Coislin. I was playing *brélan* at the same table with her this evening, and you cannot conceive what I had to endure. All the men and women in the room seemed to come up in turn to watch us. Two or three times Madame de Coislin looked at me and exclaimed,

¹ D'Arneth's *Maria Theresia*, 1748-1756.

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"*Va tout !*" in the most insulting manner ; and I really thought I should have fainted when she said to me, in a tone of triumph, "I hold the *brélan* of kings." I wish you could have seen the curtsy she made me on retiring.' 'Did the King,' said I, 'show her any particular attention?' 'You don't know him,' said she, 'if he were going to install her to-night in my apartment, he would behave coldly to her before people, and treat me with the utmost kindness. This is the result of his education, for he is by nature kind-hearted and frank.'"¹

Fortunately for Madame de Pompadour and the Cabinet of Vienna, the lady's haughty airs, and still more her perpetual demands for money, began to weary her royal admirer, "who would sign an order for a million livres without a second thought, but would give a hundred louis out of his little private treasury only with the greatest reluctance;" and an ingenious little scheme, concocted between the marchioness and Janelle, the Intendant of the Post Office,² completed the discomfiture of the "proud Vashti," as the favourite called her rival.

The officials of the French Post Office at this period were as little troubled by scruples regarding the sanctity of the letters committed to their charge as are those of the Sublime Porte at the present day and, since their duties were not particularly onerous, it was customary to employ some of their leisure time in opening and examining any epistles the contents

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset* (edit. 1825), p. 105.

² "This Janelle is a great rogue and traitor ; he has already deceived two or three Ministers under whom he has served."—*Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson*, iv. 251.

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of which they had reason to believe might repay perusal. The *modus operandi* was as follows: Half-a-dozen clerks picked out the letters they were ordered to break open, and took the impression of the seals with a ball of quicksilver. They next put each letter, with the seal downwards, over a glass of hot water, which melted the wax, without injuring the paper. It was then opened and a copy of its contents taken, after which it was sealed again, by means of the impression, and forwarded to its destination. Every Sunday the Intendant of the Post Office carried his selections from the past week's correspondence to the King, who doubtless derived considerable amusement from the perusal of his subjects' letters; for, aware of the monarch's tendency to *ennui*, and that the surest road to his favour was to provide him with an hour's diversion, it may be presumed that the Intendant did not confine his attention to epistles of a purely political nature.

One Sunday Janelle, who was a devoted adherent of Madame de Pompadour, and always made a point of exhibiting his spoils to her before submitting them to the King, brought to Versailles a letter written, or supposed to have been written, by an old counsellor of the Parliament of Paris, well known for his attachment to the Court, to one of his friends, and containing the following passage:—

“It is quite reasonable that our master should have a lady friend—a confidante—as we all do ourselves, when we have a mind to; but it is desirable that he should keep the one he has; she is an amiable woman and injures no one, and her fortune is made. The one who is now talked of will be as haughty as high birth can

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make her. She will have to have an allowance of a million livres a year, since she is said to be excessively extravagant; her relatives will have to be created dukes, governors, and marshals, and in the end will surround the King and overawe the Ministers.”¹

This letter made a great impression upon the King, all the more so as the cunning *valet-de-chambre* Lebel, who had reasons of his own for not wishing to see Madame de Pompadour displaced, had lately provided a counter-attraction for his royal master in the person of “a charming little sultana,” who had been installed at the Parc-aux-Cerfs, and in whose society his Most Christian Majesty was spending a good deal of his time. The consequence was that a few days after the receipt of the above-mentioned epistle, Madame de Pompadour was able to announce to her faithful waiting-woman that Madame de Coislin “had been shown the door.”²

It has frequently been asserted that, while the question of an Austrian alliance was trembling in the balance, Maria Theresa, in order to confirm Madame de Pompadour in her Austrian sympathies, condescended to write to her an autograph letter, couched in the most flattering terms. In a monotonous age it seems almost

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset* (edit. 1825), p. 106.

² Bernis, in his *Mémoires*, takes all the credit of the defeat of Madame de Coislin to himself. He says that he wrote to Louis, representing that a new *maîtresse déclarée* “would be injurious to his interests and reputation, and would give umbrage to the Court of Vienna,” and that if the monarch intended to acknowledge the lady as such, he must crave permission to resign his office (he was then Minister for Foreign Affairs); that the King replied “with the greatest kindness and frankness,” acknowledged that Bernis was right, and promised “to subdue his passion for Madame de Coislin.”

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a pity to spoil so striking a story, but, in the interests of truth, we feel compelled to remark that this anecdote, which would appear to have originated with Duclos, a charming writer, but an untrustworthy historian, is quite untrue. The Empress-Queen never wrote to Madame de Pompadour, never addressed her as "*Madame, ma très chère sœur,*" or even as "*Ma cousine.*" The choice of the marchioness in preference to the Prince de Conti as the intermediary between the Cabinet of Vienna and the Council at Versailles was itself a sufficient claim to the favourite's gratitude. No flattery was needed. We have, in fact, an explicit denial from Maria Theresa herself, in the form of a letter written on October 10, 1763, to the Electress of Saxony:—

"You are deceiving yourself if you believe that we have ever had any dealings with Madame de Pompadour. Never did either letter or Ambassador pass by that channel. They were obliged to pay court to her like all the others; but there was never any intimacy. That channel would not have suited me. I made her a present, rather flattering than magnificent, in the year 1756, and with the King's permission. I did not think she would have accepted it otherwise."¹

This present was a lacquer escritoire, set with the portrait of the Empress-Queen studded with jewels. It was made to Stahremberg's order by Durollay and Estienne, jewellers, of the Place Dauphine, Paris,² and cost, despite the fact that it was supposed to be "more flattering than magnificent," no less a sum than 77,000

¹ D'Arneth's *Maria Theresa*, 1756–1758.

² Maria Theresa sent a number of lacquer boxes, of which she had a fine collection, to be used in the making of the escritoire.

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livres.¹ The Empress in her letter says that it was presented to Madame de Pompadour in 1756; as a matter of fact, it was not ordered until May 1757, and not completed until January 1759. Its arrival was preceded by the following letter from Kaunitz, which, it must be admitted, seems a very fair substitute for an epistle from his Imperial mistress herself:—

THE COUNT VON KAUNITZ-RIETBERG *to* MADAME DE POMPADOUR.

“The Empress is touched, madame, by the interest which you continue to take in her alliance with the King. She has noticed during the whole time the constancy and firmness with which since its inauguration you have been attached to the system happily established between the two Courts, and it has afforded Her the

¹ Here is the bill:—

Gold set, lacquer work escritoire, with ink-horn, sand-box, and sponge-box, gold	3,464 liv.
Disbursed for the lacquer	528 „
Disbursed for the cabinet-maker, case-maker, and locksmith	360 „
For workmanship, engraving, and chasing	6,148 „
The account of the jeweller, Lempereur	66,000 „
The price of the portrait paid to the miniature-painter, Venevault	600 „
For a little box lined with copper, in which the present has been sent to Vienna and returned to Paris	30 „
For the packing of the present and the lacquer which has been returned to Vienna	28 „ 19 s.
	<hr/>
	77,278 liv. 19 s.

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most lively satisfaction. She has commanded me to intimate the same to you in Her name, and, as She thinks that it will not be displeasing to you, and that the King cannot fail to approve, if She endeavours to testify to you how deeply sensible She is of your affection for Him and for Herself, She is sending directions to the Count von Stahremberg to remit to you a little token of remembrance from Her, and begs that you will be pleased to accept it as a proof of Her esteem for you. I am charmed that the Empress has been willing to avail Herself of my services to inform you of Her intentions. Do me the favour of complying with Her wishes, and retain for myself that kindly feeling that I shall make it my boast to deserve by the respect and sincere attachment I shall most assuredly cherish for you while life lasts."

To which the flattered marchioness replied :—

MADAME DE POMPADOUR *to* THE COUNT
VON KAUNITZ-RIETBERG.

"Were you to unite, Monsieur le Comte, all the sentiments with which the nobility and tenderness of your heart are able to inspire you, you would be very far from feeling what mine experienced on receiving the portrait of Her Imperial Majesty. I am overwhelmed by such an unprecedented mark of condescension. My heart, accustomed to contemplate with the most respectful admiration the extraordinary graciousness of the Empress, did not dare to flatter itself that she would extend it to me. It is quite impossible for me to adequately express to the greatest princess in the world

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my sense of her kindness. Pardon my diffidence, Monsieur le Comte, I entreat you; convey to her the sentiments for herself which I expressed in your presence at Compiègne; give expression to the feelings which you yourself entertain for your adorable mistress; you will not be exaggerating in the smallest degree. I leave your heart to interpret the feelings of my own. You can judge by yourself, Monsieur le Comte, of my anxiety that Her Imperial Majesty should be made aware of the true nature of my sentiments. In entrusting you with a commission to which I attach so much importance, I am giving you a proof, Monsieur le Comte, of the extent of the esteem and friendship I have professed for you.

"January 28, 1759.

"I do not dare to complain of the magnificence of the present, but my delight would have been as great had I received the portrait alone."

In spite of her "diffidence," Madame de Pompadour succeeded in summoning up sufficient courage to address the same day to "the greatest princess in the world" the following letter:—

MADAME DE POMPADOUR *to* THE EMPRESS
MARIA THERESA.

"May I be permitted to hope that Your Imperial Majesty will deign to accept my very humble thanks and expressions of respectful gratitude for the inestimable portrait which has been sent to me? If to deserve this precious gift, nothing further is necessary than to be

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penetrated to the depths of one's soul with the sincere admiration and enthusiasm which the entrancing graces and the heroic virtues of Your Imperial Majesty are wont to inspire, no one in the world can have a better claim than myself. I venture to add that there is not one among the subjects of Your Imperial Majesty who does not render homage to those rare and sublime qualities. You are accustomed, madame, to observe in all those who have the happiness to approach you the sentiments that I have the honour to express for you; but I trust Your Majesty will deign to distinguish mine, and to regard them as inspired by the most profound respect with which I am, madame, Your Imperial Majesty's most humble and most obedient servant,

“JEANNE DE POMPADOUR.¹

“*January 28, 1759.*”

As soon as Stahremberg had decided to ignore the pretensions of Madame de Coislin and her champion, the Prince de Conti, and to continue to pay court to Madame de Pompadour, he suggested to the marchioness that, since the Council had shown itself unfavourable to the Austrian alliance, it would be advisable for her, for the present at least, to confine her good offices to endeavouring to gain the King over to their side. He was of opinion that if once Louis XV. could be induced to lend a willing ear to the proposals of the Cabinet of Vienna, half the battle would have been won, and their ultimate acceptance assured, in spite of the pronounced hostility of some of the Ministers.

The favourite found the task allotted her an easier

¹ D'Arneth's *Maria Theresia*, 1756-1758. E. and J. de Goncourt's *Madame de Pompadour*, p. 155.

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one than she had dared to hope. Frederick had all an author's vanity in not allowing any of his *bon-mots* to be lost, and some of his recent utterances had stirred his brother potentate at Versailles to as much resentment as he was capable of feeling. Moreover, sunk as he was in the lowest depths of debauchery, Louis was a constant prey to religious terrors, and the idea of an alliance between the two great Catholic Powers, which might deal a death-blow to Protestantism in Europe, appealed to his superstitious and bigoted mind as a work capable of redeeming all his sins, past, present, and future. "He was persuaded," says Henri Martin, "that a king who sustained the cause of the Church could not be damned for his private sins. He dreamed of a holy war from the recesses of the Parc-aux-Cerfs."¹

But Louis had no desire that his Ministers should be informed of what was going forward, and was unwilling to treat with Stahremberg in person. Madame de Pompadour, however, had anticipated this difficulty, and had an agent of her own ready to hand in the person of the Abbé de Bernis, lately returned from his embassy to Venice. The abbé was greatly changed from the days when he shared a suit of clothes with a friend and was called "Babet." He no longer attended the play; he no longer wrote amatory poetry; history, philosophy, and politics occupied his time, and so indefatigable a worker had he become, that he barely allowed himself five hours for sleep. He had, in short, developed ambitions and, as he tells us, "wished to gradually accustom the public to regard him as a man of understanding and a fit person to be entrusted with the direction of affairs." While at Venice, he had won golden opinions from

¹ Martin's *Histoire de France*, xv. 492.

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every one, and had, besides, rendered good service to France by bringing to light a secret treaty between the Courts of Sardinia and Spain, and by the discovery of some intrigues at the Escorial, which had entirely escaped the notice of the Duc de Duras, the French Ambassador at Madrid.

Bernis has frequently been accused of having espoused the cause of Austria against Prussia through personal pique against Frederick, who, in an "Epistle" to Count Gotter, had spoken sarcastically of the abbé's poetical efforts; and this was so generally believed at the time that Turgot, in some satirical verses that he wrote and circulated in Paris, with the object of showing the disasters that the Seven Years' War was bringing upon the country, inquires:—

"Bernis, est-ce assez de victimes?
Et les mépris d'un roi pour vos petites rimes
Vous semblent-ils assez vengés?"¹

But a grave injustice has been done Bernis, who seems to have been both an amiable and a well-meaning man, in supposing that his conduct in this matter was dictated by so mean and contemptible a motive. Duclos declares that when Madame de Pompadour first opened her mind to the abbé on the subject of the Austrian alliance, the latter did everything in his power to dissuade her, and only yielded against his better judgment; and Duclos's account is confirmed by Frederick himself in his Memoirs, wherein he blames Bernis for his weakness in consenting to make himself responsible for a policy of the expediency of which he was more than doubtful, but commends him for his honest endeavours to put a stop to the war

¹ Sainte-Beuve's *Causeries du Lundi*, viii. 15.

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the moment he fully comprehended the fatal consequences which it must inevitably entail upon France.¹ Bernis, in fact, who was naturally of a cautious disposition, and almost superstitiously attached to the old French political system and the anti-Austrian policy, shrank from lending himself to the undoing of the work of Richelieu. He saw that an alliance with the Court of Vienna would arouse suspicion among the smaller German States, who had hitherto regarded France as their protector and the guarantor of the Treaty of Westphalia. He saw that in the near future France must inevitably be drawn into a war of which she would be required to bear the burden, while Austria would reap the profit. He saw, too—and did not hesitate to tell his patroness—that, in the event of an unfortunate issue, it would be upon herself that the brunt of the popular resentment and the displeasure of the King would certainly fall.

But all was in vain. Madame de Pompadour, having put her hand to the plough, was not one to turn back; and Bernis, either because his political ambitions were stronger than his principles, or, perhaps, because he still hoped to act as a moderating influence, consented to confer with Stahremberg.

The three negotiators, the abbé, the Ambassador, and the marchioness, met on September 22, 1755, at a little pleasure-house belonging to Madame de Pompadour at the bottom of the gardens of Bellevue, called *Babiole* (the Bauble)—“a name well chosen for the scene of that intrigue, where the vanity of a courtesan disposed of the fate of Europe.” Stahremberg’s proposal was a vast and daring plan; nothing less than the reconstruction of the Continent. Austria was to recover Silesia and the Duchy

¹ Sainte-Beuve’s *Causeries du Lundi*, viii. 16.

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of Parma, in return for which she was for ever to renounce the English alliance and to cede Belgium to the Infant Don Philip, Louis XV.'s son-in-law, with the exception of the town of Mons, which was to be given to France. Luxembourg, the Gibraltar of Belgium, was to be dismantled. Pomerania was to be restored to Sweden. The crown of Poland (conformable to the plan of the Marquis d'Argenson) was to be rendered hereditary in the House of Saxony, while the liberties of Poland in all other respects were to be maintained intact. These terms, the Ambassador pointed out, would be highly advantageous to France. Having a great Power for an ally, she would no longer be under the necessity of exhausting her finances in order to keep the petty States of Germany in her pay, and would have nothing more to fear on the Continent, as leagued with Austria and Spain she might dictate the law to Europe.¹

These specious and dangerous proposals alarmed Bernis, and, unwilling to incur any further responsibility in the matter, he sought an audience of the King and begged him to lay them before the Council; but Madame de Pompadour, fearing the opposition of d'Argenson, who had strong Prussian predilections, and also of Puisieux and Saint-Séverin, who, having been in a great measure responsible for the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, inclined to the same side, persuaded Louis to exclude them from the meeting. Even then, however, the feeling of the Council was distinctly unfavourable to the Austrian scheme; and Bernis, who, though not yet a member, had been summoned to take part in the deliberations, seized the opportunity to suggest a compromise, which, after some discussion, was adopted. This consisted of a simple

¹ Martin's *Histoire de France*, xv. 492.

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guarantee between France, Austria, and Prussia for their European possessions, exempting the existing war with England and leaving France free to act against Hanover. An envoy was despatched to the Empress to offer it to her as an alternative to her proposals, while the Duc de Nivernois, with an imposing suite, set out for Berlin to secure Frederick's adhesion.

Maria Theresa was naturally intensely disgusted with such a tame ending to her projects of revenge. She at first absolutely refused to even consider it; but Kaunitz pointed out that, regarded as a starting-point, it was not without its advantages, affording as it did a guarantee against a Franco-Prussian attack, while Frederick would be sure sooner or later to furnish Austria with some pretext for breaking the engagements concerning himself. Very reluctantly the Empress yielded, and instructions were about to be sent to Stahremberg to sign the agreement, when news from Berlin effected a fatal change in everything.

Rebuffed by Austria, the English Government, as we have seen, had appealed to Prussia. Here they were more successful. Frederick had never for a moment deluded himself with the idea that Maria Theresa would tamely resign herself to the loss of Silesia, and he had long been preparing to resist the attack which he knew was inevitable. He had no particular desire to renew his alliance with France, partly because he was extremely unwilling that the French should make themselves supreme in Germany, and partly because his participation in their hostile designs against Hanover would expose him to three separate attacks—from Austria, from England through the Electorate, and from Russia, fifty thousand of whose troops had recently been taken into

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English pay to defend Hanover in case of invasion. On the other hand, by accepting the overtures of the Court of St. James's, he would rid himself of two formidable enemies—England herself and Russia; for Russia he considered could not possibly go to war without subsidies, and Austria was not in a position to subsidise anybody. His decision was soon made; and on January 16, 1756, a Convention of Neutrality was signed at Westminster, by which England and Prussia bound themselves to unite their forces against “any foreign Power that might introduce troops into Germany.”

A few days after the signature of this treaty, the Duc de Nivernois, the French envoy, arrived at Berlin. Now the duke was not only a great nobleman; he was also a poet and sat among the “immortal forty.” At their first audience Frederick begged him to recite some of his verses, a request with which he readily complied. The King appeared highly pleased and remarked, with a smile, “I will now show you a piece of my own composition,” saying which he produced a bulky document and handed it to the astonished envoy. It was the draft of the Convention of Westminster.¹

Frederick protested that it was with no hostile intentions against France that he had entered into this engagement, and that his only object had been to preserve Germany from war; but Louis XV. was as much offended “as if the Elector of Brandenburg had been the rebellious vassal of the French crown.” The Court of Vienna and Madame de Pompadour were not slow to avail themselves of the opening thus afforded, and though Machault and d’Argenson, acting for once in concert, disputed the ground inch by inch, their warnings and

¹ The Duc de Broglie’s *Le Secret du Roi*, i. 121.

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remonstrances were unheeded; and on May 1, 1756, Stahremberg, on behalf of Austria, and Bernis, on behalf of France, signed the First Treaty of Versailles.¹

By this treaty Austria and France bound themselves to guarantee and defend each other's possessions in Europe. Should the territories of either be threatened with invasion, the other was to send to her assistance a force of 24,000 men—to wit, 18,000 infantry and 6000 cavalry; or, at the option of the party attacked, 8000 German florins per month for each thousand of the former, and 24,000 florins for each thousand of the latter. It was, of course, a purely defensive alliance and, to all appearance, a perfectly legitimate one, in view of the convention recently concluded between England and Prussia; but the Court of Vienna had not the least intention that matters should be allowed to stop here, and regarded it merely as a stepping-stone to a closer union. A few days after the conclusion of the treaty we find Stahremberg writing to Kaunitz:—

“I believe that it would be very advisable if Your Excellency could see your way to insert in the first letter you do me the honour to write to me a few lines that I might show to Madame de Pompadour. We have never had greater need of her good offices than we have at the present moment, and I should be very glad if, in addition to the personal compliments of Your Excellency, there were something to mark the gratitude and esteem which the Court and the Ministry entertain for her. It is certain that it is to her that we owe everything, and that it is to her that we must look in the future. She is desirous of

¹ Although called the Treaty of Versailles, it was actually signed at Jouy, a country-house belonging to Rouillé, the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

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gaining our esteem, and, in truth, she deserves it. I shall have more frequent and more private interviews with her when our alliance is no longer a secret. I should like to have, when that time arrives, something to tell her which will be gratifying to her vanity."

Kaunitz lost no time in acting upon the Ambassador's suggestion, and wrote, not "a few lines which might be shown to Madame de Pompadour," but a most flattering epistle to the lady herself.

"THE COUNT VON KAUNITZ-RIETBERG to MADAME DE POMPADOUR.

