







BOCKHOFF S.

LOUIS THE FOURTEENTH,
AND
THE COURT OF FRANCE

IN
THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

BY MISS PARDOE,
AUTHOR OF "THE CITY OF THE SULTAN," ETC.

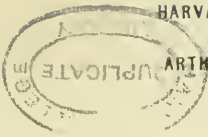


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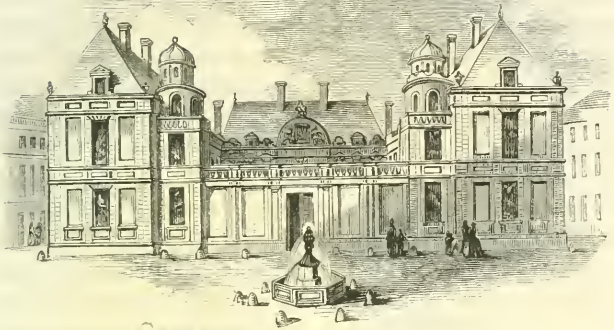
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LOUIS XIV.

AND THE

COURT OF FRANCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER I.

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THE gratification of the king at this unhopèd-for emancipation from a marriage which he had considered as inevitable, was earnest and undisguised; and the rather as, having been kept in ignorance of the real progress of the negotiation with Spain, he believed that he was left free to indulge, for an indefinite period, in his attachment to Mademoiselle de Mancini; and while the continued illness of Mazarin detained the court at Paris, he amused himself in the tennis-court, in drilling the musketeers, or in visiting the cardinal during the morning; and devoted the remainder of the day to reading, or conversing with Mary, with whom he also generally took his luncheon. When the queen retired for the night, he conducted Mademoiselle de Mancini to her residence; contenting himself at first by following in another carriage, or driving the one she occupied; but ultimately, he threw off even this restraint, and seated himself beside her, profiting by the moonlight to drive for awhile in the Place Bellecour.

So great was the liberty which she enjoyed, that Mary at length began to feel seriously alarmed at the studied neutrality of the queen; and the more she reflected upon the circumstance the more she felt the importance of clearing up a mystery, of whose existence her good sense sufficed to assure her. In this difficulty she resolved to interrogate the Abbé Fouquet* upon the subject of the mysterious visitor whom the cardinal had received in disguise, and with whom he had been closeted at midnight—never doubting that this interview bore upon her present position. The abbé was, however, too cautious to betray the secrets of his patron, and evasively replied that he was one of those secret agents whom her uncle employed in foreign courts, and that he had been sent to inform him that the Queen of Spain had given birth to a son. Mary desired to hear no more; for in an instant the effect of this

* Abbé of Barbeaux and of Rigny, brother of Nicholas Fouquet, the superintendent of finance.

unanticipated event became manifest to her. Philip IV., assured of a male successor to the throne, was now free to dispose of the hand of his daughter, and to seal, by these means, a peace between the two countries; she could not disguise from herself the desirableness of such a reconciliation to two nations exhausted by a long and harassing war, and she at once felt that all was lost. Meanwhile, Don Antonio Pimentelli, concealed in the apartments of the cardinal, was engaged with him in preparing the different clauses of the treaty which was to secure the peace of Europe; but as nothing could be definitively arranged, save at a conference of the French and Spanish ministers, an interview was at length arranged between Mazarin and Don Louis de Haro. The meeting was to be held on the frontiers of the two kingdoms, and it only remained to be decided on which side of the river it should take place.

After a short tour in the southern provinces, the court returned to Paris; and still Mary de Mancini found herself treated with unlimited indulgence by the queen, who, satisfied with the progress of the secret negotiations, felt convinced that a passion for an inferior, however violent, could not militate in the mind of Louis against the interests of his kingdom, and the gratification of receiving the hand of the first princess in Europe. She had already forgotten her own youth, and the enthusiastic days when, wooed by the Duke of Buckingham, she had wept to remember that she was mated with a king.

The court had not long been established once more in the capital, and Mazarin was still occupied in discussing the various and conflicting claims of the two long-estranged nations, whose renewal of amity was to be effected by the gentle agency of a woman, ere he experienced a severe mortification, which he, however transmuted, with his usual ability, into a new source of personal honor. Several young noblemen had assembled, during the Holy Week, at Roissi, a chateau within a short distance of Paris; and there, while

all classes of the population were engaged in the devotions imperative at so sacred a season, they abandoned themselves to the grossest dissipation—indulging in orgies so profane and disreputable that they soon became the subject of public comment.

Among them was the Marquis de Mancini, the nephew of the cardinal, whose amiable qualities and personal advantages had greatly endeared him to the court; and the rumor of the disorders in which he had been an actor no sooner reached the ears of Mazarin, than, refusing to listen to the entreaties in his favor, which were poured forth on all sides, he immediately banished him from the capital; while he contented himself by simply remonstrating with his accomplices, who all belonged to the first families in the kingdom; and, after exhorting them to greater discretion in future, he dismissed them unpunished; by which means he conciliated the whole of the families of the young libertines, who, on witnessing his unrelenting severity toward a nephew to whom he was known to be deeply attached, had anticipated little mercy for those of their own blood.*

In like manner he sacrificed Mary to the exigencies of the Queen-Mother, who represented to him that so long as she remained within reach of the king, who would resist every effort that might be made to deprive him of her society and counsel, they could entertain no hope either of a peace, or the alliance of which it was a condition. For a moment, however, the cardinal hesitated; alledging that there was no reason to apprehend, should they act too suddenly, that the king might be roused to resistance; whereas, by proceeding calmly and gradually, and estranging the lovers almost imperceptibly, they might be enabled to carry their point without opposition.

An ironical smile played about the lips of Anne of Austria, as she remarked that the overmerciful policy lately

* Mémoires de Madame de Motteville.

adopted by His Eminence might, perhaps, fail to produce the effect which he appeared to anticipate; and that he would do well to reflect upon the nature of the advice which his niece was accustomed to bestow upon the king; and the great probability there existed that, if it were allowed time to work, it would soon emancipate Louis altogether from the authority of both his mother and his minister.

The queen was well aware of the force of this reflection upon the mind of the cardinal, who dreaded nothing so much as the loss of power; and as she glanced toward him while pronouncing the remark, she saw, by the expression of his countenance, that she had struck home. He, nevertheless, affected to treat such a consideration lightly; and observed that the king was too well aware of the value of his services to dispense with them while they could be rendered available; upon which the queen, forgetful of the restraint which she had hitherto put upon her suspicions, accused him of still nourishing unseemly hopes, based upon what he considered to be the weakness of his sovereign; and renewed her declaration that she would sooner die than see her son commit the infamy of a marriage by which he must be degraded.*

Stung by the expression, Mazarin was about to withdraw; when the queen, instantly conscious of the error she had committed, prevented his purpose, and conjured him to overlook a few hasty words wrung from her in the excitement of a moment in which she felt that all her dearest interests were at stake; upon which, with his usual policy, he smiled away the insult he was never likely to forget, and declared that, in order to prove to Her Majesty how greatly she had wronged him by her suspicions, he would at once remove both Mary and her sisters to his chateau at Brouage.†

* Mémoires de Madame de Motteville.

† Brouage is a fortified sea-port town in the department of the Lesser Charente, opposite the island of Oléron. It was founded in 1555 by

Having come to this resolution, he lost no time in summoning Madame de Venelle, the governess of Hortensia and Mary Anne de Mancini; and, after having directed her to watch all Mary's movements, gave her orders to prepare her charges for an immediate removal to Brouage. Louis, however, no sooner heard of the arrangement than he hastened to demand an explanation of the cardinal, and refused to permit the departure of Mademoiselle de Mancini from the court. Vainly did the minister represent the probable disgust of the Infanta, should she learn that, even while the negotiations of marriage were pending, the king retained near him a person to whom his attachment had long ceased to be problematical, the indignation of Philip IV., and the consequent continuance of a war which was rapidly exhausting the resources of the kingdom. Louis declared his determination not to sacrifice his personal happiness to such considerations; alledging that France was quite able to protect itself against Spain as it had hitherto done; that the war would afford him opportunities of convincing his people that he was worthy to be their sovereign; and that rather than be the cause of unhappiness to Mary, he was willing and anxious to raise her to the throne—an event which must secure to the cardinal a fixed and honorable position, of which no national disaffection could thenceforth deprive him.

Mazarin shook his head coldly and incredulously. "That person," he said, "has no regard for me; but, on the contrary, a vast deal of aversion, because I do not encourage her in her madness. Her ambition is beyond all bounds, and her spirit warped and violent. She despises every one,

James, Lord of Pons, and fortified during the religious wars. After the taking of La Rochelle, Richelieu renewed the fortifications, and erected it into a government, he being himself the first governor. It possessed an excellent harbor, which, in the 17th century, was blocked with mud. The environs of Brouage are covered by unwholesome marshes, and the finest salt works in France are found there.

throws off all restraint, and is always ready to commit a thousand extravagances. It is believed that I have secretly encouraged her, and this reflection overwhelms me. I neither eat nor sleep, and am wasting away with vexation and uneasiness. If things last much longer in this state, I will embark with all my family, and go and hide myself in some corner of Italy, where we shall never be heard of again.”*

A few violent words did not, however, suffice to dissuade the young sovereign from his purpose; and he reiterated his resolution to marry Mary, and thus place her beyond the power of her enemies; but the cardinal remained firm; and although Louis wept, and, as some authors affirm, even knelt before the inexorable minister, to induce him to recall his verdict, he did so without effect. For an instant the indignant king even contemplated opposition; but as Mazarin, who had never for a moment laid aside his attitude of command, continued to expatiate upon the miseries to which his obstinacy upon this subject would expose, not only the court but the whole kingdom, the unhappy young monarch, painfully conscious of his utter helplessness, and terrified by so fearful a prophecy, threw himself into a chair, and burying his face in his hands, fell into a stupor of despair.

The cardinal felt that he had conquered; and he had, indeed, obtained a double victory, over his own ambition, and the first serious affection which Louis had ever experienced. The departure of Mary was consequently decided on; and upon the previous evening the king paid his usual visit to the Queen-Mother in a state of wretchedness which he made no effort to conceal. He had no sooner entered her apartment than Anne of Austria, taking a flambeau from the table, retired with him to the bath-room, where they were closeted together for an hour, and on their reappearance both were evidently affected; the eyes of the

* Extract from a MS. collection of Letters written at Libourne.

king were red with weeping, and in a few moments he withdrew.*

The dreaded morrow arrived; and when the nieces of the cardinal had taken leave of the queen, Mary proceeded to the king's apartment, where she found him deluged in tears.

"Sire," she exclaimed, reproachfully, as, with a dry eye and a quivering lip, she approached his chair, and extended toward him her trembling hand, "you are a king—you weep—and yet I go!"

The only reply of Louis was a fresh burst of sorrow, as he suffered his head to fall upon the table, without the utterance of a syllable. But Mary needed no other answer. She at once felt that all was over between them; and her pride enabled her to withdraw from his presence without one attempt at reproach or expostulation. Her sisters were already seated in the carriage, and she took her place beside them, scarcely appearing to remark that she had been followed by the king, who remained standing upon the same spot until the carriage had disappeared, when he departed for Chantilly, in order to indulge his grief in solitude.