"All that has been concluded up to the present between the two Courts, madame, is entirely due to your zeal and sagacity. I am sensible of it; and I should be denying myself a pleasure were I not to assure you of my feelings, and to thank you for having consented to aid me with your counsel until this hour. I ought not to allow you to remain in ignorance of the fact that Their Imperial Majesties fully appreciate your services, and entertain for you all the sentiments that you can possibly desire. What has been done ought to deserve, in my opinion, the approbation of all fair-minded men and of posterity. But what remains to be accomplished is too important and too worthy of you for you to suffer yourself to abandon your endeavours to leave nothing wanting in a work which cannot fail to render you ever dear to your country. On that account, I am persuaded that you will continue to devote yourself to an object of so much importance. In that case, I look upon success as certain, and I already share in anticipation the glory and the satisfaction that must accrue to

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you ; for assuredly no one can possibly be more respectfully or more sincerely attached to you than your most humble and most obedient servant,

“COUNT VON KAUNITZ.”¹

The expectation of Kaunitz was justified. Simultaneously with their intrigues at Versailles, the Cabinet of Vienna had been carrying on negotiations with the Czarina Elizabeth—another victim of Frederick’s caustic wit—for an offensive alliance against Prussia ; and an understanding had been arrived at that hostilities should commence in the early spring of 1757. Frederick, aware of the designs of his enemies, resolved to anticipate attack, and on the 29th of August crossed the Saxon frontier.

Nine months later France was involved in a great alliance, which had for its object the partition of Prussia.

¹ D’Arneth’s *Maria Theresia*, 1748–1756, note 533 ; E. and J. de Goncourt’s *Madame de Pompadour*, p. 170.

CHAPTER XVI

Damiens's attempt to assassinate Louis XV.—The King behaves as if mortally wounded—He is reassured by an old servant—Madame de Pompadour in suspense—Machault, the Keeper of the Seals, brings her an order from the King to retire from Court—The Maréchale de Mirepoix prevails upon her to remain—The King recovers and returns to the marchioness—D'Argenson's diplomacy—Bernis again endeavours to induce him to be reconciled to Madame de Pompadour—But again fails—Interview between the marchioness and the Minister—"Either you or I will have to go!"—The favourite in a reflective mood—The King pays her a visit—The tyranny of tears—Disgrace and exile of Machault and d'Argenson—Disastrous consequences of their dismissal at such a time—Trial of Damiens—His terrible punishment.

AT the commencement of the year 1757 an event occurred which for a moment seriously threatened the position of Madame de Pompadour, but which ultimately left her more powerful than ever.

About six o'clock on the evening of the 5th of January, Louis XV. was descending the steps of the Marble Court, with the intention of going to sup at Trianon. He had reached the last step, when he felt something strike him on the right side, and exclaimed, "Some one has struck me with his elbow!" At the same moment his attendants noticed a middle-aged man, dressed in a brown suit and wearing a *redingote* of the

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same colour, who, while every one else had uncovered, continued to wear his hat. The Dauphin, who accompanied his father, said sharply, "Do you not see the King?" and a *guard-du-corps*, stepping forward, snatched the offender's hat from his head. Scarcely had he done so, when Louis, who had put his hand to the place where he had felt the blow, brought it away covered with blood, and cried out, "I am wounded, and it is that man who has struck me! Arrest him, but do him no harm!"

The man was promptly seized and searched, when a large clasp-knife was discovered in one of the pockets of his *redingote*. On one side of it was a long, pointed blade, shaped like a dagger; on the other a kind of pen-knife, about four inches in length. It was the smaller blade with which the blow had been struck.

The King, though his wound was bleeding freely, remounted the steps, and walked to his apartments, where he lay down on the bed; while the frightened courtiers rushed hither and thither in search of surgeons. All the ladies of the Royal Family came flocking into the room, and filled the air with their lamentations. The Dauphiness fainted; Madame Adélaïde "seemed like one demented"; the Queen alone retained her composure.

The King's own surgeon, Martinière, happened to be at Trianon; but, after some delay, Hévin, surgeon-in-ordinary to the Dauphin, was fetched, and proceeded to bleed the unfortunate patient. Professional etiquette apparently forbade him to make any examination of the wound until Martinière arrived on the scene, when it was found to be a trifling one, the force of the blow having been broken by the thick winter clothes that the King was wearing. Louis, however, was in

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abject terror lest the weapon should have been poisoned, and comported himself as if he had only a few hours to live. He said to the Dauphin, "You are Lieutenant-General of the kingdom, preside at the Council, and govern better than I have." He gave d'Argenson the key of his cabinet at Trianon, and despatched him to fetch his private papers. He sent for the nearest confessor, and caused absolution to be given him "over and over again, five or six times"; and all through the night Father Desmarets, his Jesuit confessor, and two other priests watched in turn by the royal bedside, ready to administer extreme unction at the first sign of a change for the worse.

The King kept his bed for several days, and there is no saying how long he might not have remained there—for he persisted in believing that the wound was a mortal one, though the only inconvenience he appears to have suffered was that of having to lie on his left side, instead of on his right, as was his habit—had it not been for the timely interference of an old soldier named Landsmath, who had been in attendance on the King since his childhood and was permitted to speak his mind freely.

This war-worn veteran could hardly conceal his contempt at all the fuss his master was making about what he regarded as a mere pin-prick, and one day when the ladies of the Royal Family were sobbing round the bed, he lost all patience, and, stooping over the sick monarch, whispered to him—

"Order all these weeping women to leave the room, Sire. They do you nothing but harm. I must speak to you."

The King made a sign that the ladies should retire,

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and, with many reproachful glances at Landsmath, they reluctantly obeyed.

When they were alone, the old man said to the monarch, "Sire, your wound is a mere trifle; the force of the blow was broken by the waistcoat and underclothes you were wearing."

Then, bearing his brawny chest, he pointed to several terrible scars, observing, with a grim smile, "There, Sire, those are the kind of blows to be frightened at! They are something like wounds. I received them thirty years ago, and here I am alive and well."

He next insisted on the King sitting up in bed, which Louis did, and, to his intense surprise, found that he could do so quite easily.

"Now, you see, Sire," continued Landsmath, "that those idiots have deceived you. You will soon be perfectly well. Four days hence we shall be able to go out hunting."

"But, my good Landsmath," objected the King, much more reassured than he cared to confess; "suppose the knife should have been poisoned?"

"Old wives' tales, Sire!" answered the veteran, with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders. "Even if that had been the case, the poison would have been rubbed off the blade as it passed through your waistcoat and underclothes."

Louis now began to feel that he had been unnecessarily alarmed, and, accordingly, for the first time since his illness, composed himself to enjoy a sound night's rest; while the triumphant Landsmath, after closing the bed-curtains, stalked into the ante-chamber, which was crowded with priests, doctors, and weeping ladies, and cried out:—

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“The King desires to sleep. See that none of you venture to disturb him.”

A day or two later Louis announced himself as convalescent.

All the time that the King was in the hands of the priests and the doctors, Madame de Pompadour remained in her apartments in an agony of suspense. Without, under her windows, were angry crowds, who threatened “*la coquine du roi*,” as they called her, with death; within, she had to endure the pitiless curiosity of all Versailles, which flocked to her room ostensibly to tender her its sympathy, in reality to gloat over her sufferings. “She wept and fainted, and fainted and wept again.” In vain did the faithful Bernis, the Duchesse de Brancas, and the little Maréchale de Mirepoix endeavour to comfort her. In vain did her physician, Quesnay, who, in virtue of his post as surgeon-in-ordinary to the King, was admitted to the sick-room, assure her that the wound was so slight, that if the patient were a private individual, he might go to a ball with impunity. She knew the feeble character of her former lover and the hatred with which she was regarded too well to disguise from herself the danger which threatened her. Nor were her fears groundless; a very shrewd observer was already anticipating her fall.

“It is a fact,” writes the Marquis d’Argenson on January 15, “that since the attempted assassination of the King, the marchioness has not seen his Majesty for a moment. She pretends not to feel her disgrace, but little by little people are forsaking her. She has neither seen nor received any message from his Majesty, who

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does not appear to give her a thought. All this time the King is having daily interviews with Father Desmarets, and has made many affectionate and virtuous declarations to the Queen. All this means a great change at Court.”¹ Father Desmarets indeed, like a true son of Loyola, had made the most of his opportunities, as we shall presently see.

Rouillé, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Saint-Florentin, now Comptroller-General, came frequently to see Madame de Pompadour during these dark days, and showed no inclination to abandon her; but Machault, the Keeper of the Seals, her friend and confidant, whom she had raised to his present position, and whom she had intended to make Prime Minister, did not come. He was the only man who was able to reassure her, and his absence confirmed her worst suspicions. One morning Madame du Hausset’s son, who had been sent by his mother to find out what was going on in the royal apartments, returned and reported that Machault was closeted with the King. Now it had apparently been Machault’s custom, on the occasions when Madame de Pompadour had not been present at his interviews with the King, and any business of importance had been discussed, to wait upon his patroness immediately afterwards and give her a *résumé* of what had taken place. She, therefore, judged that, if he were still faithful, he would do so on the present occasion, and requested Madame du Hausset to send her son back, with instructions to take particular note of what the Minister did on leaving the King. Presently the boy returned with the intelligence that the Keeper of the Seals had gone to his house, followed by a crowd of people, which seemed

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d’Argenson*, iv. 331.

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to indicate that something of importance was about to take place. On this being told to Madame de Pompadour, she burst into tears, and exclaimed, "Is that the conduct of a friend?"

Bernis endeavoured to calm her, and begged her not to judge the Minister too hastily, but all doubts as to the latter's perfidy were soon dispelled.

The abbé went out to make inquiries about the King. Scarcely had the door closed behind him, when the Keeper of the Seals walked in. He looked stern and severe, and was evidently the bearer of no pleasant tidings.

"How is Madame de Pompadour?" he inquired coldly of Madame du Hausset.

"Alas!" replied she, "as you may imagine."

He passed on to the marchioness's closet, and every one went out, leaving him alone with his patroness. The interview lasted half-an-hour, during which those in the salon could hardly contain their excitement. At length, Machault came out and took his departure, without speaking to any one.

A few minutes later Madame de Pompadour's bell rang. Her waiting-woman hastened to answer it, followed by Bernis, who had returned while Machault was with the favourite. They found the marchioness weeping bitterly. "I must go, my dear abbé," she said, in a voice choked with sobs.

Madame du Hausset made her take some orange-flower water in a silver goblet, for her teeth chattered so much that they would have broken a glass; and, after a time, she grew calmer and requested that her equerry might be called. When he appeared, she gave him orders to have everything prepared at her hôtel

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in Paris; to tell all her people to get ready to leave, and to desire her coachman to be at hand. She then directed that no one should be admitted but her most intimate friends, and shut herself up to confer with Bernis.

All was bustle and confusion, when the door was flung open and the little Maréchale de Mirepoix appeared on the threshold.

"What are all these trunks doing, madame?" she exclaimed, pointing to the boxes and packing-cases which littered the floor of the ante-chamber. "Your people tell me you are going."

"Alas! my dear friend, such is our master's desire, as M. de Machault gives me to understand."

"And what does he advise?"

"That I should go without delay."

"Your Keeper of the Seals wants to get the power into his own hands, and is betraying you," answered the shrewd little maréchale. "He who quits the field loses it."

At these words Madame de Pompadour's courage returned; and, after an animated discussion, in which Bernis, Soubise, and her brother Marigny took part, it was decided that she should remain and await events.

"She intends to stay," said Marigny, in answer to Madame du Hausset's eager inquiries; "but hush! she will make an appearance of leaving, in order not to set her enemies at work. It is the little maréchale who has prevailed upon her to remain. Her Keeper (Machault) will pay for all this."¹

Madame de Mirepoix proved a wise counsellor.

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset* (edit. 1825), p. 139 *et seq.*

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Scarcely was Louis restored to health than he forgot all about the vows of amendment he had made with the fear of the Evil One before his eyes, resumed all his former habits, and recommenced his daily visits to Madame de Pompadour. As for that lady, no sooner did she find herself in favour once more than she determined to be revenged upon the faithless Machault, and treated him in so insolent a manner that every one was agreed that his disgrace was only a question of days.

Poor Machault seems to have been deserving of some sympathy. It would appear that the Jesuit confessor, Desmarests, by the same arguments which had proved so efficacious on a similar occasion, had extracted from the King a promise that Madame de Pompadour should be sent away, and that d'Argenson had been deputed to announce the royal commands to the lady. This mission was not at all to the taste of the War Minister, who was aware that Louis was in no danger, and foresaw a repetition of the holocaust of Metz, with himself as the principal victim. He, accordingly, represented to the King, that, since he (d'Argenson) had had the misfortune to displease the marchioness, it would be kinder to let Machault be the bearer of the ill-tidings, so that the consolation he would be able to offer might soften the blow. Louis assented, and Machault found himself confronted with the alternative of either disobeying the King or displeasing his patroness. He chose the latter course—ambition was stronger than gratitude—and d'Argenson was now rubbing his hands with glee at the prospect of the speedy disgrace of his only serious rival in the Council. Unfortunately for him, his intense hatred of Madame de Pompadour not

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only robbed him of the fruits of what, it must be admitted, was a very adroit manœuvre, but brought about his own fall.

At the end of January, that is to say about three weeks after the attempt upon the King's life, Madame de Pompadour, at the urgent entreaty of Bernis, who pointed out how essential it was to the proper conduct of the war that the hostility between the War Minister and herself should cease, consented to allow him to propose a reconciliation or, at least, a truce to d'Argenson; but his efforts met with no better success than had attended them eighteen months before. D'Argenson, who appears to have been ignorant of the fact that the marchioness was now completely restored to favour, refused to see in Bernis's offer "anything but the last efforts of a person who feels herself drowning, and catches hold of any support within reach." The abbé vainly endeavoured to reason with him, arguing that he would be risking nothing by informing the King that he had become reconciled to Madame de Pompadour solely out of respect for his Majesty and the welfare of the State; that such a reconciliation would not prevent the King from getting rid of the marchioness if such was his desire, and that, so far from the lady having prompted the overtures he was now making him, it was only with the greatest difficulty that she had been brought to consent to them. All was useless; d'Argenson only laughed contemptuously; and Bernis was compelled to return to the favourite and report the entire failure of his mission.¹

Now it happened that Madame de Pompadour had lately advised Janelle, the Intendant of the Post-Office,

¹ *Mémoires et Lettres du Cardinal de Bernis*, i. 367.

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to omit from the copies of the opened letters which he took every week to the King all mention of the attempted assassination. Janelle had promised to do so; but he did not dare to keep the matter a secret from d'Argenson,¹ who flew into a violent passion and told the unfortunate Intendant to choose between the marchioness and the Bastille. On hearing what had taken place between Bernis and the War Minister, the favourite decided to go herself to d'Argenson and demand an explanation of his treatment of Janelle. If he received her courteously, she might still hope for a reconciliation; if not, she was fully resolved that he, as well as Machault, should be disgraced. Accordingly, the following morning, she ordered her sedan-chair, and told the bearers to take her to the War Minister's hôtel.

Bésenval gives the following account of the interview:—

“Madame de Pompadour.—‘I am surprised, monsieur, at the orders which you have given Janelle. I cannot conceive what your reason can be for wishing to bring to the King’s notice a matter the remembrance of which is so painful for him.’

“D’Argenson.—‘Madame, I am obliged to let the King know the truth, and no consideration can make me depart from my duty.’

“Madame de Pompadour.—‘Excellent principles, doubtless! But you will permit me to tell you that they are out of place on an occasion like the present, and that the tranquillity of the King is so important that all other considerations should give way to it. I did not

¹ On the dismissal of Maurepas in April 1749, d'Argenson had become Minister for Paris, still, of course, retaining his post as Minister for War. As Minister for Paris the Post-Office was within his jurisdiction.

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“speak to Janelle until I had consulted all the other Ministers.’

“*D’Argenson*.—‘I shall not change my opinion, madame; and I am astonished that you, who have no authority whatever to do so, should presume to meddle with a matter which concerns myself alone.’

“*Madame de Pompadour*.—‘For a long time I have been aware of your sentiments with regard to myself. I see plainly that it is impossible to change them. I know not how it will all end; but what is certain is that *either you or I will have to go*.’

“D’Argenson bowed and left the room, without making any rejoinder.”¹

The marchioness returned to her apartments deep in thought. She leaned against the chimney-piece, with her eyes fixed upon the border and her hands in her muff, to all appearance plunged in the most profound reverie, and quite unconscious of Madame du Hausset, who stood by, patiently waiting to divest her of her cloak and hat, and dying with curiosity to know what had passed between her mistress and the War Minister. Presently Bernis entered, and, after watching his patroness for some moments, exclaimed, “You look like a sheep in a reflective mood.”

“It is a wolf that makes the sheep reflect,” replied Madame de Pompadour.

Suddenly the door opened, and who should appear on the threshold but the King himself. Madame du Hausset, who had retired to her own room, heard her mistress sobbing, and immediately afterwards the voice of Bernis telling her to bring some Hoffman’s drops. Louis mixed the draught and offered it to Madame de Pom-

¹ *Mémoires du Baron de Bésenval*, i. 219.

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padour "in the kindest manner possible." The lady smiled and kissed the hand which held the glass. Two days later Machault and d'Argenson each received a *lettre d'ordre*. They were as follows:—

"February 1, 1757.

"MONSIEUR DE MACHAULT,—Although I am persuaded of your integrity and of the honesty of your intentions, present circumstances oblige me to ask for my Seals and the resignation of your post as Minister of the Marine. You may be always certain of my friendship and esteem. If you have any favour to ask for your children, you may do so at any time. It is best that you should remain some time at Arnouville.

"Signed, LOUIS.

"I allow you to retain your Ministerial pension of 20,000 livres, and the honours attached to the post of Keeper of the Seals."

"February 1, 1757.

"MONSIEUR D'ARGENSON,—As I no longer require your services, I request you to send me the resignation of your post of Secretary of State for War and of your other offices, and to retire to your estate at Ormes.

"Signed, LOUIS."¹

It would appear from the extremely curt manner in which d'Argenson was dismissed that the King must have had some other cause of complaint against him besides his refusal to be reconciled to Madame de Pompadour, and several reasons have been assigned by different contemporary chroniclers. Bernis's explanation is that, as

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, xv. 395.

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Minister for Paris, a post which, as we have mentioned, he held with that of Secretary for War, d'Argenson had been guilty of culpable negligence in having refrained from prosecuting the authors of seditious placards and pamphlets, and that his enemies had persuaded Louis that he had tolerated these disorders, in the hope of intimidating the King into the belief that his life would never be safe until Madame de Pompadour had been sent away. Bésenval seems to think that Louis would not have consented to dismiss d'Argenson had he not been already incensed against him by the rather too assiduous court which the Minister had paid to the Dauphin when that prince had assumed the reins of government during his father's illness, and, especially, by a proposal he had made that the Council should meet henceforth in the Dauphin's apartments. A third reason, and one which we are inclined to think is more probable than either of the above, is given by Madame du Hausset.

According to her, d'Argenson proposed to set up a rival to Madame de Pompadour in the person of a certain Madame d'Esparbès, a lady for whom the King had already shown some tenderness, in consequence of which the marchioness had caused her to be removed from Court.

The moment the War Minister heard of the disgrace of his rival Machault, believing that his removal would leave him supreme in the Council, he wrote to Madame d'Esparbès:—

“The doubtful is at length decided. The Keeper of the Seals is dismissed. You will be recalled, my dear countess, and we shall be masters of the field.”

One of Madame de Pompadour's agents got possession of this letter, by bribing the courier, and the

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favourite took it, or a copy of it, to the King, who was so incensed that he there and then sent d'Argenson his dismissal.

In reference to the disgrace of Machault, a curious story was current. It was said that Machault was not sacrificed to the resentment of Madame de Pompadour, as was the general belief, but to the *amour-propre* of the King, who could not forgive him for having been a witness of the craven fears which had caused him to consent to the dismissal of the favourite, and that when the latter demanded the exile of d'Argenson, the King replied, "Yes, if you consent to that of M. de Machault." In spite of the almost apologetic terms in which the letter dismissing the Minister of Marine was couched, such conduct would have been quite in keeping with the character of Louis XV., but there happens to be another epistle in existence—one written by the King to his daughter, the Infanta of Spain—containing a passage which effectually disposes of this theory: "They have worried me so much, that they have forced me to dismiss Machault, the man after my own heart; I shall never be able to console myself."¹

But whatever may have been the true reasons for the disgrace of the two Ministers, there can be no question that the removal of the heads of both the army and the navy on the very eve of a great continental and maritime war was an act of criminal folly for which it would be difficult to find a parallel in French history. D'Argenson and Machault, though far from estimable men in private life, were capable Ministers, and immeasurably superior to their colleagues in the Council. The former had rendered great service to France during the War of the

¹ *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, iv. 21.

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Austrian Succession, and it is reasonable to suppose would have done so again had the opportunity been given him; while Machault had lately been labouring most strenuously to put the neglected navy in a condition to encounter the English fleet on something like equal terms. Their successors at the War Office and the Marine were the most pitiable ciphers; and the disasters which overtook France during the Seven Years' War were largely the result of the imbecility with which these two departments were administered.

To d'Argenson's honour it must be recorded that he left the Ministry almost as poor as when he had entered it, fourteen years before; but, through the intercession of old Maréchal Belle-Isle, Madame de Pompadour consented to solicit a pension for him, a request which the King readily granted. Some months afterwards d'Argenson's sight began to fail, and the oculist Demours was summoned to Ormes to attend him. On his return, Demours waited on the favourite and begged her to allow his patient to reside in or near Paris, as it was most important that he should be within reach of medical advice, but the marchioness refused to hear of it. It was not until after her death that d'Argenson was recalled, only to die himself a few months later.

As for his partner in disgrace, Machault, he retired to his country-house, and resided there until the Revolution, when, in spite of his great age—he was over ninety—he was arrested and imprisoned in the Madelonnettes, where he died in 1794.

A few words must be said with regard to the fate of the wretched man who was the cause of this imbroglio.

The most minute investigations were made with the object of discovering the antecedents of the would-be

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assassin, his motives for the crime, and his accomplices; and he was subjected to the most revolting tortures, a rack designed by the diabolical ingenuity of the Inquisition being brought from Avignon for the purpose. It was ascertained that his name was François Damiens, a lackey out of a situation, who had formerly been a servant in the house of a counsellor of the Parliament of Paris. He was a man of weak intellect, and his imagination had been excited by the violent denunciations of the King and the clergy he had been in the habit of hearing while waiting at his master's table.¹ He does not appear to

¹ In 1749 Machault, then Comptroller-General, proposed to levy a *vingtième* (twentieth) on the income of every one in the kingdom. The clergy, who had hitherto been exempt from direct taxation, though they occasionally voted gratuities to the King, were furious at such an invasion of their privileges, and not only refused to submit to it, but even to obey a royal edict requiring them to render an account of their revenues. "Do not force us to the necessity of disobeying either God or the King," wrote the Bishop of Marseilles to Louis. "You know which of the two ought to have the preference." With the object of diverting public attention from the real question at issue, the orthodox clergy started a fresh crusade against the Jansenists, and refused the sacraments to all who denied the authority of the Bull *Unigenitus*, promulgated by Clement XI. in 1713, among others to the Duc d'Orléans, son of the Regent. The Parliament of Paris, which was violently Jansenist, retaliated and inflicted heavy fines on the recalcitrant priests within its jurisdiction, and its example was followed by the provincial parliaments. Machault was compelled to abandon his intention of taxing the clergy, but still the religious controversy, which was known as "The War of the Certificates of Confession," continued, nor was it appeased until the King had banished several of the leaders on either side, the Parliament had suspended its sittings, and the whole judicial machinery of the kingdom had been thrown into disorder. In this contest, Madame de Pompadour at first supported the clergy, as she was annoyed at certain disparaging remarks concerning herself, which some of the leaders of the Parliament had let fall, but later on, through hatred of the Jesuits, she inclined to the other side and did not a little to bring about the final settlement.

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have had any intention of killing Louis, but merely intended to "give him a warning" to cease persecuting the Parliament and punish Christophe de Beaumont,¹ Archbishop of Paris, "the author of all the evil," and he had no accomplices.² In a more merciful age he would have been sent to a *maison de santé*, for he was obviously insane; as it was, he was condemned to the awful penalty which Ravallac, the assassin of Henri IV., had suffered.

"His horrible punishment," says a contemporary writer, "began at a quarter to five on the afternoon of the 28th of March. His right hand was burned; he was then torn with pincers; molten lead was poured into the wounds, after which he was drawn and quartered. At the expiration of an hour and a quarter he was still alive, having endured everything with intrepid firmness, and having exhibited only such signs of pain as are inseparable from human nature and cannot be avoided. For the last ceremony, a small scaffold had been erected on a level with the traces of the horses, upon which he was placed with his arms and legs hanging over. The executioner had purchased six horses for the sum of 3600 livres, in order that if one of the first four should become exhausted, he might at once be able to put another in its place. Although these horses were very powerful animals, yet, after repeated efforts, they could not succeed, even with the assistance of the two fresh ones; and the axe had to be requisitioned.

¹ Christophe de Beaumont—"a serious fool in the style of St. Thomas à Becket," as Voltaire calls him—had encouraged the clergy in their refusal of the sacraments to the Jansenists. His temporalities were confiscated by the Parliament of Paris, but restored to him by the King, who, however, subsequently banished him to his country-house at Conflans.

² See Daniens's extraordinary letter to Louis XV. in Voltaire's *Siècle de Louis XV.*, ch. xxxvii.

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Damiens's severed limbs were reunited to the trunk, and, a pile having been lighted, they were placed upon it, and, when reduced to ashes, scattered to the winds. We cannot give any account of the numbers that were in Paris that day. The inhabitants from the surrounding villages, from the provinces, and even strangers had flocked thither as to the most brilliant spectacle. Not only the windows commanding a view of the scaffold, but even those of the garrets were let at exorbitant prices, and the tops of the houses were covered with spectators. But the most striking circumstance was the eagerness of the women—whose dispositions are reckoned so tender and compassionate—to see the sight, to dwell upon it, to support it in all its horror, without a shudder or tear, and without the slightest emotion;¹ while almost all the men shuddered and turned away their heads.”²

The judges, not satisfied with this detestable cruelty, condemned the innocent family of Damiens—his aged father, wife, and child—to perpetual banishment, with the penalty of death if they returned to France. Louis, however, mitigated the severity of the sentence by granting them a pension.

¹ “Madame de P—— (Préandeau), a very beautiful woman and the wife of a farmer-general, hired two places at a window for twelve louis, and played a game of cards while waiting for the execution to begin. On this being reported to the King, he covered his face with his hands and exclaimed, ‘*Fi, la vilaine !*’ I have been told that she and others thought to pay their court in this way and signalise their attachment to the King’s person.”—*Mémoires de Madame du Hausset*, p. 174.

Richelieu says that when, during the last stage of this revolting ceremony, the executioner began to flog the horses, in order to incite them to fresh exertions, this same Madame de Préandieu cried out, “*Ab ! Jésus ! les pauvres bêtes, comme je plains !*”

² *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, iii. 93.

CHAPTER XVII

The Austrian party at Versailles strengthened by the fall of d'Argenson—Second Treaty of Versailles—Its terms far more favourable to Austria than to France—The French Ministry subservient to Madame de Pompadour—Bernis becomes Minister for Foreign Affairs—Kaunitz's letter to the favourite—Madame de Pompadour refuses to allow the Prince de Conti to command the French army—Soubise and d'Estrées—The war in Western Germany—Incapacity of the rival commanders—French victory at Hastenbeck—Intrigues at Versailles lead to the recall of d'Estrées—He is succeeded by Richelieu—Indignation of the Parisians—Lampoons—Richelieu's conduct in Hanover—“*Le Pavillon de Hanovre*”—Desperate position of the Duke of Cumberland's army—Frederick the Great's letter to Richelieu—Richelieu concludes the Convention of Kloster-Zeven—Fatal consequences of this agreement—Luxury and demoralisation of the French armies—Soubise in Saxony—Battle of Rossbach—Popular indignation against Madame de Pompadour—Grief of Soubise—He is lampooned—The favourite refuses to allow him to resign his command.

THE fall of d'Argenson not only strengthened the position of Madame de Pompadour, by ridding her of a dangerous and implacable enemy, but greatly facilitated the designs of Maria Theresa and Kaunitz, for the disgraced Minister had been as strongly opposed to the Austrian alliance as he had been to the favourite herself. “He was the enemy of the new system,” writes Stahremberg to his Government, in announcing the count's dismissal, “but he affected the contrary and argued as if he had been the most

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zealous of partisans. It is obvious, nevertheless, that all his plans were directed to reverse it, and he had difficulty in concealing his predilections for the King of Prussia and his fears that the influence of that prince was completely annihilated. It is, therefore, beyond question that his dismissal is a most fortunate circumstance for us.”¹

The cause of Austria was still further strengthened by the retirement, through ill-health, of Saint-Séverin, the negotiator of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, who, to some extent, shared d'Argenson's Prussian proclivities—a retirement which was quickly followed by that of his friend and supporter, the Marquis de Puisieux. All semblance of opposition to the proposals of the Court of Vienna was now at an end; Madame de Pompadour for the moment was as absolute as *le Grand Monarque*; and on May 1, 1757, exactly a year after the Treaty of Versailles had been signed, the favourite succeeded in dragging the misguided Ministry into a second treaty, which had for its object nothing less than the partition of Frederick's dominions. Silesia, Glatz, and a portion of Brandenburg were to go to Austria; Magdeburg, Halle, and the adjacent districts to Saxony, which was also to receive the Duchy of Halberstadt, in return for the surrender of part of Lusatia to Austria; Pomerania was to be restored to Sweden. France was to receive as her share of the spoil a portion of the Netherlands, including the seaport towns of Ostend and Nieuport, while the remainder was to be given to Don Philip, Louis XV.'s son-in-law, in exchange for the Italian duchies of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla.²

¹ D'Arneth's *Maria Theresia*, 1756–1758. Note 56.

² France undertook to pay to Austria a subsidy of 12,000,000 gulden a year, to take into her service 6000 Würtembergers and 4000 Bavarians, and to bring into the field 105,000 troops of her own.

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The advantage of this treaty was wholly on the side of Austria. The loss of the Netherlands was of little importance to her, in fact, they were rather a burden than a source of strength, while their fortifications were so dilapidated as to be hardly defensible. On the other hand, should the coalition triumph, she would not only recover all the territory she had surrendered at Aix-la-Chapelle and a good deal more besides, but would be absolutely supreme in Germany, as the only German power capable of thwarting her designs upon the independence of the minor States would be annihilated. Moreover, it was only a small portion of the Netherlands that France was to receive; the bulk was assigned to a Spanish prince, who might one day prove himself a very tiresome neighbour; while, should the war be unsuccessful, she would gain nothing whatever in return for her sacrifices, for the cession of the Netherlands was contingent upon the success of the whole undertaking. It is incomprehensible how any sane Government could have been brought to consent to such an arrangement.

But after all, what else could be expected? The Ministry at Versailles was now entirely composed of dependents of Madame de Pompadour, or nonentities who could be trusted not to oppose her will. D'Argenson and Machault had been succeeded at the War Office and the Marine by the Marquis de Paulmy and the Comte de Moras. The former is described by one of his contemporaries as "not deficient in understanding, but destitute of business capacity, plunged in intemperance and debauchery, and a slave to women, who could persuade him to do any foolish thing they chose," which may perhaps account for his appointment to the post, notwithstanding the fact that he was d'Argenson's

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nephew. As for Moras, we are told that the King would appear to have appointed him for the express purpose of accentuating the folly of Machault's dismissal. Rouillé, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, was an apoplectic old gentleman who, when at meetings of the Council his opinion was invited, was generally found to be asleep. His duties had for some months been practically discharged by Bernis; and in July 1757 he was persuaded to resign, and the abbé, whose ambition had temporarily got the better of his good sense, was installed in his place. The other Ministers were easily schooled into complaisance.

It need hardly be said that the services the favourite continued to render to the Court of Vienna did not remain without acknowledgment, and in June we find Kaunitz writing to her as follows :—

THE COUNT VON KAUNITZ-RIETBERG *to* MADAME DE POMPADOUR.

“The Comte de Stahremberg has informed me, madame, of your pleasure and satisfaction at the final arrangements which the King has made for rendering more effective support to the Empress and the common cause. He has kept me informed of the interest which you have manifested on all occasions in regard to matters which affect us. Their Majesties have always been sensible of it, and They feel so deeply this last mark of your goodwill that They have instructed me to inform you of their gratitude. Our courier is the bearer of the ratification of this great and famous treaty, which is the King's work and will be illustrious in all ages to come. Nothing now remains for Him but to press on its execution, in order to escape by this means from the dangers which

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threaten us, and to put an end as soon as possible to the immense expenditure and calamities inseparable from the scourge of war. The King will always find the Empress ready and willing to co-operate with Him in all measures necessary to effect this object; and She concludes that He is similarly inclined and agrees with Her that it is the best, not to say the only, way of promptly and surely reaping the fruit of His work. To my good wishes I will certainly add all the poor assistance that it is in my power to render, and I flatter myself that you will do the same. I do not doubt it, indeed, for I am aware of the nobility of your soul and the lively interest you take in the glory of the King and the happiness of France. Do me the favour of occasionally recalling the profound and respectful esteem which I entertain for you, and believe that I shall all my life, etc.”

Madame de Pompadour, not content with reconstructing Cabinets and negotiating treaties, now sought to control the French armies, or at least the generals who commanded them. The command of the principal army, 80,000 strong, which was to invade the Prussian dominions on the Lower Rhine, had been the subject of much jealousy and intrigue at Versailles. Maria Theresa had expressed a wish that the Prince de Conti should be appointed, and the choice would have been a good one. Conti, besides being a brave soldier, was an intelligent and energetic officer, and had given conspicuous proof of his ability in Italy during the War of the Austrian Succession. Louis had actually promised him the command; but Madame de Pompadour had not forgiven the prince for his attempt to supplant her by Madame de Coislin, and not only compelled the King to

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withdraw his promise, but refused to allow him to employ Conti in any military capacity whatever. The favourite wished to have the post given to her friend Soubise, who had assured her that he felt confident of victory, and that the glory of her nominee would reflect upon herself. As Soubise was only a lieutenant-general, his immediate appointment over the heads of all the marshals would have caused too great a scandal, so she reluctantly acquiesced in the selection of Maréchal d'Estrées, whom, however, she determined that Soubise should supersede at the first convenient opportunity. The latter accompanied the marshal, and though he only commanded a division, stamped the letters he sent to Madame de Pompadour, "*Armée de Soubise*." This and similar acts of presumption were reported to d'Estrées, and caused much friction between him and his subordinate.

The Duke of Cumberland had been placed at the head of a composite force of Hanoverians, Hessians, and other West German troops, together with a few Prussians, to resist the advance of the French. His army was much inferior to d'Estrées's in numbers, but that general acted as if the reverse had been the case. However, that mattered little, for Cumberland was even more cautious. Instead of defending the Lower Rhine, as Frederick had advised him, he fell back on the Weser—a river the passage of which was far more difficult to dispute than the Rhine—thus enabling the French to occupy nearly the whole of Westphalia, without striking a blow.¹ For upwards of four months no engagement

¹ "I have never seen any one more out of his element in war than M. de Cumberland. He seemed to be acting under our orders; as soon as we struck our tents to advance, he prepared to retreat."—*Mémoires du Baron de Bésenval*, i. 45.

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of any note occurred, and the war in this quarter began to assume a farcical character, in marked contrast to that which was being waged in Bohemia, where in two battles, Prague and Kollin, more than thirty thousand men had fallen.

At length, towards the end of July, d'Estrées, spurred on by urgent despatches from Versailles, crossed the Weser and attacked Cumberland at Hastenbeck. The battle ended in a victory for the French, though no credit was due to their commander, who had actually ordered a retrograde movement, under the impression that he had been defeated, when he discovered that the main body of the enemy was in full retreat. In fairness to him, however, it should be observed that he appears to have been left unsupported by one of his lieutenants, the Comte de Maillebois, whose conduct was afterwards made the subject of an inquiry.

While d'Estrées was manœuvring on the Weser, intrigues were going on against him at Versailles. The Comte de Maillebois, already mentioned, who was jealous of his commanding officer, kept up a private correspondence with the Marquis de Paulmy, the War Minister, in which he persistently exaggerated the shortcomings of the marshal. Moreover, the latter had, before leaving France, quarrelled with Pâris-Duverney, the commissary-general—who was the confidant of Madame de Pompadour in all military matters—owing to his refusal to discuss with him his plan of campaign. And, finally, his wife had mortally offended the favourite by conspiring against her with Mademoiselle Murphy of the Parc-aux-Cerfs. This miserable affair decided the fate of poor d'Estrées, and on the very day after the battle of Hastenbeck a courier arrived with his recall. He was succeeded by Richelieu, who had

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gained some distinction the previous year by his capture of Minorca; while it was decided that Soubise should be given an opportunity of distinguishing himself and attempt the deliverance of Saxony, in conjunction with the troops of the German Circles. How Soubise distinguished himself we shall presently relate.

D'Estrées returned to Paris to find himself the hero of the hour. The Parisians, who were, of course, unaware of the good fortune that had gained him the battle of Hastenbeck, saw in him only a victorious general sacrificed to a Court cabal, and chanted his praises, while they poured ridicule upon his successor:—

“ Nous avons deux généraux
Qui tous deux sont maréchaux,
Voilà la ressemblance.
L'un de Mars est favori,
Et l'autre l'est de Louis,
Voilà la différence.

“ Cumberland les craint tous deux
Et cherche à s'éloigner d'eux,
Voilà la ressemblance.
De l'un il fuit la valeur
Et de l'autre il fuit l'odeur,¹
Voilà la différence.

“ Dans un beau champ de lauriers
On aperçoit ces guerriers,
Voilà la ressemblance.
L'un a su les entasser,
L'autre vient les ramasser,²
Voilà la différence.”³

¹ Richelieu had a weakness for musk and other strong perfumes.

² A caricature of the day represents d'Estrées chastising the Duke of Cumberland with a branch of laurel, while Richelieu is engaged in gathering up the leaves that fall and making himself a crown.

³ *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, iii. 356. *Journal de Barbier*, vi. 555.

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The marshal waited on the King to render account of his conduct and solicit permission to retire to his estates. Louis received him very graciously and suggested that before leaving Versailles he should call upon Madame de Pompadour. D'Estrées obeyed, but as soon as he was ushered into the presence of the marchioness, he exclaimed, "It is by the King's command, madame, that I am come to pay my respects to you. I am perfectly aware of the sentiments you entertain for me, but I have too much confidence in the justice of the King, my master, to fear them." Then, turning on his heel, he left the room and quitted Versailles the same day, without reporting himself at the War Office, the titular head of which he energetically denounced as "*Cet excrément de Paulmy*." ¹

If d'Estrées had been unfitted for the command of a large army, the frivolous and corrupt Richelieu was even more so. The former, who, though slow and over-cautious, was a well-meaning and honest officer, had at least succeeded in enforcing discipline and, according to a German authority, had hanged no less than a thousand mutinous soldiers; under the latter, the troops devoted themselves to the congenial task of plunder, in which their commander, so far from attempting to restrain them, himself set the example, and to such good purpose, that when he returned to Paris he was able to build a magnificent palace at the corner of the Boulevard des Italiens, which the Parisians called in derision "*Le Pavillon de Hanovre*."

At length, after sating himself with plunder, Richelieu turned north in pursuit of Cumberland, who would

¹ *Mémoires secrets du Duclos*, ii. 139; Campardon's *Madame de Pompadour et la cour de Louis XV.*, p. 211.

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appear to have completely lost his head, and, instead of falling back on Magdeburg, where he might have acted in conjunction with the Prussians, or making a stand against the invaders, had retreated to the fortress of Stade, near the mouth of the Elbe. Here he found himself in a kind of *cul-de-sac*, penned in between the river, the sea, and the advancing French. No course was now open to him but to give battle or surrender. He chose the latter alternative, and opened negotiations with Richelieu, with a view to securing an honourable retreat for his army; the French general replied that he had come to fight and not to negotiate, and continued to advance.

However, a few days later Richelieu changed his tone. He had really no desire to drive Cumberland to desperation, and much preferred "a fair chance of plunder to pay his debts" to any amount of military glory. He also thought it possible that the English general, instead of risking a battle, might throw himself into Stade, and he doubted the policy of beginning a siege so late in the year. Moreover, he had just received a letter from Frederick, which an indignant French writer stigmatises as "a *chef-d'œuvre* of gross deceit and fulsome flattery," and in which the Prussian monarch, "in the supposition that the King, your master, now assured by your successes, will have put it into your power to labour for the pacification of Germany," expressed himself as persuaded that "the nephew of the great Cardinal Richelieu was made for signing treaties no less than for gaining battles," and that "he who had merited statues at Genoa, he who had conquered the Island of Minorca in the face of immense obstacles, he who was on the point of subjugating Lower Saxony, could do nothing more

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glorious than to restore peace to Europe, which would be without doubt the most splendid of all his laurels.”¹

It is said that the bearer of this epistle, an Italian engineer in the Prussian service, brought with him something more acceptable than flattery, to wit, 15,000 louis; and Richelieu confesses in his *Mémoires* that the King's letter was not without its effect upon him, as it appealed to “the natural benevolence of his character.” He had, of course, no power “to restore peace to Europe,” or even to conclude an armistice, which was probably all Frederick had hoped for, but he did what in the end was much the same thing as the latter, by consenting, on the mediation of the King of Denmark, to negotiate with Cumberland, and on September 10, 1757, signed the Convention of Kloster-Zeven, whereby it was arranged that the Hessians, Brunswickers, and other auxiliaries were to be sent home and to observe the strictest neutrality to the end of the war; the Hanoverians to winter in and around Stade, while the French remained masters of Hanover, Bremen, and Verden.

This so-called convention was, to all intents and purposes, a capitulation, but Cumberland protested so strongly against that word being used that Richelieu yielded the point, without taking into consideration the possible consequences of such a concession. Between a capitulation and a convention there is an important difference. The one is a military act complete in itself, the other is binding only if ratified by the respective Governments. Richelieu has been accused of criminal carelessness in not insisting on the former compact, but it is probable that he considered the matter of very

¹ *Nouveaux Mémoires du Duc de Richelieu*, iv. 181. Duclos states in his *Mémoires* that he had seen the original of this letter.

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slight importance, as he expected that the convention would be merely a preliminary step to a treaty for the neutrality of Hanover, about which negotiations had for some time been going on at Vienna. On the other hand, it is impossible to exonerate his omission both to stipulate the duration of the convention and to interdict the capitulating troops from serving against the allies of France.¹

When the news reached Versailles, Bernis tried to repair the marshal's error and to complete the agreement; but his efforts were fruitless. As soon as Frederick's affairs assumed a more favourable aspect, the English Government promptly repudiated the convention; and, by the irony of fate, the very troops that Richelieu had permitted to escape him were those which, under a more skilful general than Cumberland, inflicted such a crushing defeat on the French at Crefeld.²

For the moment, however, all North Germany was completely at Richelieu's mercy, and he might, by co-operating with Soubise, have placed Frederick in dire peril. But Madame de Pompadour wished to secure all the glory of defeating the Prussian King for her own henchman, and so Richelieu was ordered to send reinforcements to Soubise and to remain in Hanover with the main body of his troops.