During this time the veteran Corneille had produced his *Œdipus*, and Molière was pursuing his representations at the theater of the Petit-Bourbon. Moreover, two other celebrities had appeared, although they were yet to acquire the undying fame which awaited them hereafter; one was La Fontaine, who at this period took up his abode at Paris; and the other, Bossuet; while Racine and Boileau began to give the promise of future excellence which their after career so fully realized.

Four days after the departure of his nieces the cardinal left Paris in his turn, with a princely retinue, for the Island of Pheasants,† which had been ultimately decided on as the

* *Mémoires de Madame de Motteville.*

† The Island of Pheasants is a small Spanish islet formed by the Bidassoa, within a league of Fontarabia and the Gulf of Gascony.

rendezvous of the contracting parties for the royal marriage. In his suite he had two archbishops, four bishops, three marshals, and several nobles of the highest rank; as well as M. de Lyonne, the minister of state, who was to assist him in his labors. Don Antonio Pimentelli had already preceded him, to announce his approach to the Spanish minister; while, on the day of his arrival at St. Jean de Luz, the court left Fontainebleau for the south, although it was not generally known that the king had absolutely refused to undertake this journey until it had been conceded that in passing Cognac he should have an interview with Mary de Mancini. The arguments of the queen against this measure were at first vehement; but as Louis persisted in his purpose, it was ultimately arranged that the meeting should take place.

Great preparations were made by all those who had been selected to accompany the court; and the most magnificent apparel was prepared, in order to do honor to the royal nuptials; while as the illustrious *cortège* passed along the streets of Paris, the acclamations of the populace were loud and long; and a thousand blessings were called down upon the head of the young king, and a thousand prayers put up for the success and safety of his journey.

The Queen-Mother was accompanied by the Princess de Conti; the Princess-Palatine; the Countess de Flex, her lady of honor; and the Duchess d'Uzès. From Fontainebleau, the court first proceeded to Chambord, where *Monsieur* and *Madame* were then residing for a few days; and upon the road the king gayly remarked to MADEMOISELLE, who was also in the queen's coach, that he had not changed his dress nor untied his hair, because he apprehended that by increasing his good looks he should heighten the regret of his uncle, as well as that of *Madame*, and Mademoiselle d'Orleans, her sister, who had long been taught to consider herself as his future

wife; and that he had consequently disfigured himself as much as possible. Nor had *Monsieur* and *Madame* been wholly without misgivings on their side. *Madame* being not only mortified at the failure of a marriage with her daughter, of which she had so long contemplated the possibility, that she had finally considered it as certain; but also tormented with fearful visions of the outlay which would be necessitated by the royal visit; to which she had only become tolerably reconciled by the almost daily letters of *MADemoiselle*, which, in all probability, contained something more weighty than mere argument.

The uneasiness of *Monsieur*, although less squalid, was scarcely less peurile and undignified. He had amused himself since his sojourn at Blois by preserving pheasants, of which he possessed immense numbers, and which he never suffered to be destroyed; and the conviction that the king would not omit to profit by so excellent an opportunity of enjoying a favorite sport, made him perfectly wretched.

When the court arrived at Blois, *Mesdemoiselles d'Orleans* and *de Valois* received their royal relatives at the foot of the stairs, attended by their scanty train of ladies; and although each individual had made immense exertion to present a favorable appearance, the antiquated air of their costume afforded legitimate subject for merriment among the more modish attendants of the queen.

As he alighted, the king complimented *Madame* on the beauty of his cousin, *Mademoiselle d'Orleans*; whom, however, he saw at an unfortunate moment, her mortification upon hearing that he was about to form an alliance with the *Infanta* being legibly impressed upon her countenance; which, coupled with the fact that she was extremely disfigured by the bites of some gnats that had stung her during the night, robbed her of her brilliant complexion which is the greatest charm of youth. When the party had entered the palace, the courtiers dispersed

themselves through the apartments and galleries, criticising aloud the superannuated appearance of the furniture, and the obsolete dresses of the ladies; nor were they more conciliating during the dinner, of which they affected to be afraid to partake; while MADemoisELLE sat by, trembling with mortification and annoyance.* Neither the king nor his mother disguised their anxiety to be gone; and they were no sooner again upon the road than they indulged in numerous mirthful reminiscences of their visit, which were gall and wormwood to the haughty spirit of MADemoisELLE; who was, nevertheless, compelled to smile when Louis described to her the evident discomposure of her father at the destruction of the fourteen pheasants which he had killed while awaiting dinner.

It was with an aching heart that Mademoiselle de Mancini had received an order from the queen to proceed with her sisters to St. Jean d'Angély, to await the passage of the court, in order to pay their respects to Her Majesty; for the fact that the queen had herself commanded this meeting sufficed to assure Mary that she no longer dreaded her influence; and the idea of again seeing the king, only to look on him in the midst of a crowd of courtiers, tortured her almost beyond endurance. Proud in her own integrity, she nevertheless made a powerful effort to suppress all exhibition of her wretchedness, and entered the presence of the queen with a calm dignity which astonished all around her.

Her interview with the king was, however, a bitter one; for, divided between vanity and affection, Louis was at once less firm and less self-possessed than Mary. He wept bitterly, and bewailed the fetters by which he was shackled; but, as he remarked the change which nights of watching and of tears had made in her appearance, he felt half consoled; and the only result of this

* Mémoires de Madame de la Vallière.

meeting was to harrow the heart of the poor victim of political expediency, and to prove to her upon how unstable a foundation she had blindly built up her superstructure of hope.

From St. Jean d'Angély the court proceeded to Bordeaux, and thence to Toulouse, where they halted to await the conclusion of the treaty. The negotiation was a tedious one. The pardon of the Prince de Condé, and his restoration to all his honors, was a point which the cardinal was long in conceding; and this was no sooner arranged than fresh difficulties arose as to every city which was to be claimed or ceded. Weakened as he was in health, not only by the disease from which he was suffering, but also from the immense fatigue and want of rest which he was compelled to undergo, Mazarin nevertheless rallied all his energies, and refused to ratify the treaty until he had rendered it one of unequivocal advantage to the nation which he represented. It was then signed by both ministers in duplicate; after which they also appended their signatures to the marriage contract.

This contract insured to the Infanta a portion of five hundred thousand golden crowns, payable in three installments; in consideration of which sum she formally renounced "all other pretensions to the inheritance of her parents, it being clearly understood that neither she nor her children could succeed to any of the states of his Catholic Majesty, even in the event of his legitimate successors becoming extinct."

The Marshal de Grammont, who had only awaited the signing of the treaty, then took leave of Their Majesties, and hastened as ambassador-extraordinary to Madrid, to demand the hand of the Infanta; while the cardinal, worn out both in body and mind, arrived at Toulouse, after a three months' sojourn in the unwholesome air of the Island of Pheasants. Between the two ministers the

whole of the arrangements, as well as the treaty itself, had been one great diplomatic struggle; for although the marriage of the king and the general peace of Europe were the objects of the conference, more than a month was spent in settling the difficulties of precedence, and in regulating the ceremonies to be observed. The cardinals placed themselves on an equality with crowned heads, and France claimed preëminence over the other European powers; but Don Louis de Haro would concede neither of these assumptions, and refused to treat save on equal terms, both as regarded himself and the nation of which he was the representative. Mazarin brought to the strife all his usual dexterity and cunning; and Don Louis a slowness and deliberation which afforded him ample time to sift the policy of his opponent to the very dregs, although he refrained from offering any pledges, or holding out any promises; while the cardinal was lavish of both, although they were all equivocal. The aim of the Italian was to take his antagonist by surprise, that of the Spaniard to guard himself from an attempt which he had soon penetrated; and it was asserted that the latter had remarked of the cardinal, that his policy was very mistaken upon one point, for he was always seeking to deceive.

Be that as it might, it is certain that, save as regarded the peace, Mazarin obtained no actual advantage through this marriage. The portion of Maria Theresa which, as we have already stated, was nominally fixed at five hundred thousand gold crowns, would not, had it been forthwith paid into the treasury, have covered the outlay of the king's journey to the frontier to receive her. Nevertheless, these five hundred thousand crowns, equal at that period to two millions five hundred thousand livres, were a great subject of contestation between the ministers; and finally, France never received more of the dower than a hundred thousand francs.

Charles IV., duke of Lorraine, was, by this treaty,

made to feel the vengeance of both the kingdoms against which he had borne arms; and he was sacrificed by each the more readily that he was no longer in a position to oppose their united verdict. France restored to him his principality, but demolished Nancy, and placed an interdict upon his maintaining armed troops; while, in the case of the Prince de Condé, against whom Louis XIV. had even greater cause of complaint, Don Louis de Haro obliged the cardinal to give a pledge of his restoration to the favor of his monarch, by a threat that, should this article be rejected, Spain would continue to him the sovereignty of Rocroy, Câtelet, and other fortresses of which he was then in possession. By her concession upon this point, France consequently gained, not only the renewed fealty of her greatest general, but also the cities just named.*

Both these subtil ministers were, however, guilty of one act of policy, as short-sighted as it was contemptible. Charles II., at that period hopeless of regaining his throne through his own efforts, or those of his immediate friends, who had already fruitlessly exhausted both their blood and their resources in his cause, no sooner heard of the conference of the Pyrenees than he hastened to implore the help of Don Louis and Mazarin, flattering himself that their respective sovereigns, who were both his relatives, would, at last, upon the occasion of their alliance—Cromwell, moreover, being dead—revenge a cause in which all the crowned heads of Europe were individually interested; but neither Don Louis nor the cardinal would concede an interview to the unhappy and exiled king, fearing to rouse the resentment of the English ambassador, who was still at St. Jean de Luz.

Could Charles have foreseen that only a few weeks were destined to elapse ere he should be summoned by his own subjects to assume his birthright, and to ascend

* Le Siècle de Louis XIV. *Francheville*

the throne of his ancestors, without one helping hand from among the mighty potentates of Europe, he might have spared himself that last and useless humiliation. Certain it is that this unlooked-for event occurred so suddenly that he was in peaceful possession of his kingdom before the treaty of the Pyrenees was signed.

The reception of the Marshal de Grammont at Madrid had, meanwhile, been most triumphant. He had entered the city post, in order to testify the impatience of his master, magnificently attired in the garb of a courier, and followed by a splendid retinue;* and, on his arrival, the admiral of Castille had invited him to a gorgeous banquet; which, however, like the feast of the Barmecide, was meant rather for the eye than for the palate. Seven hundred dishes, emblazoned with the arms of the admiral, were served up, of which the contents were covered with saffron and gilding; but all were in succession carried away untouched, to the great discomfort of the guests, who were compelled to sit for four hours spectators of these unprofitable evolutions.*

The fêtes and galas given by the King of Spain, in honor of his arrival, revenged him, however, on the visionary banquet of the admiral, and left no doubt of the success of his mission.