Ever since the death of Louis XIV. the *morale* of the French army had been steadily deteriorating; the soldiers were insubordinate and ignorant of the simplest manœuvres, the officers incapable and luxurious. In 1733 we read of Richelieu, then a simple colonel of

¹ Longman's "Frederick the Great and the Seven Years' War," p. 117; Martin's *Histoire de France*, xv. 519.

² *Mémoires et Lettres du Cardinal de Bernis*, i. 399 et seq.

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infantry, leaving Paris for the seat of war, accompanied by "seventy-two sumpter-mules, thirty horses, a great number of men-servants, and tents similar to those used by the King."¹ But at the outbreak of the Seven Years' War the climax seems to have been reached, and the luxury of the officers and the demoralisation of the troops baffle all description. The baggage-train extended for miles, and the number of sumpter-horses far exceeded those of the cavalry and artillery, while the armies were encumbered with crowds of chefs, hair-dressers, musicians, lackeys, and courtesans. "They resembled the cohorts of Darius and Xerxes rather than the armies of Turenne and Gustavus Adolphus. The leaders permitted the soldiery all kinds of depredations that its indigence might not revolt against their magnificent voluptuousness."²

Bad as was the state of Richelieu's army, that of Soubise was infinitely worse; for Richelieu in an emergency was capable of acting with both courage and firmness, while Soubise had not the faintest notion of maintaining discipline, and both officers and men took full advantage of his weakness. Twelve thousand pedlars' and sutlers' waggons accompanied the troops, and one squadron of Life Guards alone—that commanded by the Duc de Villeroy—boasted a suite of twelve hundred sumpter-horses. As for the rank and file, they pillaged the houses of friend and foe alike, maltreated the occupants, desecrated churches, and generally conducted themselves more like savages than the troops of a civilised nation.

Soubise and his disorderly mob, for only by courtesy

¹ *Journal de Barbier*, ii. 428.

² Martin's *Histoire de France*, xv. 520.

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could it be called an army, advanced to Erfurt, where they effected a junction with the troops of the German Circles, commanded by the Prince of Saxe-Hildburghausen, who was almost as incapable as Soubise himself. Scarcely had this been done, when intelligence arrived that Frederick was marching against them in person, whereupon Soubise insisted on retreating into the hilly country about Eisenach. Now that he was actually in the presence of his redoubtable adversary, he was much less eager to try conclusions with him than he had been at Versailles. However, Frederick was compelled to withdraw, to repel a threatened Austrian advance on Berlin, and the allies, descending from the hills, advanced as far as Leipzig, and were preparing to besiege it, when they were informed that the Prussian King was returning. On hearing this, they abandoned the idea of besieging the town, and decided to fall back beyond the Saale and await his approach. Frederick followed them and took up a position near the village of Rossbach, about two miles distant from that occupied by the allied army, which outnumbered the Prussians by more than two to one. Hildburghausen wanted to fight, Soubise to retreat. His instructions were merely to harass Frederick, not to attack him, besides which six thousand of his men were absent plundering the neighbouring hamlets. His officers, however, were eager for battle, and, a despatch arriving from the French Ambassador at Vienna urging him to take the aggressive, he allowed himself to be overruled. Accordingly, on November 5, a fatuous attempt was made by the allies to march round to the left of the Prussian position, with the intention of outflanking Frederick. The result was that they were taken in flank themselves, and in an hour and a half utterly routed.

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The whole brunt of the battle fell upon the French—the troops of the Empire, a motley crew, fled without taking any real part in the action—and their loss was terrible, while nearly all their baggage and artillery fell into the hands of the victors.

The intelligence of this crushing defeat—"a second Agincourt" one French writer calls it—was received in Paris with a perfect storm of indignation. "Never was the public so inflamed against Madame de Pompadour," says Madame du Hausset, "as when news arrived of the battle of Rossbach. Every day she received anonymous letters full of the grossest abuse, atrocious verses, threats of poison and assassination. She continued long a prey to the most acute grief, and could obtain no sleep but from opiates. All this discontent was excited by her protection of the Prince de Soubise, and the Lieutenant of Police had great difficulty in allaying the ferment of the people."¹

Poor Soubise, who, to do him justice, was far less to blame than the Prince of Hildburghausen, and had displayed great bravery on the fatal field, did not attempt to disguise the severity of his defeat, as most generals would have done. "I write to your Majesty," he says, in announcing the disaster to the King, "in a paroxysm of despair. Your army has been completely routed. I cannot say how many of your officers are killed, taken prisoners, or missing." On his return from Germany, Madame de Pompadour sent for him to endeavour to console him, and took him herself to Choisy, where the King then was. Louis received the crestfallen general with much kindness, invited him to join his supper-party that evening, and gave him to understand that, in spite of his

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset*, p. 196.

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ill-success in war, he had not forfeited his royal master's good opinion.¹

But the sympathy of Madame de Pompadour and the kindness of the King could not atone to Soubise for the tempest of ridicule with which the Parisians assailed him, One lampoon represented him searching for his lost army with a lantern; another gravely announced that the Hôtel de Soubise was to let, as its noble owner intended to enter himself as a pupil at the Military School; while a third informed the public that the prince intended to build a palace to celebrate his late campaign with the stones which he anticipated would be thrown at him.

The unfortunate man, who was extremely sensitive to public opinion, was in despair. "M. de Soubise," writes Madame de Pompadour to her confidante, Madame de Lutzelbourg, "is in the last extremity of grief. You know my affection for him and can imagine my indignation at the shameful injustice with which he has been treated in Paris, for in his army he is esteemed and beloved as he deserves." However, Soubise did everything in his power to make amends for his weakness in having accepted a post for which he was so manifestly unfit, by voluntarily resigning his command and offering to serve as a lieutenant-general under Richelieu. But Madame de Pompadour took care that the resignation should not be accepted. She felt that her own honour was bound up with that of her henchman, and insisted that an opportunity should be given him of retrieving

¹ Soubise was not ungrateful. Seventeen years later when, amid the execrations of the people, the body of Louis XV. was being conveyed to Saint-Denis, the prince was the only courtier who followed the coffin.

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his reputation. So, in spite of the remonstrances of Bernis, and in defiance of public opinion, Soubise was sent to invade Hesse in the following spring in command of an army of 30,000 men, composed of the survivors of Rossbach and a body of Würtembergers which had been subsidised by France.

CHAPTER XVIII

Bernis urges Madame de Pompadour to use her influence on the side of peace—The favourite resolved to continue the war—"Let us crush the Attila of the North!"—Bernis appeals to the King and the Council—The Comte de Clermont supersedes Richelieu in Hanover—Deplorable condition in which he finds the French army—His efforts to restore discipline—Madame de Pompadour's letters to him—The French retreat across the Rhine—Incapacity of Clermont—Remonstrances of Madame de Pompadour—Disgraceful defeat at Crefeld—Clermont's letter to Louis XV.—He returns to Paris—And is lampooned—The Duc d'Aiguillon repulses the English at Saint-Cast—Madame de Pompadour sends him a letter of congratulation—Bernis again urges the necessity of peace—Scene between the Minister and the favourite—Madame de Pompadour determines to get rid of him—The Comte de Stainville, French Ambassador at Vienna, fails to carry out Bernis's instructions—And encourages the war party in Austria—He returns to France, enters the Council, and is made Duc de Choiseul—The favourite and Choiseul resolve on the disgrace of Bernis—Their duplicity towards him—The making of a cardinal—Dismissal and exile of Bernis.

WE have already related how strongly Bernis had endeavoured to dissuade Madame de Pompadour from her project of an Austrian alliance, and with what misgivings he had ultimately consented to allow himself to be made a party to it. Hitherto, however, none of his apprehensions had been justified. The desperate state to which Frederick had been reduced after his defeat

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at Kollin (June 18) argued well for the success of the coalition in Eastern Europe; while the conquest of Minorca, the victory of Hastenbeck, and the Convention of Kloster-Zeven, if they had accomplished little else, had worthily upheld the honour of the French flag. But Rossbach had undone everything. It had given Frederick a fresh lease of life; it had reanimated the courage of his allies; it had rendered the convention signed by Richelieu and Cumberland mere waste paper. From that hour the Foreign Minister resolved to use all his influence to put a stop to the war.

He, accordingly, went to Madame de Pompadour and strongly urged upon her the advisability of concluding peace while there was still a chance of doing so on honourable and, possibly, advantageous terms, pointing out that the defeat at Rossbach was but the beginning of a long train of disasters, as the operations which had already taken place had revealed the wretched incapacity of the French commanders and the demoralisation of the troops; that the accession of Pitt to office was a guarantee that the maritime and colonial war would be carried on with the utmost vigour by England; that the navy was quite incapable of coping with that of the enemy, with the result that the fleet would be annihilated and the colonies, the source and foundation of the country's commercial wealth, would be lost. He declared that no concessions that Austria might be able to make could possibly compensate France for the loss of her colonies, and that, if the Empress was determined to continue the war, the King ought not to sacrifice the interests of his realm for those of a foreign sovereign.¹

But Madame de Pompadour scouted the very idea

¹ *Mémoires et Lettres du Cardinal de Bernis*, ii. 42 et seq.

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of peace. The Austrian alliance she regarded as her own work, a system with which her honour and her interests were inextricably bound up. Peace, and at such a moment, would mean the ruin of that work, the solemn condemnation of that system, an intolerable humiliation to her pride, a death-blow to her ambitious hopes. Besides, why should she sue for peace? Had she not had an example before her eyes, in the person of her enemy Frederick, of a man reduced to desperate straits who had refused to abandon hope, and had succeeded in retrieving in a single day—almost in a single hour—a series of disasters? Was she reduced as low as he had been? And, if she were, should she show herself less resolute and less courageous than he had done? And was she to yield, too, at a time when libels and lampoons were raining upon her and the commander she had appointed, and let it be said that the noisy *canaille* of Paris had intimidated her into abandoning her policy and betraying the confidence of her royal ally?

Perish the thought! She turned a deaf ear to the arguments and entreaties of Bernis, and, sitting down at her desk, wrote to Kaunitz: "I hate the conqueror more than I have ever done. Let us put forth every effort; let us crush the Attila of the North; and you will see me as contented as I am now mortified."

Foiled in one quarter, Bernis turned to another—he appealed to the King and the Council. He told them that without generals, ships, or money—for the subsidies France had so rashly undertaken to pay were fast emptying the already depleted Treasury—it was absolute madness to continue the double continental and maritime war, and succeeded in frightening Louis sufficiently

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to wring from him a reluctant permission to sound the Cabinet of Vienna on the question of peace, and, at the same time, to approach the Spanish Court, with the view of inducing it to offer an armed mediation, whereby favourable terms might be extorted from England. From that moment Bernis was ruined in the favour of Madame de Pompadour.

Meanwhile the war went on. In February 1758 the complaints and expostulations with regard to Richelieu's depredations in Hanover, where he had passed the winter, became so loud that the Government had no option but to recall him, and the Comte de Clermont, a member of the Condé family,¹ and, like Soubise, a great friend of the favourite, was appointed in his place. The count was nominally an ecclesiastic and Abbé of Saint-Germain-des-Prés; but in 1733 he had received a dispensation from Pope Clement XII. which permitted him to bear arms without renouncing his benefices. He knew, however, "more of boudoirs and green-rooms than of camps."² When Frederick heard of the abbé's appointment, he laughed and said that he hoped the next general sent would be the Archbishop of Paris.

¹ He was the third son of Louis III., Duc de Bourbon, Prince de Condé and of "Mademoiselle de Nantes," a natural daughter of Louis XIV. by Madame de Montespan.

² He was the protector of Mademoiselle Camargo, who, according to Grimm, was the first *danseuse* at the Opera to adopt short skirts. Another of his favourites was Mademoiselle Le Duc, a star of the same firmament, who, Barbier tells us, used to drive about the Bois de Boulogne, covered with diamonds, in a little carriage of blue and silver, drawn by six ponies "no bigger than donkeys," a proceeding which "not only wounded the *amour-propre* of all the ladies, but scandalized the public, and gave rise to some biting lampoons at the expense of M. l'Abbé."

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Clermont found the French troops in a most deplorable condition through disease, want, and lack of discipline. "I have found your Majesty's army," he writes to the King, "divided into three parts: one above ground composed of bandits and robbers, another under the ground, and the third in hospital. Shall I retreat with the first division, or wait till one of the others has joined me?" However, he did what he could to provide for the wants of the unfortunate soldiers and to restore discipline, put a dishonest commissary in irons, ordered another to be hanged, and caused over fifty officers, who had absented themselves from their regiments without leave, to be cashiered. Madame de Pompadour, who seems to have taken upon herself the duties of Secretary for War, kept up an active correspondence with the new commander.

"You can judge of my despair, monseigneur," she writes, in answer to a letter from Clermont complaining of the shocking condition of the troops, "by your knowledge of my attachment to the King and the State. You yourself, too, count for much in my anxieties. It is dreadful for you to arrive at the moment when the army is on the verge of ruin, and to have brought no remedy with you. I trust that your position on the Rhine will be sufficiently strong to allow you time for those reforms which are absolutely indispensable if the King is to have any soldiers left at all. The order which you have issued against those rascals (the commissaries) has had a good effect in your army. Go on, monseigneur; do not be discouraged by the obstacles of every kind which you are encountering. You will be the means of restoring discipline, and, that accomplished, you will achieve things worthy of the

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loftiness of your soul, and which will compensate you for the difficulties you have had to deal with.”¹

Although Clermont appears to have been a good disciplinarian, and honestly anxious for the comfort and efficiency of his men, he was no more fortunate, when it came to fighting, than Soubise had been. Notwithstanding that the Hanoverian army was much inferior in numbers to the French, its new commander, Ferdinand of Brunswick, who had succeeded the incompetent Cumberland, did not hesitate to take the aggressive. Before the winter was over, he advanced, forced the French to evacuate Bremen and Verden, compelled the garrison of Minden to capitulate, and drove Clermont in confusion across the Rhine. A few weeks later Ferdinand followed him, and passed the river without apparently encountering the slightest opposition on the part of the French; for, on June 5, we find Madame de Pompadour writing to Clermont: “What humiliation, monseigneur! To allow a thousand men to land and build a bridge over the Rhine! I cannot describe to you the excess of my grief; it is in proportion to the disgrace that has overtaken us.”² And in her next letter she informs him that she is suffering from an attack of fever, “brought on by agitation and disappointment.” Old Belle-Isle, who had lately succeeded “*cet excrement de Paulmy*” as Minister for War, sent Clermont peremptory orders to attack the enemy; but the general seemed utterly bewildered, and, instead of doing so, kept moving his army about in a helpless sort of manner, and wrote to Madame de Pompadour to complain that he could not understand what he was required

¹ Quoted in E. and J. de Goncourt's *Madame de Pompadour*, p. 281.

² Bonhomme's *Madame de Pompadour, Général d'Armée*, p. 128.

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to do. In reply, he received a very sharp reprimand from the lady:—

“I must confess, monseigneur, that the letter with which you honour me has astounded me. Maréchal de Belle-Isle has never desired anything but for you to engage the enemy and force him to retire. His letters have all been read at the Council, as he was of opinion that his orders to fight were too positive to send you without the sanction of the King. After the facts of which I am aware, I can listen to nothing more about what you do me the honour to write to me. The King’s desire is that you compel the enemy to retire; but, at the same time, his Majesty can do nothing more than leave the matter to your discretion. There, monseigneur! that is the exact position of affairs. Although the fever has left me, I suffer still from severe headaches; they do not make me forget my inviolable attachment to yourself.”¹

Whether the “General of the Benedictines,” as Frederick the Great contemptuously called him, would ever have been able to summon up sufficient courage to take the aggressive must remain a matter for conjecture; for, on June 23, some days before this letter reached Clermont, Ferdinand of Brunswick saved him the trouble of coming to a decision by suddenly attacking the left wing of his army at Crefeld. The French, surprised and outnumbered, fought bravely enough, and for over an hour and a half kept the enemy at bay. But Clermont, who seems to have been under the impression that the attack was a mere feint, intended to divert attention from the Hanoverians, who were threatening his own position, made no attempt to send

¹ Bonhomme’s *Madame de Pompadour, Général d’Armée*, p. 130.

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them reinforcements ; and when Ferdinand, having completely routed the troops opposed to him, appeared in his rear, at once ordered the whole army to retreat, though three-fourths of it had never fired a shot.

In his despatches the abbé-general described this disgraceful defeat as if it had been a kind of skirmish, and stated that "the loss was the same on both sides," and that his army retreated "in unbroken order."¹ The truth, however, soon leaked out, and Belle-Isle, whose only son was among the slain, informed him that henceforth operations must be directed by a council of war, composed of himself and three other generals, as apparently the responsibility was too much for any one man to undertake. Thereupon Clermont, who felt highly aggrieved at such an imputation, tendered his resignation to the King in a most affecting letter, in which he states that his exertions in his Majesty's service have reduced him to such a lamentable state of health, that the surgeons have found it necessary to bleed him "three times in twenty-four hours," to blister him, and administer an emetic ; that willingly would he sacrifice his life in the cause of his beloved sovereign, but that, since his Majesty appears no longer to attach any value to it, he considers that it would be advisable for him to return home, "to be within reach of the necessary remedies."²

This was also the opinion of the Government, and, after some haggling as to whether his return was to be officially announced as a recall or a resignation, Clermont

¹ Lacreteille says that, as soon as he had given the order to retreat, Clermont fled at the top of his horse's speed to his headquarters at Nuys, where he inquired if many of the fugitives had yet arrived. "No, mon-seigneur," was the reply, "you are the first."

² Bonhomme's *Madame de Pompadour, Général d'Armée*, p. 134.

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reappeared in Paris, to be received, like Soubise, with a universal howl of derision :—

“ Moitié plumet, moitié rabat,
Aussi propre à l'un comme à l'autre,
Clermont se bat comme un apôtre
Et sert Dieu comme il se bat.”¹

He was succeeded by the Marquis de Contades, who would appear to have been more capable—or less incapable—than either of his predecessors.

Madame de Pompadour received some little compensation for the failure of Clermont by the success of another of her friends, the Duc d'Aiguillon, Governor of Brittany, who, at the beginning of September, repulsed at Saint-Cast an English force, which had landed for the purpose of ravaging the coast. The favourite hastened to felicitate the victor.

“ I very much regret, monsieur, that I did not say all that it was in my mind the day before yesterday in reference to the glory with which you have covered yourself,² but my head was so bad that I lacked strength to write a line. We have to-day sung your *Te Deum*, and I assure you that it was sung with great satisfaction. I had predicted your success, and, indeed, how was it possible that, with so much zeal and intelligence, a head so cool, and troops which burned, like their leader, to avenge their King, you should have failed to conquer? That would have been an impossibility. A little note

¹ “ Half plume, half bands, as fit for one as for the other, Clermont fights like an apostle, and serves God as he fights.”

² The duke's enemies asserted that he covered himself with flour rather than with glory, inasmuch as that at the critical moment his courage failed him, and he took refuge in a mill.

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that I had written you, before receiving news of your brilliant victory, ought to apprise you of my opinion of you and the justice of my representations. Tell me, I beg you, candidly, if you are very angry with me for having refused to yield to your wishes and the splendid reasons you adduced; they were worth nothing at the time, and I have found them still worse to-day.¹ Another would not have acquitted himself as well as you have; I should have been in despair, instead of being delighted, and you would have been inconsolable, and with good reason. Dare to say now that my head is not a wiser one than yours; I defy you to do it.”²

No sooner was Bernis informed of the real extent of the defeat at Crefeld than he decided that he would no longer consent “to dance with fetters on his hands and feet.” He, accordingly, again sought out Madame de Pompadour, and, showing in this moment of disaster an energy and courage superior to his character, and which considerably astonished the haughty favourite, who had always regarded him as one of the most submissive of her henchmen, informed her of his intention of immediately resigning his post if he failed to persuade the King to make peace.

The marchioness was furious, and accused the Minister of the basest ingratitude. She had raised him, she declared, from poverty and obscurity to wealth and honour, and now that he had nothing more to gain, he proposed to abandon his patroness and his country in their hour

¹ The Bretons were not easy people to govern, and d’Aiguillon had been very anxious to resign his post, but Madame de Pompadour had persuaded him to remain in Brittany.

² Autograph letter from Madame de Pompadour to the Duc d’Aiguillon, now in the British Museum.

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of trial and retire to a life of ease and luxury. Bernis replied with dignity that when they saw him resign his benefices, renounce the promised cardinal's hat, and content himself with a single abbey,¹ the King and the public would judge him more favourably than she seemed inclined to do.

The attitude Bernis had taken up with regard to the war determined Madame de Pompadour to lose no time in getting rid of him. He had already announced his intention of resigning the Ministry of Foreign Affairs if the King refused to allow him to open negotiations for peace; but that would not be enough. She was resolved that the man who had had the audacity to prefer the interests of his country to that of a foreign power should be made to pay dearly for his temerity; that he should not only be replaced but dismissed, not only dismissed but exiled; that his return to office should be made impossible; that the victory of the military party—of the party of war *à outrance*—should be complete and final, and at the same time patent to all the world.

But before Bernis could be got rid of, some one must be found to take his place, and some one, too, who would not only be in accord with her own views on the war, but would command the confidence of the King, his colleagues, and the allies of France. About this, however, she was not long in making up her mind.

We have mentioned in a previous chapter a certain Comte de Stainville, who had rendered a very considerable service to Madame de Pompadour by betraying to

¹ Bernis was abbé of Trois-Fontaines, worth 50,000 livres a year, and of Saint-Médard de Soissons, worth 30,000 a year, and prior of La Charité-sur-Loire, which brought him in a further 16,000. He was certainly making up for lost time.

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her the confidences of his cousin, Madame de Choiseul-Romanet, and had received as his reward the post of Ambassador to the Vatican. This appointment, in contrast to the majority of those made by the favourite, had proved a very fortunate one, for Stainville was an extremely able man, and it had been mainly through his influence that Benedict XIV., in spite of the most strenuous opposition from the bigoted Cardinal Valenti, his Secretary of State, had consented to promulgate the Bull *Ex Omnibus* (October 1756), which had done not a little to put an end to the long struggle between the French clergy and the Parliament of Paris.

A member of an old Lorraine family, several of whose members had entered the Austrian service, Stainville was a warm supporter of the policy inaugurated by Madame de Pompadour, and on that lady's advice he had, in the spring of 1756, been transferred from Rome to Vienna. Since the Choiseul-Romanet affair Stainville had attached himself wholly to the interests of the favourite, in the belief that in so doing he would best be consulting his own. So long, therefore, as he recognised in the instructions he received from Bernis the inspiration of the marchioness he followed them implicitly, and, not hearing anything to the contrary from the latter, had, during the winter of 1757-58, obtained from Maria Theresa, whose warlike ardour had been somewhat damped by the Austrian defeat at Leuthen, which had followed closely upon that of Rossbach, a promise to seriously consider Bernis's proposals for peace. But the moment he became aware of the growing estrangement between the Foreign Minister and the marchioness, he changed his tone, and, instead of impressing upon the Cabinet of Vienna, as Bernis directed

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him, that the reconstruction of Europe contemplated by the second Treaty of Versailles had been "a beautiful dream, in which it would be dangerous to indulge any longer," he artfully stimulated the war party at the Austrian Court, and at the same time advised the Minister that the Empress was extremely mortified at his suggestion that negotiations should be opened with Frederick, as the disasters that her armies had suffered could be easily repaired, and resources found for continuing the struggle.

And so the opportunity of ending the war was lost—an opportunity which was not to occur again until tens of thousands of men had fallen and millions of money had been spent. As the months went by, the vindictive Empress, encouraged by Frederick's evacuation of Bohemia, the reconquest of Saxony, and the victory of Hochkirch, became more determined on the humiliation of Prussia than ever, and did everything in her power to induce the Ministry at Versailles to continue its support. She abandoned her claims to the arrears of subsidies due from France; she consented to a reduction of those to be paid that year; she offered further cessions in the Netherlands; she wrote to the King with her own hand to pique his *amour-propre*, and sent through Kaunitz most gracious messages to Madame de Pompadour.

That lady now resolved to recall Stainville and make him Minister for Foreign Affairs. She had no difficulty in obtaining the King's consent. Bernis's health was much impaired by the strain and anxiety of the past twelve months; he had already asked Louis to accept his resignation, and had himself suggested Stainville as his successor. The diplomatist was, accordingly, recalled, and on his arrival in November, created a duke, under the

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title of Duc de Choiseul. It was arranged that he was to relieve Bernis of his duties as soon as the King could see his way to release the abbé, and in the meanwhile he was to assist the latter at the Foreign Office and make himself conversant with its routine.

Madame de Pompadour's next step was to disgrace Bernis. After consultation with Stainville—or Choiseul, as we must now call him—who was himself anxious for the abbé's dismissal, since even when the latter had ceased to be Foreign Minister, he would probably still retain his place in the Council, and thus be able to exercise considerable influence on the side of peace, she decided that it would be best to defer her "*coup de poignard*"—to borrow the intended victim's own expression—for a few weeks. An assembly of the clergy was being held; Bernis had promised to use his influence to obtain from them a considerable gratuity. Negotiations were in progress with the Parliament of Paris to induce them to register an edict of the King for the raising of a loan of forty million livres; Bernis's popularity with the gentlemen of the long robe could alone carry the matter through. So everything was done to disarm the abbé's suspicions. He was informed that he was to remain in the Council; the King created a new department for him for the regulation of the affairs of the clergy and the Parliament, and a handsome suite of apartments in the palace was placed at his disposal; while Choiseul overwhelmed him with protestations of friendship, assured him that when he became Foreign Minister he should not think of taking any important step without his advice, and actually suggested that they should receive the Ambassadors and conduct the business of the department together, "as if two heads could go into one hat."

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Bernis was not deceived. He was convinced that all these favours and friendly overtures were only ruses to retain his services until such time as it would suit Madame de Pompadour to dispense with them, which would no doubt be as soon as the financial negotiations then proceeding had been concluded. However, like the honest man that he was, he did not allow personal considerations to interfere with what he believed to be his duty, and, mainly through his good offices, the clergy voted a gratuity and the Parliament consented to register the edict.

For some time past negotiations had been going on with the view of obtaining a cardinal's hat for Bernis. These had been interrupted by the death of Benedict XIV., but were now completed, and on November 30 the abbé blossomed into a prince of the Church. The account of the ceremonial observed on this occasion, as given by the *Gazette de France* of that date, is not without interest :—

“The Sieur de la Live, introducer of the Ambassadors, went to-day, in the coaches of the King and Queen, to fetch the Cardinal de Bernis from his hôtel and conduct him and the Abbé Archinto, the Pope's chamberlain, who had been deputed by His Holiness to convey the biretta to the Cardinal de Bernis, to the King's apartments. Before mass the Abbé Archinto was conducted with the usual ceremonies to an audience which the King had granted him in his cabinet, and presented to His Majesty a brief from His Holiness. After this audience the King descended to the chapel, where, when mass was over, the Cardinal de Bernis presented himself, under the escort of the same introducer. The Sieur Desgranges, master of the ceremonies, received the Cardinal de Bernis at the

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chapel door, and the latter took his place close to the priedieu of the King, on the side on which the Gospel is read, and knelt in prayer. The Abbé Archinto, wearing his ceremonial robes, having placed in the cardinal's hand the Papal brief, took from a side-board near the altar, on the side upon which the Epistle is read, a silver-gilt basin upon which stood the biretta and presented it to the King. His Majesty took the biretta and placed it on the head of the Cardinal de Bernis, who, on receiving it, made a profound reverence and, at the same moment, uncovered. On the King turning to leave the chapel, the Cardinal de Bernis entered the vestry, where he assumed the robes belonging to his new dignity. He then ascended to the King's apartments, accompanied by the master of the ceremonies; and the Sieur de la Live, who had remained all this time with the Cardinal de Bernis, conducted him to the King's cabinet, where the cardinal thanked His Majesty. The Cardinal de Bernis was next conducted, with the same ceremonies, to an audience with the Queen, and presented to her the Abbé Archinto, who handed Her Majesty a Papal brief. During this audience a stool was brought, and the Cardinal de Bernis sat down.¹ He was afterwards conducted to audiences with Monseigneur le Dauphin, Madame la Dauphine, Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne, Monseigneur le Duc de Berry, Monseigneur le Comte de Provence, Monseigneur le Comte d'Artois, Madame Infante, Madame, and Mesdames Sophie, Victoire, and Louise. After all these audiences were over, the Cardinal de Bernis was conducted by the same introducer to the

¹ Bernis was now, in virtue of his rank as a prince of the Church, addressed by crowned heads as "*mon cousin*," and permitted to sit in their presence.

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coaches of the King and Queen, with the same ceremonies as when he was conducted to the King's apartments." ¹

The King was very gracious to Bernis on this occasion, and remarked, loud enough for those standing by to hear, "I have never made so handsome a cardinal." But the Minister was none the less certain that his disgrace was near at hand, and welcomed the hat merely as some protection against the storm which was about to burst upon his head. As he was returning from the chapel, surrounded by the Ambassadors, and the representatives of the clergy and the Parliament who had assisted at the ceremony, a courtier bowed to him and exclaimed, "*Monseigneur le Cardinal, voilà un beau jour !*"

"*Dites plutôt que voilà un bon parapluie,*" responded Bernis.

He was not mistaken. It was on the 13th of December that he succeeded in persuading the reluctant Parliament to register the edict, and on the very next day he received the following letter from his ungrateful master :—

"*To MY COUSIN THE CARDINAL DE BERNIS.*

"The repeated requests that you have made to me to be allowed to resign the department of Foreign Affairs has persuaded me that you have not efficiently discharged the duties of which you so earnestly desire to be relieved, and this reflection has determined me to accept your resignation of the office of Secretary of State. But I have felt at the same time that you have not deserved the confidence which I have shown you in such critical circumstances, nor the singular favours with which I

¹ *Mémoires et Lettres du Cardinal de Bernis*, ii. 94.

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have loaded you in so short a time. In consequence, I command you to retire to one of your abbeys, whichever you prefer, within forty-eight hours and without seeing any one in the meantime, and to remain there until I direct you to return. Send me any letters of mine which you may have in your possession, in a sealed packet. And I pray God, my cousin, that He may have you in His holy keeping. At Versailles, this 13th day of December.

“Signed, LOUIS.”¹

When this letter was handed to Bernis, he was at the Austrian Embassy, in consultation with Stahremberg. He broke the seals, glanced over it, and then, turning to the Ambassador, said gaily, “It is not to me that you must explain these great projects. See, here is my dismissal !” And, after conversing with the Ambassador for some minutes on indifferent topics, he retired, leaving Stahremberg astonished at his coolness.

The cardinal, though, as we have seen, by no means unprepared for the blow, had not expected it quite so soon, and had, indeed, endeavoured to anticipate it by requesting Louis’s permission to resign and retire into private life, hoping that he might still be allowed to reside either at Versailles or in Paris ; but the malice of the haughty woman whom he had dared to oppose would be satisfied with nothing short of banishment. He attributes the precipitation of his disgrace to the announcements made by several of the foreign Ambassadors of his coming elevation to the post of Prime Minister. “Their letters,” he says, “having been intercepted by the Post-Office, Madame de Pompadour, who

¹ Introduction to *Mémoires et Lettres du Cardinal de Bernis*, p. 116.

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could no longer endure me, no doubt easily persuaded the King that I should force his hand if he did not exile me to one of my abbeys ”¹

It was commonly reported that the cardinal's dismissal had been brought about by a memorial which he had sent to the King urging that in a great national crisis, such as the country was then passing through, it was imperative that there should be a *central point* in the Council, to which the other Ministers might look for guidance, and that Louis, on perusing it, exclaimed (according to Quesnay's account), "Central point? That means himself, I suppose. He wants to be Prime Minister. Whenever there is a cardinal in the Council, he is sure in the end to take the lead." And that, believing he saw in poor Bernis an incipient Richelieu, he resolved to get rid of him without delay.²

This story is only partly true. The cardinal did write such a memorial, but he suggested that Belle-Isle, the Minister for War, should be the *central point*, on account of his great experience, "or whomever his Majesty might prefer." Moreover, the memorial never reached the King, as Madame de Pompadour, whom he asked to deliver it, strongly advised him not to send it, upon which Bernis destroyed it in her presence. It is more than probable, however, that the marchioness gave the monarch a garbled version of the document, and that this, combined with Louis's annoyance at the reports the Ambassadors were sending their Governments, produced the result she desired.

Bernis retired to his abbey of Saint-Médard de Soissons, leaving behind him the reputation of an amiable and

¹ *Mémoires et Lettres du Cardinal de Bernis*, ii. 93.

² *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset* (edit. 1825), p. 116.

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accomplished man and a devoted public servant, who had striven to the utmost to repair the consequences of the fatal policy for which he had been weak enough to allow himself to be made responsible. After Madame de Pompadour's death in 1764 he was recalled and made Archbishop of Albi, and five years later sent as Ambassador to the Vatican. In Rome, where we are told he united "the dignity of an Ambassador, the polish of a courtier, and the austerity of a priest," he appears to have been much esteemed, and lived in great magnificence keeping open house for all his countrymen and entertaining in princely fashion the various sovereigns who visited the Eternal City. When the Revolution broke out, he was deprived of his embassy and his benefices, but the King of Spain granted him a pension, on which he lived till 1794.

CHAPTER XIX

Choiseul Minister for Foreign Affairs—His personal appearance—His character—He obtains ascendancy over the other Ministers—He is suspected of being the lover of Madame de Pompadour—New treaty with Austria—Frederick is hard pressed—Continued French disasters—Appalling financial condition of the country—Silhouette becomes Comptroller-General—His expedients for raising money—The King sends the royal plate to the Mint—The Court and capital follow suit—Dismissal of Silhouette—Successes of the Duc de Broglie—Soubise is sent by Madame de Pompadour to co-operate with him—Jealousy between the two generals leads to defeat at Vellinghausen—Broglie is recalled and exiled—Scene at the Théâtre-Français—Futile negotiations for peace—Choiseul concludes the Family Compact—Fall of Pitt—Bute, his successor, eager for peace—Treaty of Paris—Disastrous consequences to France of the Seven Years' War—Erection of an equestrian statue of Louis XV.—Ridicule it arouses—The Jesuits—Their degeneracy and unpopularity—Pombal expels them from Portugal—The affair of Father La Vallette—Failure of a Jesuit intrigue to overthrow Choiseul—Madame de Pompadour resolved on the destruction of the Jesuits—Proceedings of the Parliament against them—Ecclesiastical commission appointed to examine their Constitutions—“*Sint ut sunt aut non sint!*”—The favourite and Choiseul persuade Louis XV. to abandon them—The Society is suppressed in France—Caricature representing Madame de Pompadour shooting the Jesuits.

THE Duc de Choiseul, who now succeeded Bernis as Minister for Foreign Affairs, was at this time about thirty-eight years of age. His appearance was by no

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means in his favour, as he was plain to the verge of ugliness, while his figure was "what one might call awkward;"¹ but, on the other hand, his manners, we are assured, were so charming that immediately he began to speak these defects were forgotten, and his popularity with the fair sex was unbounded.

Haughty, resolute, and daring, full of energy, self-confidence, and pertinacity, Choiseul made his weight felt from the very moment he entered the Council, and, while stooping to secure his position by complaisance to Madame de Pompadour, he knew how to use her influence to secure his own ends. A greater contrast to the well-meaning Bernis, who, according to Madame du Hausset, "always had the air of a protégé about him," could scarcely be conceived. Although never a statesman of really first-rate abilities, he seemed to the pygmies who formed the Cabinet of Versailles a kind of great man, and for the first time since the death of Fleury there was a Prime Minister in France.

It appears to have been the general opinion among his contemporaries that Choiseul was something more than a protégé of Madame de Pompadour, and Senac de Meilhan goes so far as to say that "no one could possibly doubt that he was her lover."² On the other hand, Madame du Hausset, who was certainly in a position to know, since she enjoyed her mistress's entire confidence, absolutely denies that there was any truth in the rumour.

"Now that I am on the subject of lovers," she says, "I cannot avoid speaking of M. de Choiseul. Madame liked him better than any one of those I have just men-

¹ Senac de Meilhan's *Portraits et Caractères*, p. 29.

² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

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tioned,¹ but he was not her lover. . . . Madame had a lively imagination and great sensibility, but nothing could exceed the coldness of her temperament. Besides, it would have been extremely difficult for her, surrounded as she was, to keep up an intercourse of that kind with any man. It is true the difficulty would have been diminished in the case of an all-powerful Minister who had constant opportunities of seeing her in private. But there was a much more decisive fact; M. de Choiseul had a charming mistress—the Princesse de R.²—and Madame knew it and often spoke of her. He had also some remains of liking for the Princesse de Kinski, who had followed him from Vienna.³ . . . All these circumstances together were certainly sufficient to deter Madame from engaging in an amour with the duke; but his talents and agreeable qualities captivated her. . . . He was much attached to Madame, and though this might at first be inspired by a consciousness of the importance of her friendship to his interests, yet after he had acquired sufficient political strength to stand alone, he was not the less devoted or less assiduous in his attentions to her.”⁴

¹ She had just denied the truth of similar reports with regard to Bernis, the Prince de Beauvau, brother of the Maréchale de Mirepoix, and Bridge, surnamed “*le bel homme*,” one of Louis XV.’s equerries, who was said to have been the marchioness’s lover previous to her conquest of the King.

² The Princesse de Rohan.

³ Madame du Hausset might have added that Choiseul still had “some remains of liking” for his wife, whom Horace Walpole, in a letter to Gray, describes as “the gentlest, amiable, civil little creature that ever came out of a fairy egg,” and Madame du Deffand as “an angel without a weakness or a fault.”

⁴ On the whole, we are inclined to agree with Madame du Hausset. Madame de Pompadour was, as she herself expressed it, “*froide comme une macreuse*.” Ambition was the one passion of her heart; there was no room in it for such a thing as love.

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Choiseul signed as his initiation fee a fresh treaty with Austria, by which the subsidies to be paid in future by France were considerably reduced, while neither party was to conclude a separate peace. It was henceforth impossible for France to come to terms, even with England, without the consent of the Empress-Queen. The war was carried on vigorously. The Austrians and Russians pressed Frederick hard, utterly routed him at Kunersdorf—a victory which, had it been properly followed up, might have ended the struggle as far as Prussia was concerned—took Dresden, and compelled another army under Finck to capitulate at Maxen.

Far otherwise was it with their luckless ally. In every quarter of the globe France was worsted. Early in the year 1759 prospects seemed a little brighter. Soubise, who had gained two unimportant successes in the previous year at Sandershausen and Lutternberg, for the second of which, although the credit was entirely due to Chevert, his second-in-command, he was made a *Maréchal de France*, took Frankfort by means of a stratagem, and thereby secured a most advantageous base for operations on the Lower Rhine, while the Duc de Broglie defeated Ferdinand of Brunswick at Bergen, and then, having effected a junction with Contades, who had advanced into Hesse, again invaded Hanover.

But soon Fortune ceased to smile. In August Ferdinand's army, now reinforced by some eight thousand English troops, gained a great victory over Contades at Minden, an engagement in which the French might have been annihilated, but for the extraordinary conduct of Lord George Sackville, who refused to allow the cavalry to advance. In November the fleet of the Comte de Conflans, another of Madame de Pompadour's henchmen,

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who had recently been made Maréchal de France, "apparently because the title of vice-admiral was not worthy of him," was destroyed by Hawke in Quiberon Bay. Clive carried all before him in India, the French commanders complaining that, instead of soldiers, the Government sent them "*la plus vile canaille*." Wolfe defeated Montcalm before Quebec, and the fate of Canada was sealed. Everywhere there was nothing but ruin and disaster.

Meanwhile the financial condition of the country had become simply appalling. The ordinary revenues of the State for the year 1759 were estimated at two hundred and eighty-five million livres; the expenditure exceeded five hundred and three million, leaving a deficit of two hundred and eighteen million, in addition to which more than one hundred and fifty million were due to the receivers-general and farmers-general. Desperate attempts had been made to raise money by means of loans, lotteries, and life-rentes; but the credit of the Government was gone—people would not subscribe.

Under these circumstances, it may be imagined that the office of Comptroller-General was far from an enviable one; in less than a year it had had three different occupants. In February 1759 the last of these, Boulogne, resigned in despair, and the King determined to look for "a man of genius." Unfortunately, men of genius were not very plentiful in France at that moment; but eventually what was believed to be one was discovered in the person of a certain M. de Silhouette, who was Secretary of Orders to the Duc d'Orléans and Commissary to the East India Company.

Silhouette, if he lacked genius, certainly had an abundance of ingenuity. In forty-eight hours he had enriched

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the Treasury to the extent of seventy-two million livres, by the simple expedient of creating a loan to that amount, confiscating half the profits of the farmers-general, and distributing the money among the subscribers. This operation was received with great applause by every one, except the unfortunate collectors of the revenue; but, as they were the object of universal odium, nobody paid the least heed to their protests. Silhouette was hailed as a public benefactor, and the King congratulated himself on having found a heaven-born financier.

The new Comptroller's next step was to begin cutting down pensions, a measure which, as it did not affect the general public, was also much applauded. After this he determined to reform the King himself, and entreated him to set his subjects the example of the sacrifices he imposed upon them, and suggested, by way of a beginning, that he should surrender the annual sum set apart for his card playing; to which proposal Louis magnanimously consented, Choiseul having secretly offered to make up the deficiency from the funds of the Foreign Office.

But as fast as money flowed into the Treasury it went out again, for what could the foresight and economy of even the ablest Minister effect in the face of the financial chaos which permitted the expenses of one department to be thrown upon another, and allowed the King to draw millions of livres every year, without rendering any proper account of the uses to which it was to be devoted.¹ And so Silhouette was soon

¹ Louis, there can be no doubt, transferred immense sums from the Treasury to his own privy purse. Since the dismissal of Machault in February 1757 he had taken the post of Keeper of the Seals for himself, in order to appropriate the perquisites. He had no sense of shame whatever.

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obliged to have recourse to other expedients for obtaining the necessary funds—taxes on domestic servants, on servants in livery, on horses and carriages, on shops, on coffee-houses, on bachelors,¹ and, finally, one of four sous per livre on articles of consumption.

These proposals affected the pockets of all classes, and we read that poor Silhouette is applauded no longer, but that “every one is heaping execrations upon him,” and that he has become the subject of “shocking lampoons.”² The Parliament remonstrated vehemently; the King sought to force it to register the edicts imposing these taxes; while Silhouette, seeing his plans failing, suggested the most fantastic schemes, one of which was that Louis should send the royal plate to the Mint, and call upon his loyal subjects to do likewise.