As the court left Toulouse M. de Condé quitted Brussels, accompanied by his wife, his daughter, and his son; and at Coulommeirs he was met by the Duke and Duchess de Longueville; when, after a hasty greeting, the former went forward to announce his approach to the court, where the Prince de Conti had already arrived. Two days after-

* "The Marshal de Grammont left this city for St. Jean de Luz, and thence for Madrid, not only with the most attractive retinue, but also with an immense suite of persons of distinction, who were anxious to increase the splendor of an embassy of this importance.—*Bayonne Gazette of the 27th Sept., 1659.*

† Mémoires du Maréchal de Grammont

ward Condé reached Aix in his turn; and when he was announced to the queen, MADEMOISELLE was in the apartment of Her Majesty, awaiting with anxiety the appearance of the illustrious rebel; but she was fated, for the present, to disappointment, as Anne of Austria had no sooner ascertained the identity of her visitor than she turned to the princess, and requested her to leave the room, asserting that M. de Condé had desired that their first meeting might take place without witnesses. MADEMOISELLE replied with a bitter smile that she was convinced the prince would consider her absence upon such an occasion very extraordinary. The queen, however, retorted in an angry tone, and MADEMOISELLE found herself compelled to obey, which she did with an ill grace; and proceeded forthwith to complain to the cardinal of the want of consideration which had been shown to her, declaring that, should she be subjected to a renewed affront of this nature, she would immediately withdraw from court. Mazarin made an ample apology, by which the haughty princess was appeased; and M. de Condé, having shortly afterward paid her a visit, she soon forgot her momentary mortification.*

The prince, meanwhile, relieved every one about him of the embarrassment which might have been felt upon the occasion of his reappearance, by the perfect self-possession which he exhibited, and by accosting each individual with whom he came in contact with the easy and indifferent air of one who had only parted from them the previous evening; and he had not been many hours in Aix ere the king was talking familiarly to him of all that he had accomplished both in France and Flanders, with as much interest as though he had performed all these exploits in the royal service.

On the evening succeeding the departure of the court for Toulon, as MADEMOISELLE was writing in her apart-

* Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

ment, a courier from Blois was announced, who proved to be a jester on the establishment of *Monsieur*, and who threw upon her table a large packet of papers, exclaiming that her father was not dead, nor did he believe that he was likely to die this time; and then, without explaining the meaning of this extraordinary announcement, asked if the cardinal were in the city, as he had a letter to deliver to him.

The princess, greatly alarmed, inquired into the motive of his journey; when he stated that *Monsieur* had been suffering from brain-fever, but that he was now better; and that his object was to inform the court of the circumstance. The letters of MADemoiselle, however, gave a less favorable opinion of the temporary convalescence of her father; and the certificate of the physicians, by which they were accompanied, left no doubt of the gravity of the attack, nor of their apprehensions as to the result which might supervene.

Under these circumstances, the princess lost no time in sending a messenger to the cardinal, stating her anxiety to start immediately for Blois; but Mazarin declared that he was not aware if her departure would be strictly according to etiquette, and that she must delay her purpose until he ascertained the fact. In obedience to this decision, MADemoiselle contented herself by ordering prayers to be put up in all the churches, and awaited, as patiently as she could, the permission of the court to assist in closing the eyes of her dying father. On returning from the evening service of the Fathers of the Oratory on the following Sunday, she found all her retinue assembled in her antechamber; and the truth flashed upon her at once—*Monsieur* was dead; and retiring to her closet she burst into tears.

MADemoiselle could not, however, even while she wept as a daughter, forget that she was also a princess; and, accordingly, she soon sufficiently controlled her filial emo-

tion to remember that it was her duty to inform the king of the death of his uncle. "These are dignified proceedings," she remarks, "in which we should never fail." She, therefore, sustained by this reflection, dried her tears, and wrote a letter to the cardinal, informing him that her grief would not allow her to address the king; but that as her duty obliged her to inform His Majesty of the death of *Monsieur*, she requested him to perform the office for her. She then sent a gentleman to wait upon the queen and the Duke d'Anjou with the melancholy tidings, and proceeded to write a second letter to the Prince de Conti, to inform him of her anxiety that he should succeed to the government of Languedoc, for which she strongly advised him to apply; but counseled him, at the same time, not to speak of any private government, in order that all such might be left to those upon whom *Monsieur* had himself bestowed them; after which she gave the necessary orders for her mourning, and then retired to rest, "occupied by a sincere regret at the death of *Monsieur*."

We have shown how MADemoiselle bore the loss of her last parent; let us now turn to the little court of Blois, and examine the effect produced by the demise of Gaston upon those by whom he was immediately surrounded.

Madame was not present when he expired; but he no sooner ceased to breathe than she demanded the keys of the presses, in which she locked up the dinner-services, the plate, and every thing that came under her hand; and having secured all articles of value, she discharged the whole of her household, retaining only a few Lorraine attendants, who were as rapacious as herself. She next removed the sheets from the bed upon which *Monsieur* lay dead; and as there was, consequently, no linen left in which to shroud the corpse, it became necessary for some one to supply it; when *Madame de Raré*, the governess of his daughters, gave the last proof of her attachment to

her master by furnishing the death-sheet in which he was carried to his grave.* Moreover, the usual religious ceremonies were neglected, and scarcely a prayer was said for the son, the brother, and the uncle of three powerful sovereigns. The doors of the apartment in which he lay were closed every evening, and the priests left the body unattended during the night. Notwithstanding the severity of the cold, neither light nor fire was allowed in the room; and when, after having laid in state for several days, the body was finally removed to St. Denis, the funeral procession was composed only of a few pages and almoners.

Etiquet prescribed for *Madame* a retirement of forty days in an apartment hung with black, where she should have received the condolences of the public bodies, and of her own private friends; but Marguerite of Lorraine was not, as we have shown, a person to be influenced by common rules; and, although no princess had yet ventured to neglect this last ceremonial of mourning, she dispensed with the restraint and the expense alike, and at the end of eleven or twelve days reappeared in the midst of her diminished household, to the great scandal of all its members. Nor was this all; for, having arranged her affairs at Blois, she announced her intention of forthwith proceeding to Paris, to entreat the king in behalf of herself and her daughters; and when she set forth for this purpose, instead of traveling in a close coach, she selected an open carriage, by which means she was recognized in every town and village through which she passed.†

The curate of St. Savior of Blois had attended the prince

* It is a singular fact that a similar circumstance occurred at the death of *Madame* herself. After her body had been embalmed not one of her women would give a chemise for her to be buried in, but said that they did not possess any; and it was the Princess of Wirtemberg who supplied the linen necessary for her decent interment.

† Mémoires de Madame de la Vallière.

in his last moments, the principal of the Oratory, who was his confessor, not being upon the spot, while the Abbé de Rancé,* the nephew of the archbishop of Tours, attached himself with exemplary devotion to His Royal Highness, and, until he expired, remained constantly by his bedside.

Previously to that period he had been known only by his companionable qualities, his powers of intellect, and his utter disregard of the duties of his sacred profession; but the death-bed of *Monsieur*, as MADemoiselle relates, changed the whole tenor of his life. Conscious of the errors of his past career, beside the body of the almost forsaken prince, whose passage to the tomb he had so materially assisted to render happy, he formed the resolution of abandoning a world by which he had been so grievously misguided; and as he had the control of the Abbey of La Trappe, he at once determined that it should be the place of his penance, for which purpose he requested permission of the king to reform the community, and had no sooner received the royal sanction to that effect than he took the vows of the rigid order of St. Bernard, and was deputed by the whole body to proceed to Rome, where he succeeded admirably in his mission, and displayed so much piety and ability that he was soon regarded as a worthy successor to the saint whose garb he wore. On his return to France he reorganized his abbey, and placed it upon the same footing which it held in the time of its holy founder.

Other authorities, however, attribute the conversion of M. de Rancé to a very different cause. The whole of his youth had been devoted to dissipation; and among other women of rank to whom he had attached himself in a manner unbecoming his profession, was the beautiful but dissipated Duchess de Montbazon, from whom, on one occasion, he had been compelled to separate himself for a short

† Dom Armand John le Bouthillier, nephew of the superintendent of finance.

time, and to whose residence he hastened immediately on his return from his journey, ignorant that she had died during his absence. Entering her apartment unannounced, he was horror-struck on seeing her head placed upright upon a dish, the leaden coffin which had been prepared having been found to short for the body; and this sight, for which he had been totally unprepared, produced so great an effect upon his mind, that it determined him to the retreat which has been already mentioned!*

Certain it is that this conversion created infinitely more sensation than the death by which it had been preceded, for Gaston left scarcely a regret behind him. Always disaffected and suspicious, he was perpetually in a state of moral revolt; and when circumstances occasionally compelled him to put his theories into practice, he unhesitatingly sacrificed all those who had been weak enough to trust to his honor, when by such measures he could insure his own safety. Not one of all his friends escaped some share of suffering for his sake: exile, imprisonment, and death had been alike the reward of their misplaced confidence in his principles; and his abandonment of their interests in the hour of need was so notorious, that, on one occasion, when at a public rejoicing, he extended his hand to the Prince de Guémenée, who had ascended some steps, the prince said, with a somewhat equivocal smile, "I thank Your Royal Highness the more sincerely for your help, as I am the first of your friends whom you ever assisted to descend from a scaffold!"† a bitter pleasantry, which must have smitten with momentary shame even Gaston of Orleans.

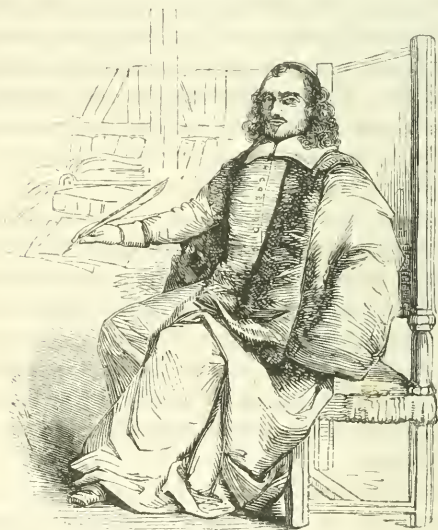
Neither the death of a member of the royal house, nor the conversion of an abbé of the court, were, however, events of sufficient importance to divert the thoughts of all classes for more than a very brief interval from the

* Dictionnaire Encyclopédique de Charles Saint-Laurent.

† Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

approaching marriage of the king; and, accordingly, Gaston was laid beside his illustrious kindred in the gloomy vaults of St. Denis, and the iron gates closed behind him, never again to revolve upon their hinges until they once more fell back to admit another inmate to this Necropolis of departed royalty, while De Rancé buried himself in the living tomb of La Trappe, to fast and pray, exist in eternal silence, and daily dig his grave with his own hands, without leaving any lasting impression upon the public mind.

Every eye was turned toward the Pyrenees.



CHAPTER II.

Postponement of the Royal Marriage—Journey of the Court to St. Jean de Luz—Marriage of Louis XIV.—Portrait of the Young Queen—Meeting of the Kings of France and Spain—Mary de Mancini at Brouage—The Marquis de Peguilain—Return of the Court toward Paris—The Prince Colonna asks the Hand of Mary de Mancini—She rejects his Suit—Mesdemoiselles de Mancini summoned to Fontainebleau—Indifference of the King at their meeting—Marriage of Mary de Mancini and the Prince Colonna—Her subsequent Career.

CONSIDERABLE surprise was felt by the court when they received an intimation that the marriage of the sovereign was postponed until the following spring; the severity of the weather, and the consequent probability of a rigorous winter, being a pretext for this delay on the part of the King of Spain, who could not, as he asserted, expose himself without imprudence, at such a season, to a journey for which both his age and his infirmities unfitted him.

In the interval which consequently elapsed, intelligence reached the French court of the death of the second prince of Spain, and great alarm was felt both by the queen and Mazarin that this event would prevent the completion of the treaty; but, as peace had become quite as desirable for the one kingdom as for the other, their fears were not realized; and in the month of May, 1660, Louis XIV. and his court left Toulouse for Bayonne, and thence proceeded to St. Jean de Luz, where they were to be met by the King of Spain and the Infanta.

Nothing could exceed the magnificence of the preparations for this royal and nuptial interview. A temporary palace had been erected in the Isle of Pheasants, which was redolent of Spanish splendor and French elegance; a bridge connected the island with the main land on either

frontier; and infinite difficulties had been vanquished in order to place the two sovereigns on a perfect equality, even in the most minute details of accommodation and ornament. The bridges, forming covered galleries, were precisely similar, and led to two saloons splendidly furnished and decorated, having lateral chambers and dressing-rooms; while in the exact center, calculated to an inch of surface, was the grand hall of meeting, which was extremely spacious, and lighted only on the riverward side. Two doors of entrance, placed precisely opposite to each other, enabled the two great contracting parties to make a simultaneous entrance; while the floor, divided in a straight line across the center, was covered on the Spanish side with Persian carpets wrought on a ground of gold and silver; and the moiety which belonged to France was overspread with crimson Genoa velvet, laced with gold and silver. In each compartment were placed an arm-chair and a table; and upon the latter stood two inkstands and two timepieces; in short, not the slightest deviation, save in the material which covered the floor, was perceptible in the respective sides of the vast apartment.*

On the 3d of June, Don Louis de Haro, as the proxy of Louis XIV., having the Bishop of Fréjus as his witness, married the Infanta Maria-Theresa, daughter of Philip IV., King of Spain, in the church of Fontarabia, where the ceremony was conducted with the most stately and chilling gravity. MADemoiselle, who had with some difficulty obtained permission to attend the espousals *incognita*, relates that a dais of gold brocade, inclosed by curtains save on the side next the altar, had been prepared for the king in the tribune, and beside it was placed a seat for Don Louis de Haro, with, beyond this, a bench for the grandees of the kingdom on one side, and a second for the almoners directly opposite. All the French who were present occupied the steps of the altar.

* Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

The king entered the church, preceded by a few Swiss guards, the larger portion of the troops remaining at the entrance; and immediately before him walked the Bishop of Pampeluna, with the whole of his clergy, in full sacerdotal costume. Philip IV. wore a gray coat embroidered with silver, and his hat looped with a large diamond, to which was attached a pendent pearl, both belonging to the crown jewels. He was followed by the Infanta, who walked alone, dressed in white satin, richly embroidered, and ornamented with small bows of silver serge, a quantity of ill-set gems, and a mass of false hair. Her train was carried by her first lady of the household.*

By some strange oversight, the Bishop of Fréjus was not apprised of the precise hour at which the marriage had been appointed to take place; and the service was actually about to commence when he was missed, and a messenger hastily dispatched to his residence, whence he arrived without delay totally unattended; and with evident chagrin reproached Don Louis for his neglect, as he passed on to take his place at the altar.

At the conclusion of the mass, Philip IV. seated himself in his chair of state, and the Infanta took her place upon her cushion; after which the bishop also seated himself, and Don Louis approached, and presented to him the procuration of the King of France, which the Bishop of Fréjus had just delivered into his hands. It was read by one of the assistant priests, as were also the Papal dispensations; after which the marriage service was performed; the king standing the whole time between the Infanta and Don Louis.

When the princess was called upon to make her affirm-

* *Camerièri Major* are persons who, in the Peninsular courts, have unlimited authority over the servants of the palace; dress and undress the king, or other member of the royal family whom they serve, and exercise their jurisdiction over all which relates to the internal economy of the household.

ative reply, she turned round and faced her father, making, when she had so done, a very profound curtsey, as if to solicit his permission to utter it, which was apparently conceded; she then slowly and gravely moved her lips, and answered in a low, firm tone. Throughout the whole of the ceremony, the Infanta never once gave her hand to Don Louis, nor did he present the ring to her. At the termination of the service she knelt before the king, and kissed his hand; after which Philip withdrew his hat, and embraced her. She then rose, placed herself on the king's right hand, and the whole train swept after them from the church.

Nothing could more thoroughly illustrate the different genius of the two nations than the manner in which they observed the royal marriage day. At Fontarabia not a vestige of rejoicing was to be detected; all was grave, and still, and monotonous as usual; while in France the people were profuse in outlay both of money and acclamation. Their joy amounted, indeed, almost to delirium.*

“The Infanta,” says Madame de Motteville, who accompanied MADemoiselle to witness the marriage, “is short, but well made; we admired the extreme fairness of her complexion; her blue eyes appeared to us to be fine, and charmed us by their softness and brilliancy. We celebrated the beauty of her mouth, and of her somewhat full and roseate lips. The outline of her face is long, but being rounded at the chin, pleased us; her cheeks, rather large but handsome, had their share of our praise; her hair, of a very light auburn, accorded admirably with her fine complexion. To speak the truth, with more height, and handsomer teeth, she would deserve to be estimated as one of the most beautiful persons in Europe. Her bust appeared to be well formed and tolerably full; but her dress was horrible.”†

* Louis XIV., sa Cour, et le Regent.

† Mémoires de Madame de Motteville.

On the following day, Anne of Austria, the King of Spain, and the royal bride met on the Island of Conference. The Queen-Mother arrived first, Philip IV. having been detained at Fontarabia by the visit of the Duke de Créqui, who waited upon him in the name of his royal master, to present to the young queen, not the jewels of the crown, but those which Louis offered as his marriage gift, and which were very fine. She was accompanied only by *Monsieur* (the Duke d'Anjou, now Duke d'Orleans), etiquette not permitting the young king to have an interview with his bride before a given moment, and attended by Mesdames de Flex and de Noailles. She was soon followed by her royal brother and the bride, and the meeting between these long-severed relatives was stately and dignified. Anne of Austria, indeed, in whom the sister for a moment overcame the sovereign, endeavored to salute the Spanish king upon the cheek; but he held back his head so rigidly that she could not succeed.

The young queen then threw herself upon her knees before her, and requested permission to kiss her hand; upon which Anne of Austria lifted her affectionately from the floor, and embraced her with great tenderness. The conversation that ensued was kind, heartfelt, and earnest on the part of the Queen-Mother; but Philip never relaxed for a moment in his stateliness. After some time had elapsed, the Cardinal Mazarin approached Their Majesties, and informed them that a stranger was at the door, who requested that it might be opened to him; when Anne of Austria, with the consent of the king her brother, desired that the visitor might be admitted.

Mazarin and Don Louis had left the door partially thrown back, in order that the king might see his bride; and as it was desirable that she should also see him, they were careful not to impede her view, which was the more easy as he was a head taller than either of the ministers. As her son approached, the color of the Queen-Mother rose,

and the Infanta having met his eye, blushed deeply ; while Philip remarked, with a gracious smile, that he had a handsome son-in-law.

The suite of the Spanish king consisted of Don Louis de Haro, his prime minister ; Don Pedro of Arragon, captain of the Bourgignon guard ; the Marquis d'Aytonne ; the Marquis de Malepique, grand master of the ceremonies ; the Marshal de Leche and the Count de Monserci, both sons of Don Louis de Haro ; Don Fernando Vonès-de Canto-Carero, secretary of state ; and Senhors Pimentel and Velasquez. Louis XIV. was accompanied by the Queen-Mother, *Monsieur* Duke d'Orleans, the Prince de Conti, Cardinal Mazarin, and numerous great officers of the crown and kingdom ; among whom were the Vicomte de Turenne, who had recently been appointed marshal-general of the camps and armies of the king ; and the marshal Duke de Grammont, who had visited Madrid to demand the hand of the Infanta.*

The Infanta-queen was attired in a robe of white satin, embroidered with bugles, and wore a hoop. Her hair was simply dressed, and adorned with a bouquet of pear-shaped emeralds mingled with brilliants, which were a present from her royal bridegroom. On casting his eyes over the suite of Louis, the King of Spain remarked M. de Turenne, and repeated several times, "There is a man who has caused me many uneasy hours : " a reminiscence which considerably annoyed the marshal.†

When Louis XIV. had advanced to the center of the saloon, the two kings placed themselves in front of their respective tables, and cushions were brought to each ; after which the cardinal came forward, bearing a copy of the Gospel with a cross resting upon the volume, while the patriarch of India acted similarly on the Spanish side ; both being in full costume. This done, the two sovereigns

* Le Comte Alexandre de Laborde.

† Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

knelt; M. de Brienne, French secretary of state, then took the treaty of peace, and Don Fernando Vonès-de Canto-Carrero, who held the same distinguished rank in Spain, did the same; and each read it aloud in his own language. At its conclusion, the royal allies laid their hands upon the Gospel, and took their oaths to observe its contents; after which they both rose, and advancing at an equal pace to the division of the apartment, exchanged an embrace, which Louis XIV. gracefully followed up by the assurance that he pledged himself, not only to peace, but to friendship. When some further courtesies had been reciprocated, they moved side by side to the upper end of the table; where Don Fernando Vonès presented the Spanish retinue to the King of France, and the cardinal made the French suite known to the King of Spain. At the close of this ceremony each monarch retired to his closet to sign the treaty, and reappeared in the great saloon, where Philip IV. remarked to the Queen-Mother, that as it was growing late, he would return to the island-palace on the following day at three o'clock. After this announcement the two courts separated.*

On the morrow the Queen-Mother returned alone to the island, desiring MADemoisELLE and the ladies of her household to await her in her apartments, in order to receive the young queen, who was to reside with her for a couple of days; after which the marriage was celebrated in the church of St. Jean-de-Luz. A raised platform extended from the residence of Anne of Austria to the entrance of the church, which was richly carpeted. The young queen was robed in a royal mantle of violet-colored velvet, powdered with fleurs-de-lis, over a white dress, and wore a crown upon her head. Her train was carried by Mesdemoiselles d'Alençon and de Valois,† and the Princess de Carignan. After the ceremony the queen complained of

* Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

† The younger daughters of Gaston.

fatigue, and retired for a few hours to her chamber, where she dined alone. In the evening she received the court, dressed in the French style; and gold and silver tokens, commemorative of the royal marriage, were profusely showered from the windows of her apartment.