The King consented, and the loyal subjects hastened to follow his example. We read that Madame de Pompadour, Maréchal Belle-Isle, Choiseul, and other Ministers have sent their plate; that the Duc d’Orléans has sent his “in a wagon”; that the Dauphiness has volunteered with a silver toilet-table, “brand new and of exquisite costly pattern,” but that the King would not accept it; that certain mean and unpatriotic persons were undecided whether to send their plate or to hide it, but that public opinion was so strong that no one dared to use anything but pewter.³ Even the religious communities were compelled to go with the stream. The clergy of Notre-Dame sent a deputation to the King to inquire how much of their plate they should contribute, doubtless hoping that the monarch would

¹ Silhouette proposed that unmarried men should pay a triple capitation tax.

² *Journal de Barbier*, vii. 202.

³ *Ibid.*, vii. 102

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refuse to avail himself of their loyalty. Their disgust may be imagined when Louis curtly replied, "Everything except the sacred vessels." In order to incite a spirit of emulation, it was resolved that a list of the contributors should be printed; that it should be inserted in the gazettes, and read at Versailles. This was most effective, and we are told that "even the courtesans were desirous of figuring upon this patriotic catalogue."¹ Receipts were given at the Mint for all the plate sent in, and promises to refund its value to the owners at the rate of seven livres per ounce when the ship of State should have weathered the storm; but whether these promises were ever redeemed appears very doubtful.

However, the Parisians were not long in avenging the loss of their silver. At the same time that Silhouette had suggested the melting-pot scheme, he had proposed another and far more important one, nothing less than that, for the duration of the war, the State should suspend all payments, except that of the *rentes*—in a word, temporary bankruptcy. This announcement was greeted with a storm of indignation. The unfortunate Minister was compared to the famous robbers Cartouche and Mandrin, the latter of whom had recently expiated his crimes on the wheel; while those who took his vagaries less seriously covered him with ridicule. "The very tailors and milliners took him up—trousers without pockets, dresses without flounce or fold, which they called *à la Silhouette*;—and to this day in France, and other Continental Countries, the old-fashioned Shadow-Profile (mere outline, and vacant black) is practically called a silhouette. So that the very Dictionaries

¹ *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, iii. 179.

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have him; and like bad Count Reinhart or Reynard, of earlier date, he has become a Noun Appellative, and is immortalised in that way.”¹ At length, the popular outcry became so loud that Louis saw the necessity of abandoning both the proposal and the Minister, and on November 22 the Comptroller-General was dismissed.

Although Silhouette’s tenure of office did not benefit the Treasury very much, it seems to have been not altogether unprofitable to himself. “Instead of retiring to the country to bury his shame there,” writes a disgusted contemporary, “he rented a splendid house in the most fashionable quarter of the town. Magnificent equipages, rich liveries, and a great number of servants testified to a degree of opulence most offensive to other people. It appeared as if he had raised himself upon the ruins of his fellow-citizens; he was served on plate at a time when the greatest noblemen had only earthenware or china.”²

Silhouette was succeeded by Bertin, the Lieutenant of Police, for Madame de Pompadour’s faithful henchman, Berryer, “who had oftentimes saved the marchioness from poison and the assassin’s knife,” had been promoted to the Ministry of Marine. Bertin succeeded in inducing the Parliament to register some fresh taxes—one of a sou the livre on articles of consumption, and a double capitation tax—by promising that they should only remain in force for two years, and also managed to float a fresh loan of fifty million, “which enabled the Government to vegetate from day to day.”

The miserable war began anew in the spring. Frederick,

¹ Carlyle’s “Frederick the Great,” viii. 248.

² *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, iii. 179.

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now reduced to less than a hundred thousand men, the majority of them raw recruits, for the splendid, well-disciplined troops of 1756 existed no longer, had to contend with more than double that number of Austrians, Russians, and Imperialists; while Ferdinand of Brunswick, with only 70,000 men, was confronted by 120,000 Frenchmen. Frederick, however, remained unconquered, though Berlin was a second time pillaged by the enemy, and in November gained a decisive victory over the Austrians at Torgau.

The French armies somewhat retrieved their character during this campaign, and Broglie, who had superseded Contades after Minden, won a battle at Corbach, while the Marquis de Castries, one of his lieutenants, repulsed a night attack made upon him by Ferdinand at Kloster-Kampen. *Te Deums* were sung in Paris, and Broglie became a popular hero.

Unfortunately, Madame de Pompadour could not let well alone. She was resolved that the honour of conquering Hanover should belong to Soubise, and in spite of Choiseul's remonstrances, the incapable prince was sent in the following spring to the Lower Rhine to co-operate with Broglie in Hesse, with the chief command in the event of a junction. Ferdinand immediately marched against Soubise, who, greatly alarmed, hastened to unite his forces with those of Broglie. The latter was anything but pleased at the arrival of his colleague, of whom he was violently jealous, but agreed that an attempt should be made to surround Ferdinand, who was in camp at Vellinghausen on the banks of the Lippe, and crush him by weight of numbers. Broglie's jealousy, however, led him to attack some hours earlier than had been arranged, in the hope of monopolising all

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the glory of the anticipated victory; and when, finding the task very much more difficult than he had bargained for, he was reluctantly compelled to send to Soubise for assistance, the latter, who could not understand why the duke had begun the action before the time agreed upon, contented himself with a feeble cannonade of an outlying redoubt on the enemy's right flank. The consequence was that Broglie was overpowered and driven back in confusion with heavy loss.

Each general laid the blame upon the other, but Madame de Pompadour decided the matter by causing Broglie to be recalled and banished to his estates by a *lettre de cachet*. This act of injustice was not allowed to pass unchallenged. Voltaire's *Tancrède* was then being performed at the Théâtre-Français, and when the celebrated actress Mademoiselle Clairon, in the part of Aménarde, came to the lines, "It is a hero's lot to be persecuted. A hero to whom justice is refused appeals to all hearts," she repeated them with such impressiveness that their application was at once perceived, and "the name of Broglie was on every lip."

Madame de Pompadour now fell back upon d'Estrées, whom she had formerly caused to be superseded, and he departed for Germany amid a shower of lampoons, which represented that he was going to gather laurels for Soubise to wear. The two generals gained a victory at Johannisberg, but they were driven out of Hesse and across the Weser, and Ferdinand was pressing them hard when the preliminaries of peace came to stem the tide of French disasters.

As far back as the autumn of 1759 the English Government had joined Frederick in making proposals for peace, but though Choiseul was not unwilling to

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come to a separate agreement with England and retire from the war, Maria Theresa would not hear of it, unless England consented to withdraw her support from Frederick. This, of course, Pitt refused to do, so nothing came of the negotiations. In the spring of 1761, however, they were resumed by Choiseul, seconded this time by Austria and Russia. The English Government sent an envoy to Paris, and the French Government an envoy to London, to discuss a separate arrangement, which, it was hoped, might lead to a general pacification; but Pitt seemed determined on the humbling of France, and though these negotiations were protracted for several weeks, they proved as fruitless as the last. It is, indeed, open to question whether Choiseul was really sincere in his desire for peace at this moment, aware as he was that it could not fail to be a humiliating one. It would appear more probable that it was merely a ruse to gain time, in order to conclude a negotiation which he had long meditated and from which he hoped much. This was to draw the King of Spain, and with him the other Bourbon sovereigns, into the war.¹

He had certainly chosen his time well. The relations between England and Spain had for some years past been very strained. Disputes had arisen on several points, such as the violation of Spain's neutrality by English cruisers, the rights of fishing on the banks of Newfoundland, the right to cut logwood and maintain settlements in Honduras, while the continued aggrandisement of Great Britain was regarded as a serious menace to the

¹ *Vie privée de Louis XV.*, iv. 8. The writer says that the French envoy, Bussy-Ragotin, was nothing but a spy, sent to ascertain the feeling of the new Court (George II. had died the previous year) on the question of the war, and that he intrigued with the Tories against Pitt.

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Spanish colonies. Moreover, Don Carlos of Naples, who had succeeded his half-brother, the peace-loving Ferdinand VI., in 1759, was inspired by deadly hatred of England. Twenty years before, he had joined the coalition against Maria Theresa, upon which an English fleet, under Commodore Martin, had sailed into the Bay of Naples, dropped anchor within gunshot of the palace, and given his Sicilian Majesty one hour and no longer to choose between recalling his troops and signing a treaty of neutrality, and a bombardment. Carlos was, of course, compelled to yield, but he never forgot the humiliation to which he had been subjected, and thirsted for revenge.

And so it happened that when Choiseul suggested the advantage of a treaty, by which the Kings of France and Spain should each recognise the enemies of the other as his own, and guarantee each other's possession in all parts of the world, and offered to restore Minorca to Spain in return for her assistance,¹ the Court of Madrid lent a willing ear to his proposals, and on August 15, 1761, the celebrated Family Compact was signed. By a secret clause, the King of Spain bound himself to declare war against England on the following 1st of May, if she had not concluded peace with France before that date.

This alliance was of little direct advantage to France, for, even with the help of Spain, she was powerless to stem the tide of English conquests, and Carlos paid dearly for his interference by the loss of Havanna and

¹ Choiseul also offered another concession, which, though it may seem trifling to us, was regarded as of the highest importance by the Court of Madrid—the renunciation of precedence. That is to say, that in courts foreign to the House of Bourbon, whereas hitherto the French Ambassador had always taken the precedence over the representative of Spain, priority of credentials was in future to decide the matter.

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Manilla ; but indirectly it proved her salvation, since it precipitated the fall of her implacable enemy, Pitt, who, obtaining early information of the hostile intentions of Spain, proposed, like Frederick in 1756, to strike first. Finding himself unsupported in the Cabinet, where the machinations of "thrice-paltry" Bute had undermined his influence, he tendered his resignation, which was accepted by the young King.

"Pitt's dismissal," said Diderot, on hearing of the fall of the Great Commoner, "is a greater gain to us than the winning of two battles." And so it proved. Pitt had been as firmly convinced of the necessity of reducing France to impotence as Cato had been with regard to Carthage. Bute, who now assumed the direction of affairs, and found himself, just as his predecessor had foreseen, compelled almost immediately to declare war against Spain, thought only of bringing hostilities to a close, in order that he might be able to devote himself to the task of breaking up the Whig oligarchy and extending the royal prerogative. And thus the extraordinary spectacle was presented of the first Minister of a triumphant power suing for peace as eagerly as if his country was on the verge of ruin.

Choiseul was, of course, only too willing to treat on anything like reasonable terms, and Madame de Pompadour this time offered no resistance. Even she was compelled to admit that the game was up. The "Alliance of the Three Petticoats" (Elizabeth of Russia, Maria Theresa, and Madame de Pompadour), as Frederick called the coalition, existed no longer. The Czarina Elizabeth had died in January 1762, and though her successor, the eccentric Peter III., who had actually ordered the Russian forces which had been employed

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against Prussia to turn their arms against their former allies, had speedily lost both his throne and his life, the present sovereign, his widow Catharine, had firmly declined Maria Theresa's overtures for a renewal of the alliance made by Elizabeth. The consequence was that Austria was now left to face Prussia with no other support than what she could obtain from the half-hearted German Diet and the Saxons, and all she could hope for was to hold her ground.

But in any case it would have been impossible to continue the war another six months, for matters were at the last extremity; the financial resources of the country were absolutely exhausted. Accordingly, on November 3, the preliminaries of peace between France, Spain, and England were signed at Fontainebleau, and on February 10 in the following year converted into the Peace of Paris. The other belligerents had come to terms five days earlier at Hubertsburg, a castle belonging to Augustus of Saxony, and Frederick had been once more confirmed in his possession of Silesia.

The sacrifices imposed upon France by the Treaty of Paris were, of course, not nearly so heavy as would have been the case had Pitt remained in office; indeed, it is open to question whether Pitt would have consented to make peace at all until the French navy had been practically annihilated. But, even as things were, they were sufficiently humiliating for a proud nation. She surrendered Canada and Cape Breton, gave up all claims on Nova Scotia, allowed England to retain Grenada and the "Neutral Islands" in the West Indies, ceded Senegal, restored Minorca, and recovered her possessions in India only by pledging herself to maintain no troops or fortifications there. Thus ended the famous Seven Years'

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War, which, besides annihilating her influence in North America and India, cost France two hundred thousand men and enormous sums of money, lowered her prestige in Europe, crippled her finances for years to come,¹ and dealt a death-blow at the monarchy, which, by arrogating to itself absolute authority, had incurred and accepted undivided responsibility.

As if this miserable war had been a succession of glorious victories, instead of crushing reverses, it was decided, at the suggestion of Madame de Pompadour, to commemorate it by the erection of a colossal equestrian statue of Louis XV. in what is now the Place de la Concorde. This statue, which was the work of Bouchardon, was placed on a pedestal adorned at the four corners by allegorical figures representing Strength, Wisdom, Justice, and Peace, executed by Pigalle, and was unveiled with great ceremony on June 20, 1763. The *Gazette de France* for the 27th of that month announced that the unveiling was received "with enthusiastic acclamations of joy on the part of an innumerable company."² As a matter of fact, the people looked on in dead silence, and showed what they thought of the matter by the following stinging couplet, which was found affixed to the statue the next morning:—

"Grotesque monument, infâme piédestal,
Les Vertus sont à pied et le Vice à cheval."

¹ The annual revenue had been forestalled to the amount of nearly eighty million livres. The outside expenses of the war had not been acquitted, and from 1762-69 France was forced to pay between thirty-three and thirty-four million of arrears in respect of the subsidies due to Austria. In addition to this, the national debt had grown to an appalling extent, and a large body of life-rentes and tontines had been created.

² Quoted in *Journal de Barbier*, viii. 81.

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And the painter La Tour, coming to admire the allegorical figures of Pigalle, heard the women of the lower class crying out to one another, as they pointed derisively at the "Virtues": "Do you see how the King has made them put his wantons by the side of his procuress? Look, there is Madame de Mailly, and there's Madame de Vintimille, and the one behind her is Madame de Châteauroux, and next her is Madame de Pompadour!"¹

To the intense relief of the Government, the disastrous Treaty of Paris aroused comparatively little comment in the capital, the reason being that the popular interest was at that moment absorbed in another conflict—that between the Parliament of Paris, supported by the whole influence of Madame de Pompadour, and the Jesuits.

By the middle of the eighteenth century the Jesuits, not only in France but all over the world, had derogated very far from the lofty ideals of Loyola. They had abandoned the system of free education, which had brought them so much influence and honour; they had attached themselves to Courts, thereby losing their hold over the middle and lower classes; they had endeavoured to monopolise ecclesiastical patronage and aroused the jealousy of the secular clergy; they had utilised their position as missionaries in the colonies to acquire political power, and, in some instances, as in Paraguay, where, in 1750, they had stirred up a rebellion against the Portuguese Government, practically ruled them. To crown all, they had, in direct violation of the precepts of their founder, their own Constitutions, and the prohibition of several Popes, embarked in com-

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Richelieu*, viii. 286; Campardon's *Madame de Pompadour et la cour de Louis XV.*, p. 153.

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merce, and had developed into a vast trading corporation, with houses scattered all over the world. The consequence was that they had come to be regarded with jealousy and distrust, not only by the bulk of the population, but also by the Governments of even the most conservative States, and stood, though they seemed more powerful than they had ever been, upon the verge of an abyss, into which it needed but a thrust to precipitate them.

It was from Portugal, a country where they had long exercised the most absolute dominion, that the thrust came. There the able Minister, Carvalho (afterwards Marquis de Pombal), who had obtained great influence over the weak Joseph I., had determined on their destruction. He was firmly convinced, though as usual direct evidence was lacking, that they had been the originators of the rebellion in Paraguay already referred to, which had lasted six years and put the Government to enormous expense; and he was, moreover, exasperated by the manner in which they had fomented opposition to his domestic reforms. Accordingly, in 1757 he issued decrees against them, forbidding them to approach the Court without leave, prohibiting them from trading, preaching, and the confessional. Finally, at the beginning of the year 1759, he charged the whole Society with complicity in an attempt upon the King's life, which had been made in the previous September—and for which two unfortunate noblemen, the Marquis de Tavora and the Duke d'Aveiros, both of whose wives had yielded to the licentious monarch's overtures, had been executed—confiscated all their property, and shipped them to Civita Vecchia, where they were left to be maintained at the Pope's expense.

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Such a proceeding on the part of a small and superstitious State in which the Jesuits had been so long dominant naturally had a great effect upon France, where the Order had never recovered from the injury it had received in its struggle with Port-Royal. Its arrogance, which had been pardoned so long as it was associated with merit and learning, inspired nothing but hatred and contempt when coupled with mediocrity; and these feelings were accentuated by the prominent part which it had taken in the conflict between the clergy and the Parliament, its perpetual interference with the relations of domestic life, and the continuous attacks of Voltaire and the philosophers. An act as impolitic as it was discreditable gave it its death-blow.

One of the most prosperous of the Society's commercial establishments was situated in Martinique, where Father La Vallette, the head of the mission there, carried on an exceedingly prosperous business under the guidance of one Isaac, a Jew! He had correspondents in all the principal towns in Europe, and had gradually acquired a monopoly of the trade of the island, inso-much that the inhabitants complained to the French Government, who recommended that the enterprising Father should be transferred to another sphere of usefulness. His superiors, however, obtained permission for him to remain at his post, promising that he should in future confine himself to the care of souls instead of sugar. They appointed him vicar-general and apostolic-prefect, under which high-sounding titles he continued to trade as merrily as ever. But, alas! evil days were in store. In 1755 Father La Vallette had drawn bills of exchange for a very large amount upon his principal correspondents, Leonci and Gouffre, a great commercial

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house at Marseilles. The merchandise which he was shipping to France to cover his bills was seized by the English.¹ Leonci and Gouffre applied to Madame de Pompadour's quondam confessor, Father Sacy, the attorney-general of the missions of France, for reimbursement. Sacy referred them to his superiors; but the generalship of the Society was then vacant, and nothing could be done till it was filled. Before that event took place, the merchants had been compelled to suspend payment.

Ricci, the new General of the Jesuits, had fully intended to settle the claims² and continue the commerce; but finding that it was too late to stop the scandal, he foolishly decided to repudiate La Vallette, and instructed Sacy, whom the assignee of the bankrupts had associated with La Vallette in an action he was bringing against the latter before the courts at Marseilles, to deny that the holy man at Martinique had had any authority to pledge the credit of the Society.

In vain did the unfortunate Leonci and his partner write the most affecting letters to Sacy. The Father replied that he had "nothing but tears and prayers" to give them; and when the case came into court,

¹ Another misfortune befell La Vallette about this time. He had announced his intention of sending to France the relics of holy personages of his Order who had suffered martyrdom at the hands of the natives. These pretended relics were ingots of gold. When the cases arrived at the Jesuit convent at Bordeaux, they were found to contain, instead of ingots, nothing but the bones of animals; they had been opened and rifled by the captain of the ship. The Jesuits could not enter a complaint, as the bill of lading had specified nothing but bones.

² D'Angerville says that Ricci actually sent a courier to Marseilles to inform the merchants that La Vallette's obligations would be met. He arrived three days too late.

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solemnly swore that La Vallette had been trading on his own account and entirely without the sanction of the Society.

The result was that La Vallette, who did not appear, was condemned to pay what was due; while the decision with regard to Sacy was postponed to give his superiors time for reflection. Ricci, however, persisted in his refusal to acknowledge the obligation; whereupon, in May 1760, the Leoncis brought an action against the whole body of the Jesuits in France as jointly responsible, and won the case.

The reaction of this disgraceful affair was felt all over Europe. The counting-house of the Jesuits at Genoa was closed by order of the Genoese Government; Venice forbade the Society in its territories to receive novices; and in France the Lieutenant of Police interdicted to them the sale of drugs, which compelled them to abandon the immense pharmacy which they had at Lyons.

Ricci now resolved on an appeal to a superior court. He had the alternative of carrying his case before the Great Council, an exceptional tribunal, which was friendly to the Church and would doubtless have endeavoured to induce him to settle the matter amicably, or to the Grand Chamber of the Parliament of Paris, a body mainly composed of bitter Jansenists. Every one, of course, expected that he would choose the former; to universal astonishment, he announced his intention of appealing to the latter.

One Father Frey, a Paris Jesuit, "who passed for an acute politician," seems to have been responsible for this suicidal decision. He had assured his superiors that success was certain before either tribunal, but that it would be the more glorious before the one which was

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popularly supposed to be hostile to them, but whose hostility he declared was grossly exaggerated ; and they had taken his advice. "The Jesuits," says Bernis, "were the dupes of their own cunning."¹

The extraordinary confidence which Father Frey had professed in the result of the approaching appeal would seem to have been based on a plot which he and other members of his Order had concerted with the Duc de la Vauguyon, a malignant fanatic and a bitter enemy of Choiseul, to overthrow that Minister and make the party of the Dauphin supreme. In this conspiracy the prince himself was an innocent accomplice. La Vauguyon and his friends had informed him that Choiseul had lately come to an understanding with the Parliament of Paris, by which the Society was to be suppressed and certain restrictions imposed on the royal power, and in proof of this had produced a document, purporting to be written by a counsellor of the Parliament, but, as a matter of fact, the work of a Jesuit, and begged him to lay it before the King. The Dauphin, who was a high-minded if bigoted young man, had hitherto kept sternly aloof from all Court intrigues ; but he was a staunch supporter of the Society and much attached to his father, in spite of the coolness with which the latter treated him, and, never suspecting for a single moment that the document was a forgery, was highly indignant, and promised to do as they suggested.

This clumsy plot failed as it deserved ; indeed, the intelligence of the Jesuits at this period appears to have been about on a par with their morals. The King, instead of at once dismissing Choiseul, as the conspirators fondly imagined he would do, sent for the Minister,

¹ *Mémoires et Lettres du Cardinal de Bernis*, ii. 103.