All her Spanish retinue, including the Countess de Pleigo, her *camarara-mayor*, then took their leave, and departed for Spain, with the exception of five individuals: her confessor, her physician, her surgeon, her first waiting-woman, Malina, who had served the queen her mother in the same capacity, and the nephew of the latter, who had married one of her *femmes-de-chambre*.

On the 15th of June the court left St. Jean-de-Luz for Paris; and at Toulouse the Duke de Grammont, after the successful termination of his mission to Madrid, received the compliments of the royal circle, and presented to the king the Marquis de Pégulain,* his nephew, a young officer who had distinguished himself in the last campaign. His personal advantages, his cheerful disposition, his brilliant conversation, and, above all, his tact in dispensing those frank and apparently unpremeditated flatteries which are so welcome to sovereigns, so won upon the young king, that Louis at once determined to attach him to his person by all the attractions of court favor.

At Amboise the royal party were met by the Prince de Condé, who came to present his son, the Duke d'Enghien. At Chambord the Duke de Longueville paid his respects in his turn; and lastly, at Fontainebleau, the Duke de Lorraine and the Duke de Guise awaited the arrival of the king and queen to pay their homage. Thence the illustrious *cortège* reached Vincennes, where they remained until the preparations were completed for their solemn entrance into the capital, which ultimately took place on the 26th of August.

On the occasion of his marriage the king had hastened

* Afterward Duke de Lauzun.

to recall from banishment both the Count de Vivonne and the Marquis de Mancini; and poor Mary, in her exile at Brouage, wept with joy to hear that her dearly-beloved brother had been chosen for the honor of bearing the train of MADemoiselle, even although it was at the nuptials of the only man whom she had ever loved; for she saw in this distinction an earnest of his future favor.

For herself she had no longer any thing to hope; the past was as a brilliant dream from which the present was a mere troubled waking. She looked around upon the dreary state by which she was environed, and tried to condense her secret thoughts, and to fix them on the familiar objects amid which she tried to believe that she was destined to wear away her life. Until within a week of the royal marriage she had occasionally received letters from Louis; and if they were not what they had once been, still she struggled to close her eyes against the fact; but, since the Infanta had become Queen of France, no communication had reached her. This was as it should be, she argued to her own heart—the passion which had formerly been her glory could now only be her shame. It was right that he should forget her, as he had done. But when the bruised heart spoke in its turn, she buried her burning face in her spread hands, and thought what a boon it would be to die.

Mademoiselle de Mancini dwelt only on the broad outline of her misfortune—she did not waste a thought upon its details; and even had she heard of the new courtier whom the pleasure-loving Louis had attached to his train at Toulouse, she would not have suspected for an instant that he could possess the power further to embitter her destiny. And yet so it was: since the banishment of Vivonne and Mancini, the young king had only the faithful Prince de Marsillac about his person to whom he was willing to confide those secrets which at his age are considered as so important; and even this confidence availed him

little, for the prince could only listen and lament. He did not possess sufficient courage to offer an opinion which might chance to give offense; and thus Louis soon wearied of a sympathy which, however sincere, was never suggestive.

At such a moment, therefore, M. de Péguilain was doubly welcome; toward the two recently reconciled culprits the king was anxious not to exhibit a too marked attachment, lest by so doing he might create jealousy and disaffection among his other courtiers; while as regarded the new favorite he was under no such restriction; and as De Péguilain was too clever not to perceive in an instant the error of the Prince de Marsillac, he at once adopted a diametrically opposite line of conduct, whose very novelty increased the predilection of Louis in his favor. He even dared to blame where he disapproved; but he did it with a grace which invested the error with a sort of kingly virtue that flattered the vanity and self-appreciation of the young monarch, even although it convinced him of his fault; while, where he had only to applaud, he based his praises upon such high and dignified grounds that they assumed a double value.

It was not long, therefore, under these circumstances, ere Louis confided to him all the details of his passion for Mary de Mancini; a passion which, although chilled and diminished by recent circumstances, was still far from being wholly overcome; and the subtil Péguilain, desirous to remove so dangerous a rival from the mind and affections of his royal master, employed his most crafty arguments to uproot the lingering remains of so formidable a preference. He urged nothing on the ground of morality, for he felt that such a position was untenable in the atmosphere of a court; but he adduced his own example, and that of some of the most gallant nobles of the kingdom, to prove that constancy was a chimera fit only to be entertained by boys and prudes. Day after day these conver-

sations were renewed; and if they failed to convince his auditor, they at least served to shake his faith both in his own sentiments and in the merits of Mademoiselle de Mancini; and hence the utter silence on his part which supervened.

Such was the position of the former lovers, when Madame de Venelle received an order from the cardinal to conduct his nieces to Paris; asserting that the Queen-Mother, who had graciously expressed her regret that Mary had not been present at the royal marriage, was anxious that she should at least partake of the festivities which were consequent upon them, as well as the entry of the young queen into the capital. To Mademoiselle de Mancini this order was like a death-pang; but she well knew that there was no possibility of resistance, and she accordingly set forth upon her journey with a heart full of despair and bitterness. As she advanced toward the capital, deaf to the joyous acclamations of her young sisters, to whom a return to the pleasures of the court was as the opening of a new paradise, she saw at the entrance of every town and hamlet the preparations which were making to welcome the young queen: the triumphal arches, the windows garlanded with flowers, and the many-colored lamps forming the cipher of the new deity; while, more than once, the crowd recognizing the livery of Mazarin, had stopped the carriage to ask tidings of the progress of the royal party.

The heart of Mary bled at every pore, and when at length she alighted at the new palace of the cardinal,* she hastened to shut herself into her apartment, in order to indulge her despair in solitude and silence.

Mazarin, anticipating some outbreak on the part of the unhappy girl, upon an occasion of such bitter trial, resolved to seize the opportunity of offering to her at that moment a brilliant marriage, which would place her beyond the com-

* Now the Royal Library.

ments of the court; and a letter was accordingly put into her hands, immediately after her arrival in Paris, in which he informed her that the constable, Prince Colonna, had asked her hand, and implored her to reflect seriously before she renounced the prospect of becoming one of the greatest ladies in Rome.

But Mazarin did not understand his niece. The moment which he had considered to be so favorable was precisely one in which Mary, who felt that her dignity had been compromised by others, was more than ever resolved to uphold it in her own person. She consequently lost no time in returning a cold and positive refusal to the proposition, and thus proved that she was equal to the emergency, cruel as it might be.

The communication of the cardinal was followed by a second from the Duchess de Noailles, in which she announced the arrival of the court at Fontainebleau, where the principal persons of the kingdom were to be presented to the young queen previously to her entry into Paris; and in this list the names of Mary and her sisters having been inscribed, the duchess wrote to inform her that they would have the honor of being presented by the Countess de Soissons, their sister, and the Princess de Conti, their cousin, on the ensuing Sunday, immediately after the high mass.

When Mademoiselle de Mancini reached Fontainebleau, every one was struck by the alteration in her person; they had one and all forgotten to estimate the extent of her sufferings; and, as though every thing conspired to render her trial the more difficult to bear, just as she had begun to congratulate herself on hearing that the king had walked into the park to inspect the recent improvements of Le Notre,* and had with tolerable firmness joined her sister,

* Andrew Le Notre, born at Paris in 1613, became architect and landscape-gardener to the king. He designed the grounds of Marly, Trianon, Chantilly, St. Cloud, the Tuileries, and the Terrace of St.

and advanced toward the queen, Louis entered the hall of audience to request Maria Theresa to accompany him in a second survey.

It chanced that at that precise moment the Countess de Soissons was in the act of presenting Mademoiselle de Mancini; and, as she was named, the king bowed without one vestige of emotion or sign of recognition; inquired after the health of the cardinal, who had been detained at Vincennes by the gout; exchanged a few words with Madame de Soissons; and then turned away to salute the other ladies who were passing before the queen, to each of whom he addressed some remark or compliment with the same condescending indifference.

Mary felt that she could bear no more. The whole brilliant scene swam before her eyes, but she could not distinguish objects; and, suddenly rousing herself from an emotion which she felt would expose her to the merciless railleries of the circle, she withdrew a little apart in order to rally her scattered senses. The affectionate greeting of the Queen-Mother added a fresh pang to her wretchedness; for it was so marked that she at once felt the security which it implied. She was no longer feared. Louis had then, indeed, ceased to love her.

When the presentations had terminated, the king invited all the ladies of the circle to attend the queen at a hunt in which she was about to join; and as every one rose, Mademoiselle de Mancini, eager to escape the scene of her torture, announced to the Princess de Conti that she had just received news of the aggravated illness of the cardinal, which compelled her immediately to depart for Vincennes.

At some distance from the chateau she was compelled to halt, in order to allow the queen and her train to pass; and thus she again saw Louis, who preceded the cavalcade Germain. In 1675 Louis XIV. conferred upon him letters of nobility, and the cross of St. Lazarus. He died in 1700.

on horseback, surrounded by all the nobles of his court, and conversing with the Marquis de Pégulain. The heart of Mary throbbed almost to bursting; it was impossible that the king should not recognize the livery of her uncle—the carriage in which he had so often been seated by her side—he would not—he could not pass her by without one word. She deceived herself. His Majesty was laughing at some merry tale of his new favorite, by which he was so much engrossed that he rode on, without bestowing even a look upon the gilded coach and its heart-broken occupant.

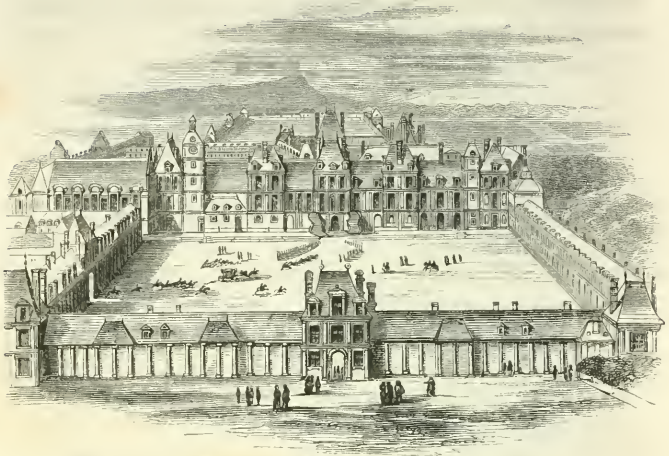
On the morrow, pale, cold, and tearless, Mademoiselle de Mancini drove to Vincennes, where she announced to the cardinal that she was ready to give her hand to the Prince Colonna, provided the marriage took place immediately, and that he wrote without an hour's delay to ask the consent of the king. Mazarin, delighted to have thus carried his point after having despaired of success, at once promised to comply with her wishes; and Mary returned to Paris as self-sustained as she had left it, although, perhaps, not without a latent hope that her resolution would awaken some return of affection in the breast of Louis—induce some remonstrance—elicit some token of remembrance.

Again, however, she was the victim of her own hope. The royal consent was granted without a single comment, accompanied by valuable presents which she dared not decline; and Mary walked to the altar as she would have walked to the scaffold, carrying with her an annual dower of a hundred thousand livres, and perjuring herself by vows which she could not fulfill.

Her after-career we dare not trace. Suffice it that the ardent and enthusiastic spirit which would, had she been fated to happiness, have made her memory a triumph for her sex, embittered by falsehood, wrong, and treachery, involved her in errors over which both charity and propri-

ety oblige us to draw a veil; and if all Europe rang with the enormity of her excesses, much of their origin may surely be traced to those who, after wringing her heart, trampled it in the dust beneath their feet.

VOL. II.—C



CHAPTER III.

The State-Entry into the Capital—Popularity of Mazarin—Marriage of the Princess Marguerite of Savoy and the Prince of Parma—Indignation of the French Court—A rival Court—The Saloons of Madame de Soissons—Fire at the Louvre—Mazarin condemned by his Physicians; his sudden generosity; his Easy-Chair—Hortensia de Mancini affianced to the Duke de la Meilleraye; he assumes the name of Mazarin—Marianne de Mancini affianced to the Duke de Bouillon—Improvidence of the Sisters—Remorse of the Cardinal—Mazarin and the Th  atine Monk—The affected Donation—The Death-Toilet—Last Advice to the King—Presentation of Colbert—Death of Mazarin—Departure of Louis XIV. and the Queen-Mother for Paris—The King rules in his own Person—The Cardinal's Will—Indifference of his Family—Mazarin at the Gaming-Table—The Gambling-Debt.

SHORTLY after the presentation at Fontainebleau, the king and queen entered Paris in state; and throughout the entire day the streets presented only one long, and brilliant, and unbroken procession. At four o'clock in

the morning, every one was astir; and at five, all the ladies were in full costume, wearing their mantles of ceremony, which they had no opportunity of throwing off until seven o'clock in the evening, notwithstanding the intense heat. The whole court was grouped about a throne which had been erected at the barrier, and on which the young queen received the salutations of the several bodies of the state, before making her entry into the city. Neither the form nor color of the houses before which the procession was to pass could be distinguished, so profusely were they decorated with hangings of tapestry and bright-tinted cloths; while the ground was thickly overstrorn with flowers and sweet-scented herbs, upon which the carriages moved without noise, extracting, as their heavy wheels crushed out the juices of the perfumed carpet beneath them, a thousand delicate odors. The queen, in all the glory of her youth and beauty, glittering with jewels and beaming with smiles, was borne forward in an antique car blazing with gold, beside which rode her royal consort, attired in a suite of velvet embroidered with gems, estimated at between seven and eight millions.

The Queen-Mother, accompanied by the Queen of England and the Princess Henrietta, occupied the house of Madame de Beauvais, within the city, where they awaited the termination of the preparatory ceremonies. The most magnificent feature of the whole procession was, however, the household of the cardinal, which was numerous and splendid, totally eclipsing, by its marvelous pomp, that of *Monsieur*; in short, so regal in its profusion, that the Count d'Estrées,* not being altogether able to excuse its

* John d'Estrees, born in Picardy in 1624, originally embraced the military profession, and was appointed lieutenant-general in 1655. Created vice-admiral of France, duke and peer, he was commissioned to demand from the English an explanation of the spoliations which they were committing in the French possessions in America. In 1672, his vessels, in conjunction with those of England, overcame the naval forces

overwhelming assumption, could find no other terms in which to describe it, than by styling it a display of *ostentatious simplicity*.

This period must be considered as the culminating point of Mazarin's prosperity. The people by whom he had been driven from the capital, and who had put a price upon his head, received him with acclamations; the magistrates who had fulminated the decree hastened to offer him their homage; the king acquiesced in all his wishes with the docility of a pupil, conscious that he owed much of his present power to his able and zealous policy. He refused to give his hand to the princes of the blood in the third degree, as he had formerly done; and he who had been treated by Don Louis de Haro as an equal assumed to consider the Great Condé as an inferior. Like his predecessor, the Cardinal de Richelieu, he maintained the same military household as the king himself, and was surrounded by guards, gendarmes, and light-horse, with, moreover, the addition of a company of musketeers, which bore his name, all commanded by nobles, having young men of quality serving under them.* He was no longer accessible as he had once been; and any one who was ill-advised enough to ask a favor of the king personally was certain of failure; while the Queen-Mother, by whom he had so long been upheld, through good and evil fortune, against the whole sense of the kingdom, became a mere cipher from the moment in which he ceased to require her protection.

One check, however, the haughty cardinal was destined to receive, even in the hour of his triumph; and that one came from the long-persecuted Stuart. Charles II. had

of the Dutch admirals, Ruyter and Tromp. On his return from this expedition he was made Marshal of France, and dispatched in pursuit of the corsairs of Tunis and Tripoli. Ultimately he received the command of the coasts of Brittany, and died in 1707.

* Mémoires du Duc de St. Simon.

solicited the hand of Mary de Mancini when he was a wandering exile, and it had been abruptly, and even superciliously denied. Mazarin had no sympathy with unthroned and wandering monarchs, but when the united voices of a great nation summoned Charles to take possession of his birthright, the spirit of the ambitious cardinal yearned to clutch the recovered crown, and to place it upon the head of one of his nieces. He accordingly made known his change of resolution to the English king, offering him, at the same time, a dower of five millions of livres if he would raise Mary to the throne of England; but Charles spurned at the indelicacy of the proposal; and Mazarin forthwith encouraged the pretensions of the Roman prince, to whom he ultimately married his unhappy niece.

The position of Mazarin necessarily secured suitors to the remainder of those young girls, of whom, on their first appearance at court, the Marshal de Villeroy had uttered so brilliant a prophecy; and among these were the dukes of Lorraine and Savoy, who, alike careless of receiving a dower with their brides, asked only that one fortified town on the borders of each principality should be placed under his own authority. This proposition Mazarin, however, absolutely rejected, considering such a concession dangerous to the interests of France, and the princes accordingly withdrew their claim.

While the negotiations were proceeding at the Isle of Pheasants, a marriage had, however, taken place which excited great indignation at the French court. The Princess Marguerite of Savoy, smarting under the indignity which had been cast upon her at Lyons, and foreseeing that an alliance was inevitable between Louis XIV. and the Infanta, had, somewhat abruptly, bestowed her hand upon the Prince of Parma—an event which filled all the courtiers of France with astonishment. They could not comprehend how a princess who had ever entertained a

hope of sharing the throne of Louis XIV. could abase herself to marry a mere sovereign prince. They considered this step as an immense dereliction from dignity, corresponding but little with the haughty self-respect she had evinced upon the rupture of her marriage with the French king, and which had been a theme of general praise; and they at once decided that, after having been encouraged to raise her eyes to such a height as that of the French throne, she should never have condescended to marry elsewhere, and would have been better advised had she retired into a convent. They forgot that she possessed all the pride of a woman as well as the dignity of a princess, and that nothing remained to her save to prove that although she might have writhed under an insult it had failed to crush her.

In Paris, meanwhile, all was gayety and splendor; and the whole winter was consumed in one round of never-ceasing dissipation, of which the two queens were, however, the least interested partakers. Anne of Austria was gradually becoming more and more devout, and consequently less able to appreciate the pleasures of the world; while Maria Theresa, naturally timid, was ill at ease in the midst of a numerous and brilliant court. The natural consequence ensued: another circle more consonant to the tastes and habits of the fastidious courtiers was soon formed; and the most distinguished members of the nobility, both male and female, revenged themselves upon the monotonous and rigid ceremony of the royal festivals by constantly frequenting the saloons of the Countess de Soissons, who, as superintendent of the queen's household (to which exalted post she had been appointed by the cardinal at the period of the Infanta's marriage), had apartments in the Tuileries, where, by her profuse expenditure, her wit, and, above all, her unconquerable audacity, she soon succeeded in making her circle the center of gallantry, plotting, and intrigue.

The principal feature of her receptions was the perfect freedom which they permitted, all the guests being more or less connected, and all strangers resolutely excluded; and there Louis XIV., feeling, like his courtiers, the charm of an utter freedom from restraint, which he could never enjoy in his own apartments, spent evening after evening, unconsciously acquiring that grace and ease of manner by which he was so eminently distinguished in after-life.* His vanity and his ambition had been alike flattered by an alliance with the crown of Spain, and these, superadded to the youthful beauty of his wife, had deceived him for a time into the belief that he returned an affection which on her part was at once ardent and sincere; but he soon awakened from the happy illusion, and discovered that the void in his heart, left by the absence of Mary de Mancini, was by no means supplied.

In the midst of these courtly diversions, the cardinal, hourly sinking as he was in health, determined to invite the king and queen to a grand ballet, which should transcend all that had yet been seen at Paris; and he accordingly caused the Gallery of Kings to be decorated with columns of gold serge on a ground of red and green, which had been manufactured at Milan; but, in the course of hanging these costly draperies, they by some means took fire; and the magnificent roof of the gallery, painted by Fremine, and representing Henry IV. under the figure of Jupiter exterminating the Titans, was utterly destroyed, as well as all the royal portraits executed by Janet and Porbus.†

This shock overcame the cardinal, who considered it as an evil omen; and made no effort to escape, until he was

* Mémoires du Duc de St. Simon.

† Peter Porbus was a native of Ghent, who established himself at Bruges, where he acquired considerable reputation. The portrait of St. Hubert, at Ghent, and that of the Duke d'Alençon, at Antwerp, are esteemed as his best works. He died in 1583.

aroused from his stupor by the captain of his guard, who supported him with some difficulty from the room, pale, trembling, and terrified to such an excess, that those who saw him under the influence of this morbid horror at once felt that its result must be fatal. The apartment in which he had been sitting was in flames an instant after he had been removed. He was conveyed to the Mazarin palace, where his physician was instantly summoned, and had no sooner ascertained the state of his patient than he called in eleven of his professional brethren; and when the consultation had terminated, at once returned to the sick-chamber, and announced to the cardinal that although science might enable them to prolong his existence for a certain period, his malady was beyond cure, and must, ere very long, terminate fatally.

Mazarin received this intelligence with more firmness than could have been anticipated, and merely requested to be informed with equal frankness of the probable duration of his life. On being told that he might still survive a couple of months, he replied that two months would suffice for all that he had yet to accomplish; and bade the physician leave him, and during his absence consider how he could best further his fortunes; after which he retired to his closet to meditate upon the great change that awaited him.

Some days afterward he sent to request that *Monsieur* would pay him a visit, and during the interview presented him with fifty thousand crowns; and thenceforward every one was convinced that he felt his end to be rapidly approaching.

His weakness increased hour by hour, while the declaration of Guénaud that he had only two months more to live was continually present to him by day and haunted his dreams by night. On one occasion, when Brienne*

* Henry Augustus, Count de Brienne, who died in 1666, leaving behind him his Memoirs, commencing at the accession of Louis XIV.,

entered his chamber on tiptoe, the valet-de-chambre of His Eminence having warned him that his master was dozing in an arm-chair beside the fire, the visitor discovered that he was convulsed with agitation, although evidently in a profound sleep. His body rocked to and fro, impelled by its own weight; and his head swung from the back of his chair to his knees, as he flung himself to the right and left incessantly; and during the lapse of five minutes that M. de Brienne continued to watch his movements, he asserts that the pendulum of a clock did not vibrate more rapidly than the frame of the sufferer. At intervals he uttered a few words, but in so low and choked a voice that they were unintelligible; and at length Brienne, unable longer to endure so wretched a spectacle, and fearful lest the sick man should fall into the fire, summoned his attendant from the antechamber to his assistance.