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handed him the incriminating paper, and demanded an explanation. Choiseul, of course, had no difficulty whatever in clearing himself, and the poor Dauphin was severely reprimanded by his father ; while his intended victim demanded an audience, and informed him that, "although he (Choiseul) might one day have the misfortune to become his subject, he might rest assured that he would never consent to become his servant."¹ When the prince complained to Louis of the Minister's insolence, the latter merely shrugged his shoulders and intimated that his son had no right to expect anything else.

Now up to this time it would not appear that Choiseul had entertained any hostile intentions towards the Jesuits, though he had long regarded them with disfavour, nor is it at all probable that, even after the provocation he had received, he would have taken any steps against them on his own initiative, for he was far from being of a vindictive nature. But Madame de Pompadour no sooner heard of what had taken place than she recognised that her hour of vengeance had arrived. She had not forgotten his lordship of Mirepoix's ill-advised endeavour to nip her ambitions in the bud, or the outspoken sermons of Father Griffet, or the inconvenient scruples of Father Sacy, or the intrigues of Father Desmarets. She was resolved that these meddlesome priests should pay dearly for their rash attempts to thwart her will. The axe was already laid to the foot of the tree ; it should not be her fault if it was not driven home. Choiseul was under too great obligations to the favourite to refuse to second her revengeful schemes, and, after some demur, promised her his co-operation.

¹ Prince Emmanuel de Broglie's *Le Fils de Louis XV.*, p. 281.

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Meanwhile the La Vallette affair had reached the Parliament of Paris. Again did the Jesuits deny the joint responsibility imputed to them and maintain that each of their houses or colleges was administered separately in regard to temporal matters. The Parliament ordered them to produce their Constitutions, that it might be seen how far these bore out their statements; and the Constitutions, a document hitherto almost unknown,¹ were accordingly produced. After examining the clauses relating to the question at issue, the court gave judgment against the Society for the whole amount claimed and an additional fifty thousand livres by way of damages.

But the matter did not end there. Once having got their enemies into their power, the Parliament was by no means disposed to allow them to escape. It appointed a commission to examine and report upon the Constitutions, and the provincial parliaments followed suit. On July 8, the Abbé Terrai, a clerical counsellor and a rancorous opponent of the Order, proposed that a second commission should be appointed to report upon "the moral and political doctrines of the so-called priests and scholars of the Society of Jesus"; and his motion was agreed to. A month later the Parliament ordered a great number of Jesuit works published during the last two centuries, including an ingenious "Apology for the Massacre of Saint-Bartholemew," to be publicly burned by the common hangman, "as teaching a murderous and abominable doctrine against the safety of the lives of citizens and even of sovereigns"; and, the commission, having unanimously condemned the Con-

¹ The first authoritative edition of the Constitutions was published at Prague in 1757.

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stitutions, began to issue decrees restricting the privileges of the Society—a step in which it had been anticipated by the Parliament of Rouen.

At this stage of the proceedings the King interfered, and directed that the decrees should not come into force for a year, and in the meanwhile appointed an ecclesiastical commission, composed of archbishops and bishops, to sit in judgment upon the Constitutions. Only two members of this commission went so far as to report in favour of the suppression of the Society, but several advocated restrictions upon its powers, and all were unanimous in condemning the unlimited authority of the General as incompatible with the laws of the realm. In consequence, a proposal was sent to Ricci suggesting that he should delegate his powers, so far as France was concerned, to five provincial vicars, who should swear to obey the laws of the realm, to bring no foreign Jesuit into the country without permission from the King, and to consent to an inspection of their colleges by the Parliament.

Ricci replied with the historic "*Sint ut sunt aut non sint*" ("Let them be as they are or not at all")¹ and all hope of compromise was at an end. The Queen, the Dauphin, and their friends made desperate efforts to save the Society, while Clement XIII. sent violent remonstrances to Louis and a Bull to the French clergy, which the King ordered to be returned to the Pope unread. All was vain. For a time the monarch wavered with

¹ This suicidal answer was not improbably inspired by Clement XIII., the foolish Pontiff who persisted in regarding the Seven Years' War as a conflict between Catholicism and Protestantism, and brought upon himself the ridicule of Europe by sending the Austrian general, Daun, after his victory at Hochkirch, a consecrated sword and hat.

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his usual irresolution, but Madame de Pompadour and Choiseul succeeded in persuading him that public opinion was so inflamed against the Jesuits that if he persisted in maintaining them, a new Fronde would certainly break out and his own life be in danger; and eventually he abandoned them to their fate remarking, with characteristic indifference, that "it would be rather amusing to see what Father Desmarets (his confessor) would look like as an abbé (in bands instead of his long gown)." ¹

After various repressive measures, closing their colleges, forbidding them to wear the dress of their Order, compelling them to vacate their houses and prohibiting them from assembling anew, and imposing on all who wished to exercise any ecclesiastical function an oath repudiating the Society and its General, the King, in November 1764, suppressed the Jesuits in France. Three years later they were expelled from the country. Their suppression, and still more their expulsion, were attended by circumstances of great harshness, but it cannot be said to have been altogether undeserved. "The Jesuits," writes Bernis, "had shown no mercy to their enemies; they received none themselves; and the stones of Port-Royal which they had levelled with the ground fell again on their own heads." ²

During the anti-Jesuit campaign Madame de Pompadour found herself, for the first time in her career, in accord with public opinion, and the heroine, instead of the victim, of the lampoons in which the contest was very prolific. In one of these, which purported to be a recently discovered prophecy, she was compared to

¹ *Mémoires du Baron de Bésenval*, ii. 58.

² *Mémoires et Lettres du Cardinal de Bernis*, ii. 104.

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Agnes Sorel, the high-souled mistress of Charles VII. :—

“ Au livres du Destin, chapitre des grands rois
On lit ces paroles écrites,
De France Agnes chassera les Anglais
Et Pompadour les Jésuites.”¹

A caricature of the day represented the favourite shooting with an arquebuse, as in a second Saint-Bartholomew, at a crowd of flying Jesuits, while the King was sprinkling the bodies of the slain with holy water, and the magistrates of the Parliament, in their official robes, digging graves for their reception.

¹ *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l'histoire de la république des lettres*, i. 90; Campardon's *Madame de Pompadour*, p. 231.

CHAPTER XX

Louis XV. in love with Mademoiselle de Romans—Madame de Pompadour becomes alarmed—She visits the lady and her child in the Bois de Boulogne—The Maréchale de Mirepoix's view of the situation—Fate of Mademoiselle de Romans and her son—Gradual failure of Madame de Pompadour's health—The result of the Seven Years' War her death-blow—Her chagrin at losing the King's affection—And at the growing power of Choiseul—"I am dying of melancholy!"—She falls dangerously ill at Choisy—But rallies and is removed to Versailles—Drawing by Cochin in celebration of her supposed convalescence—She has a relapse—Her will—Her death—"The marchioness has a wet day for her journey"—The Queen's letters to Président Hénault—Madame de Pompadour's character and influence considered.

AFTER the discomfiture of Madame de Coislin which we have related in a previous chapter, no serious attempt seems to have been made by the ladies of the Court to dispute the ascendancy of Madame de Pompadour, who, of course, had nothing to fear from the poor young girls of the Parc-aux-Cerfs, whose very baseness, as she once expressed it, was her security. Nevertheless, during the last years of her life the marchioness's position was threatened by a formidable rival—one who was neither a *grande dame* nor a daughter of the people, but who, like herself, belonged to the upper *bourgeoisie*. This was a certain Mademoiselle de Romans, whose

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father was a wealthy notary at Grenoble, and who had been presented to the King in the gardens of Marly.¹

The lady was of a rather uncommon type of beauty, being extraordinarily tall for a woman, so tall, indeed, that, according to Sophie Arnould, Louis XV., although himself above middle height, "seemed like a schoolboy beside her." Her shape, however, was perfect, and she moved with the grace of a queen.

Mademoiselle de Romans had refused to submit to the indignity of occupying the Parc-aux-Cerfs, and it was at Passy, in a house which Louis had bought for her there, that she received the visits of her royal lover.² She bore the King a son, who was baptized under the name of Louis Aimé, son of "Charles de Bourbon, Captain of Horse," and the Dame de Meilly-Coulange.³

¹ Madame Campan says that Louis XV. first saw Mademoiselle de Romans in Paris when she was a child of twelve, and fell in love with her. By arrangement with her parents, he had her educated with great care until she was fifteen, when she was brought to Versailles. Casanova, in a long and highly unedifying account of his amatory adventures at Grenoble, mentions her among the ladies who succumbed to his fascinations. He takes great credit to himself for having refrained from taking advantage of his conquest.

² Who, according to Barbier, used to visit her quite openly in a carriage drawn by six horses.

³ The following letters, written by Louis XV. to Mademoiselle de Romans at the time of this interesting event, are given by the brothers De Goncourt in *Les Maîtresses de Louis XV.* :—

"I am very well persuaded, my giantess, that you have dropped some hint since your departure from here, but what it is I cannot exactly say. I do not wish that our child should be entered under my name in the certificate of baptism; but I am unwilling that anything should be done which might render it impossible for me to recognise it in days to come, if such were my pleasure. I desire, therefore, that it be called Louis Aimé or Louise Aimée, son or daughter of Louis the King or Louis Bourbon, whichever you wish, provided that your name is also inserted

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This child was the joy and pride of Mademoiselle de Romans's life. She cherished the hope that Louis XV. would follow the example of his great-grandfather and legitimate him, and that she herself would be given a high rank at Court, and, in her folly, she already saw herself the mother of a Duc du Maine. Although she had been most strictly enjoined not to allow any one to suspect the paternity of the child, "her secret stifled her," and, accordingly, almost every fine day in summer she used to repair, elegantly dressed, to the Bois de Boulogne, carrying the boy, attired in the most costly lace, in a kind of basket, and sitting down on the grass, close to one of the most frequented paths, would suckle the child, a sight which naturally soon began to arouse no small amount of curiosity. On one occasion, she varied her programme by appearing at the Tuileries,

in the certificate. It is likewise my desire that the godfather or godmother should be poor people or servants, but no one else. I kiss you and embrace you very tenderly, my tall friend."

This letter bears the direction "to Mademoiselle de Romans, Grand Rue de Passy, at Passy."

"On my arrival here I was informed of your happy delivery; I did not expect it so soon. The baptism must take place this evening or early to-morrow morning. You will tell the curé, under the seal of the confessional, whose the child is; but you must never speak of him, or show him to any one, or give any one the certificate of baptism, unless with my consent, if that be possible, which I believe it may be some day. For godfather and godmother, you may take two servants upon whose discretion you can rely. The name must be Louis Aimé, son of Louis de Bourbon and of—your name—Dame de Meilly-Coulonge.

"LOUIS.

"VERSAILLES, *January 13, 1762, 5 P.M.*"

After writing this letter, the King changed his mind about the wording of the certificate, and the name of the father appeared therein as "Charles de Bourbon, Captain of Horse," instead of "Louis de Bourbon."

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and was quickly surrounded by a crowd of people, all anxious to have a peep at this wonderful infant, whose paternity was already shrewdly suspected by the gossip-loving Parisians; whereupon the fond mother cried out, "Ladies and gentlemen, pray stand back a little and allow the King's child to breathe."

Madame de Pompadour's confidential agents brought her most alarming reports of the progress of this affair, from which it appeared that the King was constantly at Passy; that the boy bore an extraordinary resemblance to his august progenitor, and that it was the general belief that the latter intended to legitimate him.

At length, the marchioness became so much perturbed that she determined to see for herself what her rival, or rather rivals, were like; and, accordingly, one day, as she was passing through the Bois de Boulogne, on her return from a visit to the porcelain manufactory at Sèvres, she ordered her coachman to stop, and, telling Madame du Hausset to follow her, alighted and made her way towards Mademoiselle de Romans's favourite haunt.

As soon as they were out of sight of the carriage, Madame de Pompadour pushed her hat over her forehead, and taking out a pocket-handkerchief, held it to the lower part of her face, as if she were suffering from toothache. With her features thus partially concealed, she approached her rival, who, with her child, was sitting in her usual place upon the grass, dressed in the height of fashion, and with her magnificent black hair, which one writer declares was so abundant that, when let down, it reached to her knees, confined by a diamond comb.

After watching her for a few moments, Madame de Pompadour made a sign to her companion to

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speak to the lady, whereupon the following conversation ensued :—

Madame du Hausset : “What a very lovely child !”

Mademoiselle de Romans : “Yes, madame, I must confess he is, though I am his mother. Do you reside in this neighbourhood ?”

Madame du Hausset : “Yes, madame, I live at Auteuil, with this lady, who is just now suffering from a most dreadful attack of toothache.”

Mademoiselle de Romans : “I pity her sincerely, for I myself frequently suffer from the same complaint.”

Madame du Hausset : “I am sure such a beautiful child must have a handsome father ?”

Mademoiselle de Romans : “Yes, he is very handsome ; and if I were to tell you his name, you would agree with me.”

Madame du Hausset : “I have the honour of knowing him then, madame ?”

Mademoiselle de Romans : “Most probably you do.”

Here, the conversation, which was beginning to take an interesting turn, was cut short by Madame de Pompadour, who, fearing that she might be recognised by some of the passers-by, said a few polite words in a low tone to the lady, and began to move away. They regained their carriage without being observed, and, as the marchioness sank back among the cushions, she said with a sigh, “It must be confessed that both mother and child are beautiful creatures,” and added, “The child has his father’s eyes.” She returned to Versailles in very low spirits, which the discovery that nearly all her friends, including Choiseul, shared her apprehensions did not tend to improve.

The astute little Maréchale de Mirepoix, however,

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whose belief in Madame de Pompadour's influence over Louis XV. had never for a moment wavered, even in the dark days which had followed Damiens's attempt upon the monarch's life, took a much less serious view of the affair, and laughed at the favourite's fears.

"I do not tell you," said she to the marchioness, "that the King loves you better than her; and if by the wave of some enchanted wand she could be transported hither; if she could entertain him this very evening at supper; if she were familiar with all his tastes, you might have cause to feel alarmed. But princes are above all creatures of habit. The King's attachment to you is like that which he bears to your apartment, your furniture. You have accommodated yourself to his habits; you know how to listen to his stories; he is under no restraint with you; he has no fear of wearying you. How do you think he could summon up sufficient resolution to uproot all this in a day; to form a new establishment, and to make a public exhibition of himself by so great a change in his arrangements?"

Madame de Pompadour here interposed with the remark that it was not so much Mademoiselle de Romans as her child whom she feared, and that if the King were to legitimate the latter, the public recognition of the mother must follow as a matter of course.

"All that," rejoined her friend, "is in the style of Louis XIV. Such dignified proceedings are very unlike our master. Be assured the King cares very little about children; he has enough of them, and he will not trouble himself about the mother or the child."

Events proved that the little *maréchale* had accurately gauged the situation. Louis XV. showed no inclination to imitate *le Grand Monarque*, and Madame de Pompadour

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soon came to look upon his intrigue with Mademoiselle de Romans with as much indifference as upon those of the Parc-aux-Cerfs.

After Madame de Pompadour's death, a certain Abbé de Lustrac, who had charge of the education of the little Louis de Bourbon, and to whose care Mademoiselle de Romans had entrusted the correspondence which had passed between the King and herself, plotted to secure for her the post of *maîtresse déclarée*. The Ministers, however, but lately released from the domination of the haughty marchioness, were by no means inclined to tamely submit to another term of petticoat rule, and the tears and importunities in which the lady indulged, incited thereto by the scheming abbé, at first irritated and finally disgusted the King, who determined to rid himself of both her and her boy. Mademoiselle de Romans's house was forcibly entered by the police, who seized all her private papers, though they failed to discover the certificate of baptism; her child was taken away from her and confided by Sartine, the Lieutenant of Police, to the care of one of his clerks, who was allowed five thousand livres a year for the expenses of his education; while she herself was married to a M. de Cavanhac, who would appear to have treated her very badly.

Scarcely had Louis XVI. ascended the throne, than the mother sent him the certificate of baptism, and implored him to redress her child's wrongs. The kind-hearted King at once caused inquiries to be made, when the boy was discovered at Lonjumeau, working as a stable-help, his guardian having appropriated the money paid him for his charge's education to his own use. Louis XVI. recommended him to the Archbishop of Paris, and he was ordained and loaded with rich benefices. The Abbé

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de Bourbon, by which title he was henceforth known, seems to have been an amiable youth, and was much esteemed by the Royal Family, and particularly by the daughters of Louis XV., who treated him in all respects as a younger brother. He died while still a young man, and thus escaped the horrors of the Revolution.

Almost from childhood Madame de Pompadour's health had been a source of considerable anxiety to her friends, and her physicians had prescribed for her a milk diet, and strictly cautioned her to avoid all fatigue and excitement. These directions she appears to have followed with beneficial results until her installation at Versailles, when it became no longer possible to do so. To retain her hold over the King it was necessary to amuse him, and to amuse him it was necessary to be continually with him. Late hours, high living, frequent journeys over rough roads to Choisy, Compiègne, Marly, and Fontainebleau, constant excitement, ceaseless anxiety, all combined to exhaust her strength; and we read in her own letters and the journals of her contemporaries of severe colds, attacks of fever, violent headaches, days spent in bed, and "blood-lettings in the feet" to persuade her to endure which Louis, on one occasion, gave her a present of six thousand livres.

As time goes on, the symptoms become more alarming. In August 1749 d'Argenson announces that the marchioness has become "a skeleton," and that the lower part of her face is "yellow and withered." Twelve months later he writes that she looks "thinner than ever," and adds, "It is a miracle how she can live with all that she has to do." In April 1756 we read that she has given up attending the Queen, owing to

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her liability to be seized with violent palpitations of the heart.¹ At the birth of the Duc de Bourgogne (eldest son of the Dauphin) she fainted and had to be "pushed behind a screen."² In November 1757 she felt so ill, that she believed her end was near, and made her will.

But her recuperative power seems to have been miraculous, and, taking into consideration the fact that after the fall of d'Argenson and the defeat of Madame de Coislin all opposition to her had ceased, and that she might, therefore, have reasonably looked forward to a period of comparative repose, it is quite possible that her days might not have been greatly curtailed, but for the events of the Seven Years' War. By a singular act of divine justice, that war, in which so many thousands of her countrymen had been ruthlessly sacrificed to gratify her vanity and ambition, was destined to prove her own death-blow. She had dreamed of associating her name with a reign of conquest, with captured cities and subjugated provinces, with the aggrandisement of the monarchy, with the glory of the arms of France. She had dreamed of humbling the pride of "those

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes*, xv. 339.

"Madame (de Pompadour) had terrible palpitations of the heart. Her heart actually seemed to leap. She consulted several physicians. I recollect one of them making her walk up and down the room, lift a weight, and move quickly. On her expressing some surprise, he said, 'I do this to ascertain whether the organ is diseased; in that case, movement quickens the pulsations; if that effect is not produced, the complaint proceeds from the nerves.' I repeated that to my oracle Quesnay. He knew very little of the physician, but he said his treatment was that of a clever man."—*Mémoires de Madame du Hausset*, p. 245.

² Madame de Pompadour to Madame de Lutzelbourg, September 21, 1756.

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villains,"¹ as she called the English, of forcing "the Attila of the North" to sue for her pardon, and of earning the eternal gratitude and friendship of the Empress-Queen.

Such had been her dream! What was the reality? Instead of victory, disaster; instead of glory, humiliation; instead of aggrandisement, ruinous sacrifices; commerce annihilated; a State on the verge of bankruptcy; a people in want of bread and seething with discontent; a sovereign despised and detested.

The marchioness found herself compelled to "renounce all her glory," and the haughty woman never recovered from the agony of humiliation such a renunciation involved.

Nor, indeed, were other sources of chagrin wanting to put the *comble* upon her misery. The King, her womanly instinct told her, had long ceased to love her; he had now become absolutely indifferent to her. Degraded and apathetic though he was, he could not close his eyes to the shame and the wretchedness which the war had brought upon his kingdom; for it affected all classes, the landowner as well as the farmer, the courtier as well as the citizen, and she felt that he regarded her, and with justice, as the cause of it. She had no fear that he would dismiss her, for her influence over him was still as great as ever; she was still the *confidante*, still the *amie nécessaire*; besides which, however much his fetters might gall him, he lacked the resolution to free himself from them. But her mortification was none the less keen for all that.

And Choiseul again—Choiseul whom she had raised from obscurity to fame—had long been quite inde-

¹ Madame de Pompadour to the Duc d'Aiguillon, July 1758.

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pendent of any assistance from her.¹ He had added to the portfolio for Foreign Affairs, first that for War, and afterwards that for the Marine, and even talked about taking charge of the finances as well. His relatives and protégés filled all the most lucrative posts in the Army, the Diplomatic Service, and the Church; it was to his wife rather than to the favourite that the *grandes dames* now paid their court; every day he entertained fifty or sixty people at his table; his household expenses were said to exceed eight hundred thousand livres; he had become, in fact, a kind of sovereign. "People think me all-powerful," the marchioness said one day to Madame du Hausset, "but I could not obtain a cross of Saint-Louis were it not for M. de Choiseul." Probably she exaggerated the state of the case. It is certain that the Minister never forgot his obligation to the favourite, and that her requests were usually granted as soon as asked, but she had been so long paramount that the bare idea of a rival influence was gall and wormwood to her.

Mindful of the success which had attended the prediction of the fortune-teller Lebon,² Madame de Pompadour, disguised by means of "a false nose delicately made of a bladder, which rendered it impossible to recognise the face, and yet did not present any shocking appearance, a wart under her left eye, and her eyebrows

¹ "He (Choiseul) has got a credit with the King, quite independent of the lady (Madame de Pompadour). He treats her often very slightly; sometimes roughly tells her she is handsome as an angel when she talks of affairs; and bid her throw a *mémoire* the other day into the fire."—Hans Stanley to Pitt, June 9, 1761.