As he was aroused from his troubled sleep, the cardinal betrayed the secret which was preying upon his vitals; the name of his physician and the period of existence which had been assigned to him were the first sounds that escaped his livid lips; and when those about him endeavored to cheer him by the remark that Guénaud was only mortal, and his judgment consequently fallible, he answered, with a heavy sigh, that Guénaud understood his trade!

Yet still, despite this moral and physical prostration, the indomitable minister turned his attention to the establishment of his remaining nieces, and affianced Hortensia, the most beautiful of the two, to the Duke de la Meilleraye, grand-master of the king's household, on condition that he should assume the name of Mazarin, with an annual income of fifteen hundred thousand livres, and immense personal effects. To Marianne, who was yet a child, he moreover bequeathed a sufficient dower to enable her to enter and terminating at the death of Mazarin. Originally secretary to the cardinal, he afterward became an ambassador, and minister for foreign affairs.

the family of Bouillon when her age should permit her to do so; while, as regarded the Princess de Conti and the Countess de Soissons, he had already secured to the former the superintendence of the household of the Queen-Mother, and to the latter that of the reigning queen. Hortensia, to whom, despite the affection which he had long felt for her, he had always denied every thing beyond common necessaries, herself relates the delight which she experienced when, so soon as her marriage had been determined on, her uncle called her into his cabinet; and, in addition to a splendid *trousseau*, presented to her a casket containing ten thousand pistoles in gold. The cardinal had no sooner left her at liberty to examine her new acquisitions than she sent for her brother, the Marquis de Mancini, and her sister Marianne, and desired them to take what they pleased. All the trio then filled their pockets; and as, when they had done this, there still remained about three hundred louis in the casket, they opened the windows, and threw them into the court of the palace, in order that the lacqueys who were assembled there might scramble for the prize.

This adventure soon reached the ears of the cardinal, and the ingratitude and folly which it exhibited added another pang to his dying hours, which had already become embittered by a sudden remorse on the subject of his enormous wealth. The Cardinal de Richelieu, a man of high birth and ancient family, had felt that he had a right to possess a princely revenue; but Mazarin, whose origin was at best equivocal, and who had been the architect of his own fortunes, at whose extent he learned to shudder in the solitude of a death-chamber, became terrified as he reflected that he was able to bequeath more than forty millions to his family. His confessor, a conscientious Théatine monk,* startled like himself at the

* The Théatines were a religious order, instituted in 1524 by St. Gaétan de Thienne, Peter Caraffa, bishop of Théato, afterward Pope

unheard-of amount of his wealth, which Mazarin mentioned in the course of his confession, allowing that he considered it as a sin; at once declared that His Eminence would be damned if he did not forthwith make restitution of that portion of the money which had been ill acquired; to which the cardinal rejoined that he owed all to the bounty of the king. The honest ecclesiastic was not to be deceived, however, by such a compromise with principle, and retorted, with the same firmness, that the cardinal must compel himself to distinguish between what he had actually received from the sovereign as a free gift and what he had himself appropriated; upon which Mazarin, in despair at such an announcement, declared that in that case he must restore the whole. He then reflected for an instant, and desired that M. Colbert might be immediately sent to his apartment.

When Colbert had obeyed the summons, the cardinal confided to him the difficulty which had arisen; and the former at once advised, in order to remove his scruples, and to prevent his immense fortune from passing away from his family, that he should make a donation of all that he possessed to the king, who would not fail in his royal generosity to annul the act at once. Mazarin approved

under the name of Paul IV., and several other distinguished persons. Clement VII. sanctioned the institution, in 1529, under the name of regular clerks: a novel description of priests, living in a community, and forming different societies or congregations, some of which exacted solemn vows, others merely simple ones, and others again from whom no vow whatever was required. The Théatines were the first community who bore the appellation. The name of Théatines was given to them in consequence of the Bishop of Théato having been one of their founders. They wore a black frock, a black cloke, and white stockings. They undertook to reform the clergy, to instruct the young, to nurse the sick, and to contend against heretics. Throughout all France they possessed only one establishment, which was situated in Paris. Their order was suppressed and their convent destroyed in 1790. The Théatines produced many individuals who distinguished themselves both by their science and their virtues.

the expedient ; and on the 3d of March the necessary document was prepared ; but three days having elapsed without the restoration of his property, he became the victim of a thousand fears ; and as he sat in his chair he wrung his hands with agony. The wealth for which he had toiled and sinned—which he had wrenched alike from the voluptuous noble and the industrious artisan, had, as he believed, passed away from him forever. The labor of his life was rendered of none avail ; and the curses which he had accumulated upon his own head had failed even to gild his tomb. “My poor family !” he exclaimed at intervals ; “my poor family ! They will be left without bread.”

This bitter suspense was not, however, fated to be of long duration. On the third day from the transmission of the deed of gift, Colbert entered his chamber radiant with success, and placed the recovered document in his hands, with the intelligence that the king had definitively refused to accept the offering ; and that he authorized the minister to dispose of all his property as he should see fit. On receiving this assurance, the worthy Théatine declared himself satisfied, and at once bestowed the absolution which he had previously withheld ; and he had no sooner done so than Mazarin drew from beneath his bolster a will which he had already prepared, and delivered it to Colbert.

A week before his death a singular whim seized the sick man : he caused himself to be shaved, his mustaches to be trimmed, and covered his cheeks with red and white paint, to a degree which rendered his complexion more fresh and brilliant than it had ever been during his period of health. He then entered his chair, and made a tour of the gardens despite the cold February wind, to the great astonishment of the courtiers who were dispersed in the avenues ; but the effort was beyond his strength, and he soon fell back upon his pillows, desiring that he might be conveyed to his apartment.*

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

Meanwhile the king continued to pursue his usual amusements, dancing in the different ballets, and supping with the Queen-Mother; but the illness of the minister at length became so grave that all business was suspended. The marriage of Hortensia had taken place, but necessarily without any of those festivities by which it would, under other circumstances, have been attended; and her husband had at once assumed the name of Duke de Mazarin.

From the time that the cardinal received the last sacraments, the courtiers were excluded from his chamber; and ingress was forbidden to all save the king, the queen, and M. de Colbert. During one of his visits, Louis entreated that the minister would give him whatever advice he might deem desirable, declaring his intention to profit by it to the utmost.

“Sire,” said the dying man, “know how to respect yourself, and you will be respected: never have a prime minister; and employ M. de Colbert whenever you require the assistance of an adviser at once intelligent and devoted.”

It was on this occasion also that he made use of nearly the same words in which, as we have mentioned elsewhere, he was himself presented by the Cardinal Bentivoglio to the Cardinal Barberino: “I owe every thing to you, Sire; but I believe that I cancel my obligation to Your Majesty by giving you Colbert.”

Ultimately the cardinal expired early in the morning of the 9th of March, “more like a philosopher than a Christian,”* at the age of fifty-two, having ruled the kingdom of France during a period of eighteen years. He was scarcely regretted even by those whose fortunes he had founded; neither the king nor the Queen-Mother made any show of grief beyond the first few days; and so little was either really affected by the decease of the man who had, whatever might be the other vices of his administration,

* Louis XIV., sa Cour, et le Regent.

raised France to a high and dignified station among the nations of Europe, that Louis, on awakening in the morning, no sooner ascertained his death than he immediately rose, and summoned Letellier, Fouquet, and Lionne to a secret council, in which he informed them of his future intentions; after which he had an interview with the Queen-Mother, with whom he dined, and subsequently left Vincennes, where the court was then residing, in a close carriage, for Paris; while Anne of Austria, twice widowed in fact, although not in heart, followed in a chair with bearers, attended by the Marquis de Beaufort, her first equery, and Nogent-Bautru, her jester, who enlivened her journey by their unceasing gayety.

The administration of the kingdom was regulated two days before the death of the cardinal according to his advice, and every arrangement had been already made when Harlai de Chanvalon, the president of the ecclesiastical assembly, waited upon the king to inquire to whom he must in future address himself on questions of public business, and received the concise reply, "*To Myself.*"

St. Simon asserts that it was, doubtless, the enormous wealth accumulated by the cardinal which decided Louis XIV. to dispense, throughout the remainder of his reign, with a prime minister, as well as to exclude all ecclesiastics from his council. Well, indeed, might he form such a resolution; for the fortune which Mazarin left behind him was colossal, and his will declared the disposal of fifty millions, while, at the same time, it strictly forbade an inventory of his personal effects.

His principal legatee was Armand Charles de Laporte, Marquis de la Meilleraye, Duke de Rethelois de Mazarin, to whom he bequeathed all that might remain of his property after the acquittal of the several legacies, and who never ascertained the exact amount of his inheritance in consequence of the interdict which the cardinal had laid upon the inventory, although he succeeded in convincing

himself that it ranged between thirty-five and forty millions. The Princess de Conti, the Princess of Modena, the Princess de Vendôme, the Countess de Soissons, and the Princess Colonna, each received two hundred thousand crowns. The Marshal de Mancini, who had anticipated the entire inheritance of his uncle, and who was, consequently, dissatisfied with his bequest, had, for his portion, the Duchy of Nevers, nine hundred thousand crowns in ready money, a yearly income derived from his estate of Brouage, the moiety of his personal effects, and all his property in Rome. To the Marshal de Grammont he left a hundred thousand livres, and to Madame de Martinozzi, his sister, an annual income of eighteen thousand.

The special legacies were these : To the king, two cabinets filled with public records, in an unfinished state ; to the Queen-Mother, a brilliant, estimated at a million of livres ; to the reigning queen, a bouquet of diamonds ; to *Monsieur*, sixty gold marks, a hanging of tapestry, and thirty emeralds ; to Don Louis de Haro, the Spanish minister, a fine painting by Titian ; to the Count de Feusaldagne, a large clock in a gold case ; to His Holiness the Pope, six hundred thousand livres, to be employed in the war against the Turks ; to the poor, six thousand francs ; and finally, to the crown, eighteen large diamonds, to be called the Mazarins.*

Upon a survey of the enormous wealth thus amassed by one man, during an administration of twenty years, for a great portion of which period the nation had been drained of its resources both by foreign and intestine war, it is scarcely surprising that the cardinal should have been anxious to conceal, as far as possible, the exact amount of which he had pillaged the people.

In 1630 he had barely emerged from obscurity, and had, for all fortune, his diplomatic subtilty and his indomitable ambition ; while, in 1661, he died possessed of a sum equal

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

to two hundred millions of the money of the present day. He died unmourned even by his own family, every member of which he had raised to rank and opulence ; for his avarice had counteracted the effect of his exertions. Each felt that he was striving rather to exalt himself through them than to benefit their individual fortunes ; while they resented the parsimony which, after decorating them with a rank requiring a corresponding expenditure, left them in a position that prevented their upholding it with dignity. The results of such a system might have been foreseen ; the Princess de Conti and the Duchess de Mercœur, from the fact of their having married shortly after their arrival in France, escaped its effects ; but M. de Mancini and his remaining nieces became, so soon as they acquired the means, improvident and careless to a degree exceeding belief.