² In Madame de Pompadour's list of pensioners this woman figures as the recipient of an annuity of 600 livres.

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painted,"¹ had, some years before, in company with Madame du Hausset, sought an interview with another eminent member of the same profession, a certain Madame Bontemps. Among other questions which she had put to the woman had been one relating to the manner of her death, and the answer had been, "You will have time to prepare yourself." One evening, not long after the Treaty of Paris, the marchioness recalled this prediction to her faithful waiting-woman, remarking bitterly, "The fortune-teller said I should have time to prepare myself. I believe it, for *I am dying of melancholy*."

It seems, indeed, to have been the case. So long as she had had a definite end in view, so long as she had had rivals to outwit and enemies to overcome, and "glory" to pursue, her strength of will had triumphed over her physical infirmities. But now that, on the one hand, she had outwitted her rivals and crushed her enemies, while, on the other, her "glory" had proved but an illusion and a dream, she had no longer any object left to live for. The stimulus to cling to life once removed, the end could not be far distant. She was soon a mere shadow of her former self, and the only way that she could contrive to hide the ravages of disease was by a thick layer of powder and rouge, which completely concealed the skin. Her splendid eyes, which shone with an intensified lustre, and seemed to bear witness to the indomitable spirit which lurked within that wasted frame, were all that remained to her of the beauty which had captivated the heart of Louis XV.

It was on the occasion of a short visit of the Court to Choisy, in February 1764, that the marchioness finally

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset*, p. 224.

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broke down. Her temperature rose rapidly, and she was racked by a terrible cough, which prevented her from obtaining even brief intervals of repose. When the Court returned to Versailles, she was so ill that she was compelled to remain behind. The doctors did not conceal their anxiety, and her friends were prepared for the worst. Louis paid the sick woman every possible attention, coming almost daily to visit her, and, when prevented from leaving Versailles, sending couriers every hour to inquire how she fared. Possibly the King's kindness was not without its effect upon the patient, for, to the surprise of her physicians and to the delight of her friends, she rallied, the fever left her, the cough abated, and advantage was taken of the improvement in her condition to remove her to her apartments in the château of Versailles. The patient herself seems to have been convinced that she was convalescent, and gave orders to Cochin to make a drawing in celebration of her recovery. An eclipse of the sun had taken place about this time, and this event was represented by the artist, while the poet Favart contributed the following verses in explanation of the allegory:—

“ Le soleil est malade
Et Pompadour aussi !
Ce n'est qu'une passade,
L'un et l'autre est guéri.
Le bon Dieu, qui féconde
Nos vœux et nôtre amour,
Pour le bonheur du monde
Nous a rendu le jour
Avec Pompadour.
Votum populi, laus ejus.”

Other people, however, took a much less cheerful view

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of the case, and we find Madame du Deffand writing to Voltaire: "Madame de Pompadour is much better; but her illness is not nearly over, and I dare not entertain much hope."¹

Madame du Deffand was right. Scarcely had the marchioness returned to Versailles than her malady redoubled in intensity, and the doctors were compelled to inform her that her last hour was approaching. She received the announcement with unflinching courage, and immediately sent to the King to inquire what he wished her to do under the circumstances—whether to accept the consolations of religion, or to decline to receive a confessor. Louis replied that he desired to see her reconciled to God, and, accordingly, the curé of La Madeleine, the parish in which the Hôtel d'Évreux was situated, was sent for.

The morning of her death (April 15, 1764) she reopened the will which she had made in November 1757, and read it carefully through. Its contents were as follows:—

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.

"I, Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, Marquise de Pompadour, separated wife of Charles-Guillaume Lenormant, écuyer, have made and written this present testament and ordinance of my last will, which I desire shall be executed in its entirety.

"I recommend my soul to God, beseeching Him to have mercy upon it, and to accord me grace to repent and to die in a state worthy of His clemency, hoping

¹ *Lettres de Madame du Deffand* (edited by M. de Lescure), p. 288.

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to satisfy His justice through the merits of the precious blood of Christ, my Saviour, and through the powerful intercession of the Holy Virgin and of all the saints of Paradise.

"I desire that my body be carried to the Capuchins of the Place Vendôme at Paris, without any ceremony, and that it be there buried in the vault of the chapel which they have allotted me in their church.

"I leave to M. Collin, in recognition of his attachment to my person, a pension of, . . . 6,000 livres

To M. Quesnay 4,000 „

To M. Nesmes 3,000 „

To M. Lefevre, overseer 1,200 „

"To my three waiting-women, to Mademoiselle Jeanneton, to my three *valets-de-chambre*, to my men-cooks, officers, steward, butler, and concierge, to each the income at ten per cent. on the sum of 500 livres; and to make my intentions clearer, I am going to cite an instance. Madame Labbaty has been with me twelve years; she would be paid 600 livres a-year for life, that is to say, twelve times fifty at ten per cent. on a capital sum of 500 livres, provided that for each year of service it will be increased by a further 50 livres.

"I leave to my footmen, coachmen, porters, ushers, gardeners, and wardrobe-women the sum of 300 livres, of which they will be paid the interest according to the plan which I have explained in the preceding clause.

"I bequeath to the rest of my servants who are not included in the two above-mentioned clauses, 500 livres of capital, out of which they will receive pensions in the same manner as I have already explained.

"Further, I direct that all the pensions and endowments created during my life-time shall be paid without

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any deduction. And, further, I give to my waiting-women everything belonging to my wardrobe—gowns, underclothing, dresses, and lace therein contained.

“Further, I bequeath to my third waiting-woman a legacy of 3000 livres, in addition to her annuity; and also to the wardrobe-woman in daily attendance upon me a legacy of 1200 livres, in addition to her life-annuity.

“Further, to my three *valets-de-chambre*, a legacy of 3000 livres.

“I beg the King’s acceptance of the gift which I am making him of my hôtel in Paris,¹ it being suitable for converting into a palace for one of his grandchildren. My desire is that it should be for Monseigneur le Comte de Provence.²

“I also beg His Majesty’s acceptance of the gift which I am making him of all my engraved stones by Guay, whether bracelets, rings, seals, &c., to augment his cabinet of precious engraved stones.

“As for the residue of my moveables and immovables, of whatever kind and wherever they may be, I give and bequeath them to Abel-François Poisson, Marquis de Marigny, my brother, whom I make and appoint my sole legatee; and in the event of his decease, I appoint in his stead and place M. Poisson de Malvoisin,³ quarter-

¹ The Hotel d’Évreux, now the Elysée.

² Afterwards Louis XVIII.

³ This Poisson de Malvoisin was originally a drummer in the regiment of Piedmont. As soon as he heard of his relative’s elevation, he went to her and solicited her good offices to obtain him promotion. The marchioness, aware of the prejudice that existed in the army against officers not of noble birth, advised him to retire and promised him her assistance in some other profession. This he declined to do, representing that her influence would be paramount in the army as elsewhere. She

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master in the army, and at the present moment brigadier in the Carabineers, and his children.

“I appoint as executor of my present testament M. le Prince de Soubise, whom I empower to act and to make all arrangements which he may consider necessary for the due execution of the said will, and especially to set aside such moneys, rents, and effects belonging to my estate as he may deem suitable for the payment in full of all the life-annuities bequeathed by me; and in case he should find them inadequate for the purpose, I empower him to provide from the sale of my moveables a sufficient sum to acquire securities or annuities, the funds from which will serve to discharge the said life-pensions, and also to select and nominate such person as he shall deem suitable, and to pay him such salary as he may deem sufficient, to collect the revenues set apart by the executor of my will and to pay the aforesaid life-annuities to each of the aforesaid legatees, who, in virtue of this assignment and appropriation, will have no power to lay claim to anything, nor have any rights or charges upon the rest of the property belonging to my estate.

“However troublesome M. de Soubise may find the commission I am giving him, he ought to regard it as a sure proof of the confidence with which his probity and his virtues have inspired me. I beg his acceptance

yielded and persuaded the Duc de Biron, colonel of the Regiment du Roi, to procure Malvoisin a commission in his own corps. The officers, however, were not so complaisant as their colonel, and politely intimated to the ex-drummer that, if he wished to remain in the regiment, it would be necessary for him to fight a duel with every one of them in turn. Not relishing the prospect, he withdrew; and Madame de Pompadour consoled him by obtaining him a lieutenancy in a dragoon regiment.

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of two of my rings, one my large aigue-marine coloured diamond, the other an engraving by Guay representing Friendship. I flatter myself that he will never part with them, and that they will recall to his memory the person who has entertained for him the most tender of friendships.

“Executed at Versailles, November 15, 1757.

“JEANNE-ANTOINETTE POISSON,
“*Marquise de Pompadour.*”

The marchioness next read over the codicil which she had written on the back of this will, March 30, 1761:—

“I bequeath to Abel-François Poisson, Marquis de Marigny, my brother, the land belonging to my marquissate and peerage of Menars and whatever he will find there at my decease, and after him to his children and grandchildren male, to the eldest in all cases. If he has only daughters, the entail will lapse, and the land must be divided amongst them.

“In the event of my brother dying without issue, I appoint in his stead and place, subject to the same conditions, M. Poisson de Malvoisin, at the present moment brigadier in the Carabineers.”¹

And she dictated to Collin² this second codicil:—

“I desire to make bequests as tokens of friendship and as souvenirs of myself to the following persons:

“To Madame du Roure³ the portrait of my daughter.

¹ On the death of the Marquis de Marigny without issue in 1781, Poisson de Malvoisin succeeded to this property.

² Collin, as has been mentioned, was a duly-qualified attorney before he became Madame de Pompadour's major-domo.

³ She was a sister of the Duc de Gontaut.

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Although my daughter had not the honour of being related to her, she will serve to remind her of the friendship which I have entertained for Madame du Roure.

“To Madame la Maréchale de Mirepoix my new diamond watch.

“To Madame de Château de Renaud a box containing a portrait of the King set with diamonds.

“To Madame la Duchesse de Choiseul a silver box set with diamonds.

“To Madame la Duchesse de Grammont¹ a box on which is a diamond butterfly.

“To M. le Duc de Gontaut² a wedding-ring of rose

¹ The Duchesse de Grammont (Beatrix de Choiseul-Stainville) was Choiseul's sister and married in 1759 the Duc de Grammont. She was thus described by Hans Stanley, the English envoy in Paris during the peace negotiations of 1761, in a letter to Pitt:—“The Duchesse (de Grammont) is the only person who has any weight with her brother, the Duc de Choiseul. She never dissembles her dislike or contempt of any man, in whatever degree of elevation. It is said that she might have supplied the place of Madame de Pompadour, if she had pleased. She treats the ceremonies and pageants of Courts as things beneath her; she possesses a most uncommon share of understanding, and has very high notions of honour and reputation.” It was probably through his haughty sister's influence that Choiseul refused the political alliance which Madame du Barry offered him—a refusal which brought about his disgrace. During the Reign of Terror, the duchess was arrested and brought to trial, together with her friend, the Duchesse de Châtelet. She exhibited, on this occasion, the most dauntless courage, disdaining to ask mercy for herself, but pleading most eloquently for her friend, “who had injured no one, and whose whole life afforded nothing but an example of virtue and beneficence.” Both ladies perished on the same scaffold.

² Armand Louis de Gontaut, afterwards Duc de Biron. Madame du Hausset says of him: “He was very gay, and had the art of creating gaiety. Some one said he was an excellent piece of furniture for a favourite. He makes her laugh and asks for nothing either for himself or for others. He was called the White Eunuch.”

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and white diamonds, tied with a green knot; and a cornelian box which he has always much admired.

"To M. le Duc de Choiseul an aigue-marine tinted diamond and a black box piqué and a cup.

"To M. le Maréchal de Soubise a ring by Guay representing Friendship: it is his portrait and mine for the twenty years I have known him.

"To Madame d'Amblimont¹ my set of emeralds.

"If I have forgotten any of my people, I pray my brother to attend to it, and I confirm my will. I hope that he will approve of the codicil which friendship dictates to me, and which I have directed M. Collin to write, as I have only sufficient strength to sign it.

"At Versailles, April 15, 1764.

"(Signed) LA MARQUISE DE POMPADOUR."

¹ Madame d'Amblimont was devoted to Madame de Pompadour, who used to call her and Madame d'Esparbès "her kittens," and to declare that they amused her as much as the chase amused the King. Her fidelity to her friend, on a certain occasion, received a severe test. "I one day said to her (Madame de Pompadour)," relates Madame du Hausset, 'It appears, madame, that you are fonder than ever of the Comtesse d'Amblimont.' 'I have reason to be,' said she. 'She is unique, I think, for her fidelity to her friends and for her honour. Listen, but tell no one. Four days ago, the King, passing her on his way to supper, tried to slip a note into her hands. D'Amblimont, in her mad-cap way, put her hands behind her back, and the King was obliged to pick up the note which had fallen on the ground. Gontaut was the only person who saw all this, and, after supper, he went up to the little lady and said, "You are an excellent friend." "I did my duty," said she, and immediately put her finger on her lips to enjoin him to be silent. He, however, informed me of this act of friendship on the part of the little heroine, who had not told me of it herself.' I expressed my admiration of the countess's virtue, and madame said: 'She is giddy and headstrong, but she has more sense and more feeling than a thousand prudes and devotees. D'Esparbès would not have done as much; most likely she would have met him half-way.'"—*Mémoires de Madame du Hausset*, p. 81.

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The marchioness next charged Collin to recompense all those who had attended her during her illness, and to distribute among the poor any money that he might find in her desk.

These dispositions finished, she ordered her women to dress her and put some rouge on her pallid cheeks, and directed that Janelle, the Intendant of the Post-Office, who, unaware that the end was so near, had called to pay his usual visit, should be admitted. She read the extracts he submitted to her and discussed their importance with him with as much apparent interest as if she had been in the enjoyment of full health, and then, lying back in an arm-chair, calmly awaited the end.

Presently the curé of La Madeleine was shown in, and remained with the dying woman for some time. As he rose to leave, the marchioness signed to him to remain, remarking, with a smile, "*One moment, Monsieur le Curé, we will take our departure together.*"

A few minutes afterwards she expired at the age of forty-two.

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Madame de Pompadour retained her empire intact to her last hour; no sooner had she closed her eyes than she was forgotten. Louis XV. received the news of the death of the woman who had shared his life for nearly twenty years with the most absolute indifference. As the funeral *cortège* left Versailles on its way to Paris, it was raining heavily. The King stood at the window of his apartments, watching it with the idle curiosity which the sight of that of an entire stranger might have aroused, and merely remarked, as it passed out

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of sight, "*The marchioness has a wet day for her journey.*"¹

And a few days later we find Marie Leczinska writing to her confidant, old President Hénault: "Finally, there is no more talk here of her who is no longer than if she had never existed. Such is the way of the world; it is very hard to love it."²

It is extremely difficult to form a just estimate of the character of Madame de Pompadour. That her private life calls for very severe condemnation it would be idle to deny; yet must she not be judged by the standard of morality which obtains to-day. In her time conjugal fidelity hardly existed. "A Frenchwoman," says Sydney Smith, writing of the marchioness's contemporary, Madame d'Épinay, "seems always to have wanted the flavour of prohibition as a necessary condiment to human life. The provided husband was rejected; and the forbidden husband introduced through posterns and

¹ This is the generally accepted account; but, in justice to the memory of this much-abused monarch, it is only fair to say that there is another and very different story, which is related by Dufort, the *introduceur* of the Ambassadors, in his *Mémoires*: "The day of the marchioness's burial arrived. It was six o'clock in the evening, and a terrible storm was raging. The marchioness had by her will directed that she should be buried in the Church of the Capuchins, Place Vendôme, where she had prepared a superb tomb. The King took Champlost's (his *valet-de-chambre*) arm. Having approached the glass-door of his private cabinet, which opened on to the balcony, he maintained a solemn silence, watched the *cortège* filing through the avenue, and followed it with his eyes, in spite of the wind and rain, to which he appeared insensible. As he re-entered the room, two great tears coursed down his cheeks; but all he said to Champlost was, 'That is the only mark of respect that I have been able to pay her'—than which no more eloquent words could have been spoken at such a moment."

² *Mémoires du Président Hénault*, p. 421.

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secret partitions. It was not the union to one man that was objected to—for they dedicated themselves with a constancy which the most household and parturient woman in England could not have exceeded—but the thing wanted was the wrong man, the gentleman without the ring, the master unsworn to at the altar, the person unconsecrated by priests.”¹ Such a state of affairs was the inevitable result of girls not being permitted to choose their own husbands, and not meeting with their affinities until after marriage. It was, indeed, as much a matter of course for a man to make love to his neighbour’s wife as to wear a wig or carry a sword; as much a matter of course for a woman to yield to the fascinations of some fashionable Lovelace of the time as to powder her hair or rouge her cheeks. A couple true to their marriage vows appear to have been regarded with positive disapproval. D’Argenson speaks of the “bad taste” displayed by the Duc and Duchesse de Chartres in being so constantly in each other’s society—this, it may be remarked, was in the first years of their married life; they were unfaithful enough afterwards by all accounts. And the same chronicler, on hearing of the indignation exhibited by the Flemings at the appearance of Madame de Châteauroux in the King’s train during the campaign of 1744, writes in his journal: “What a foolish prejudice to find fault with pleasures that do harm to no one!” And yet d’Argenson was a man of high principle, and as far removed from the Richelieus of his day as was the elder Pitt from “Jemmy Twitcher.”

Taking these facts into consideration, it must, we think, be admitted that Madame de Pompadour was no

¹ *Edinburgh Review*, December 1818.

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worse, and possibly a good deal better, than the majority of her contemporaries, since she was, at least, faithful in her infidelity. It was her misfortune to have succeeded where others failed, and she paid the penalty of success. The women who envied her while she was alive, and bespattered her memory when she had passed away, were certainly not entitled to cast stones at her; but, as their lovers did not happen to be kings, their amours were perhaps unknown to any one save their accommodating confessors, and they are, in consequence, regarded by their descendants as examples of all the domestic virtues. Had Madame de Pompadour been less beautiful, less charming, less witty, less accomplished, had she, in short, failed to attract the attention of Louis XV., she might have had a score of lovers and yet have died in the odour of sanctity.

Much has been said of her implacability, and of her unscrupulous treatment of her enemies; but here again allowance must be made. It was in most cases her life, so to speak, against theirs. The ambitious Ministers, envious women, and scheming Jesuits by whom she was surrounded would certainly have stuck at nothing to compass her downfall; and if she occasionally stooped to encounter them with their own weapons, she cannot be greatly blamed. Surely such persons as Maurepas, d'Argenson, Madame d'Estrades, and the perjured Sacy and his confrères are unworthy of any sympathy!

In regard to what may be called her public life, there can be no question that her influence upon affairs of State was most baneful, yet not more so than that of any other favourite would have been at this period. To hold her responsible for the long series of disasters during the Seven Years' War, except in so far as the

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entry of France into that lamentable struggle was due to her influence, is to show the most complete ignorance of history. From the very beginning of the contest France was foredoomed to failure. Decay not only in the army and the navy, but in every department of State had been going on practically unchecked for years; it would have needed the administrative genius of a Richelieu, the military genius of a Napoleon, to have insured success under such circumstances, whereas France could not boast a single statesman—with the possible exception of Choiseul—or a single general of even first-rate ability.

Apart from her responsibility for the Seven Years' War, it is very doubtful whether Madame de Pompadour really did much harm—whether, indeed, the good did not outweigh the evil. On the one hand, we have the dismissal of several more or less capable Ministers, and a good deal of nepotism and venality, at a time when nepotism and venality were both rampant. The charge that she degraded the monarchy may be dismissed; Louis XV. was quite capable of degrading it without any assistance from her. On the other, we find her the supporter of Choiseul; “the connecting link between the most literary of epochs and the least literary of kings;”¹ the patroness of French art, at a time when French art was languishing for want of such patronage; the creator of the manufactory of Sèvres; the founder of the École Militaire. But, unfortunately for her reputation, it is by the results of her foreign policy—if her Austrian predilections and Prussian antipathies can be dignified by that name—that she will always be judged; the Seven Years' War overshadows everything else.

¹ Sainte-Beuve's *Causeries du Lundi*, ii. 398.

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Her career affords us two very useful object-lessons—a moral one and a political one. Of the former we do not propose to speak; it is sufficiently obvious. But of the latter we may venture to say one word. It is, that when a woman, occupying a position of exceptional influence, is content to confine her energies to matters with which her sex may safely concern itself, her influence will, as a general rule, be beneficial, as Madame de [Pompadour's undoubtedly was upon literature and art. But when she begins to meddle with public affairs, to endeavour to control the appointment of Ministers, of Ambassadors, and of generals, and to direct their policy and operations, however well-meaning, however gifted she may be, her influence cannot fail to be most mischievous, for, as d'Argens has truly observed, "the prejudices of man emanate from the mind and may be overcome; the prejudices of woman emanate from the heart and are impregnable."

"Madame de Pompadour," says Sainte-Beuve," ought perhaps to be considered as the last king's mistress worthy of that name; after her, it would be impossible to descend and enter decently into the history of the Du Barry. The kings and emperors who have succeeded in France, from that time to our own day (1850), have been either too virtuous, or too despotic, or too gouty, or too penitent, or too domesticated, to allow themselves such useless things; at most only traces of them have been met with. The race of king's mistresses, then, may be said, if not to have ended, at least to have been greatly interrupted, and Madame de Pompadour remains in our eyes the last in our history and the most brilliant."