In short, the avarice of Mazarin had passed into a proverb, and both friends and enemies were subjected to its withering effects. Every circumstance afforded him a pretext for augmenting his hoards ; and his favorite axiom, whenever he was thwarted, of “ They sing, they shall pay for it,” was never once contradicted throughout his whole period of power. He is, moreover, accused, by more than one authority, of having stooped to measures degrading to his high rank, in order to increase his property, and is even suspected of having shared with the privateers the profits of their ocean forays, although this fact was never fully proved ; but the Dutch did not hesitate to brand him with a moral degradation which they would never have assigned to the Cardinal de Richelieu.

Mazarin felt no compunction in cheating at cards, which were, at that period, the ruling passion of the court, and, miser as he was, habitually risked the gain or loss of fifty thousand livres in a night ; while, as a natural consequence, his temper ebbed and flowed with his fortune.

Perhaps the most amusing anecdote connected with his

avarice, multitudinous as they were, was an equivoque which occurred only a few days before he breathed his last, and within an hour after he had obtained the absolution which his confessor had, for a time, withheld. The cardinal had just transmitted his will to Colbert when some one scratched at the door,* which having been interdicted, Bernouin, his confidential valet-de-chambre, dismissed the visitor.

“Who was there?” asked Mazarin, as his attendant returned to the bedside.

“It was M. de Tubeuf, the president of the chamber of accounts,” replied Bernouin; “and I told him that Your Eminence could not be seen.”

“Alas!” exclaimed the dying man, “what have you done? he owed me money; perhaps he came to pay it; call him back—call him back instantly.”

M. de Tubeuf was overtaken in the anteroom and introduced. Nor had the cardinal deceived himself. He was, indeed, come to liquidate a heavy gambling debt, and Mazarin welcomed him with as bright a smile as though he had years of life before him in which to profit by his good fortune, took the hundred pistoles which he had brought in his hand, and asked for his jewel-casket, which was placed upon the bed, when he deposited the coins in one of the compartments, and then began to examine with great interest the valuable gems which it contained.

“You must give me leave, M. de Tubeuf,” he said, with emphasis, as he lifted a fine brilliant and passed it rapidly across the light, “to offer to Madame de Tubeuf—”

The president of accounts, believing that the cardinal, in acknowledgment of the heavy sums which he had from time gained at the card-table, on his account, since he had been

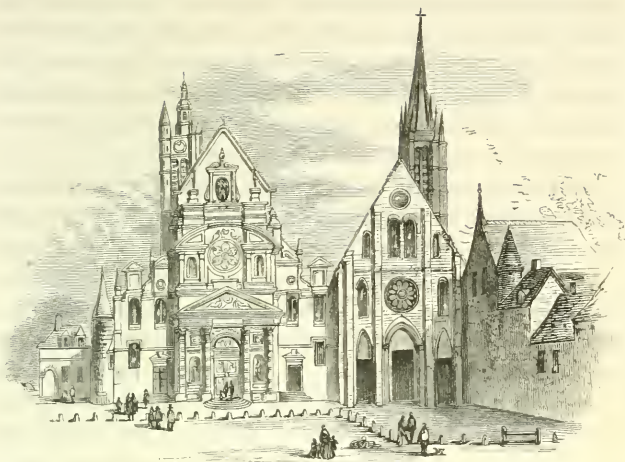
* At this period bells were unknown in France, and every courtier carried, in the pocket of his vest, a small comb with steel teeth, with which he scratched against the door of the apartment where he desired to enter.

too ill to act for himself, was about to present him with the precious gem which he then held in his trembling fingers, moved a pace or two nearer to the bed with a smile upon his lips.

“To offer to Madame de Tubeuf—” repeated the dying miser, still gazing upon the jewel—“to offer to Madame de Tubeuf—my very best compliments.” And, as he ceased speaking, he closed the casket, and made a sign that it should be removed.

Nothing remained for the discomfited courtier but to make his bow and depart, with the mortification of feeling that he had been, for an instant, so far the dupe of his own wishes, as to believe, that while he was yet alive, Jules de Mazarin could make up his mind to give away any thing for which he had no prospect of receiving an equivalent.*

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.



CHAPTER IV.

The Court-Mourning—Active Intrigues—Sudden Self-Assumption of Louis XIV.—The Three Ministers—Revelation of Colbert—Louis XIV. at three-and-twenty—Monsieur—Henrietta of England affianced to Monsieur—Departure of the English Princesses for London—Impatience of Monsieur—Anne of Austria retires from the Court; her Malady—Return of the Queen and Princess of England—The Princess Henrietta and the Duke of Buckingham—Marriage of the Duke d'Orleans—Daily Habits of Louis XIV.—Mutual Jealousy of the young Queen and Monsieur—Hidden Motives of Madame—The King attaches himself to Madame—Astonishment of Fouquet—The Duchess de Navailles; her *Repartée*—Mademoiselle d'Houdancourt—High-heartedness of Madame de Navailles—The Iron Gratings—Mademoiselle de la Vallière.

IN order to dissimulate as much as possible the general joy which was felt by all classes on the demise of the cardinal, the king resolved upon a general mourning. The order was unprecedented, for it compelled not only the court, but all the princes of the blood to assume a mourn-

ing garb for a minister who was himself neither a prince, nor related, in the most remote degree, to the royal family. There was, however, no alternative; for the king and the two queens having given the example, nothing remained but to follow it; and the court was, accordingly, crowded with sable garments and smiling faces, producing an anomaly as striking as it was inconsistent.

The death of Mazarin filled the court with the wildest hopes and the most active intrigue. The pretty women who figured in the royal circle flattered themselves that a prince of two-and-twenty, who had once been sufficiently the slave of his passions to offer his crown to a subject, might be easily governed under the influence of a new attachment; the younger of the courtiers indulged the belief that the reign of favoritism was about to recommence, while each of the ministers anticipated individual supremacy. Not one among all those who were the most intimately interested in the progress of events suspected for a moment that Louis XIV., the deity of the court ballets, the slave of etiquette, and the unquestioning and supine pupil of an ambitious minister, would suddenly rouse himself from his moral lethargy, and take upon him the burden of the government.

Nothing could more distinctly prove the error under which all the great functionaries labored with regard to their young monarch than the fact that not one of them demanded a personal audience of His Majesty, but that each inquired to whom he was in future to address himself. We have already stated that his answer was, "*To MYSELF*;" but even startled as they were by such a reply, they never anticipated that he would persevere in a resolution so dissonant to his habits. They had been accustomed to consider him only as the votary of pleasure, and they had yet to learn that for some time past he had tried his strength, and resolved to fill worthily the exalted station which providence had assigned to him as a birthright. Determined to be-

come in fact, as well as in name, the sovereign of France, and remembering that, both by precept and example, Mazarin had warned him never again to subject himself to the despotism of a prime minister, he stringently defined the limits beyond which no public functionary might presume to act, and indicated to each the particular hour at which he was to report his proceedings to himself, giving to all the necessary power which alone could render their ministry effective, but watching over each with a tenacity of attention that rendered any abuse of authority impossible, or at least dangerous.

We have already stated that, immediately on ascertaining the demise of Mazarin, Louis XIV. had summoned to his presence Le Tellier, Lionne, and Fouquet; and they are personages too important to be passed over without a formal introduction to the reader.

Michel le Tellier, the war minister, was a man of handsome exterior and winning manners, timid in domestic life, but courageous and enterprising in politics—tolerably firm in pursuing measures once adopted, but, nevertheless, better calculated to follow than to lead. His greatest dread was that of becoming unpopular; and he was, perhaps, encouraged in this somewhat weak alarm by the consciousness that he was himself a dangerous enemy. He was mild and insinuating, always profuse in promises, which he was equally ready to forget, and eminently courteous and accessible; but his regard did not extend beyond these professions. His utter want of ambition was exhibited in a piece of advice which he offered to the king on the subject of the Chancellor Seguier, who was anxious to be elevated to the rank of a duke and peer: "Such exalted dignity, sire," he replied, when consulted by Louis XIV., "does not beseem the learned professions, it is good policy to accord them only to military prowess:" a decision which blighted all the exertions and hopes of his eldest son (Louvois), who never succeeded, despite his

eminent services, in effacing from the mind of his royal master the remark made by his father, who had assuredly never reflected on the probable consequences of such an opinion in his own family. Louvois was the victim of this unguarded aphorism; but Segulier was eventually exempted from its influence, for he ultimately obtained the coveted rank which was denied to the able son of the minister.*

Hughes de Lionne was a gentleman of Dauphiny, and a more able diplomatist than his colleague, Le Tellier, a fact which was so well known to all the foreign ministers that they redoubled their caution when compelled to treat with him personally. Whenever a necessity for exertion arose De Lionne was indefatigable, and fulfilled his arduous duties with a zeal and an ability almost unequalled; but the crisis once passed, he again turned all his energies toward those sensual pleasures to which he was a willing slave, and sacrificed without hesitation his fortune, his health, and even his natural indolence, to the gaming-table, the banquet, and other still more questionable vices.†

* Michel le Tellier was the son of a councilor of the *Cour des Aides* (exchequer), and was born in Paris in the year 1603. He was, in the first place, a councilor of the grand council, then (in 1631) king's advocate at the Chatelet of Paris, and master of requests. Appointed steward of Piedmont in 1640, he secured the favor of Mazarin, who made him war secretary of state, and to whose interests he remained attached throughout the whole of the civil war. He was intrusted with all the negotiations between the court and the rebel princes, especially Gaston d'Orleans and the Prince de Condé; and it was by his influence that the treaty of Ruel was ultimately concluded. After having been the minister of Anne of Austria during her regency, he continued to serve Louis XIV. in the same capacity. He coöperated with Colbert in the overthrow of the superintendent Fouquet, and obtained for his son, the Marquis de Louvois, the survivorship of his office as secretary of state. In 1677 he was made chancellor and keeper of the seals, and in this trust he exhibited a zeal both vigilant and active. He was one of the principal movers of the revocation of the edict of Nantes. He died in 1685.

† *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de Louis XIV. Choisy.*

Nicholas Fouquet, whose name became famous, owing to his extraordinary reverse of fortune, was a man whose genius was essentially diplomatic. Full of resources, of which he never hesitated to avail himself to the utmost, he frequently discovered a mean of successful enterprise in the very circumstances which to others appeared pregnant only with danger, and hopeless from their entanglement. Learned in the law, well read in polite literature, and an amateur of art—brilliant in conversation, high-bred in his deportment, and magnificent in all his ideas, he no sooner conferred a service than he at once placed the person whom he had obliged in the position of a friend, and confided in his reciprocal esteem without one misgiving that it would fail. He possessed, preëminently, moreover, the rare and difficult talent of listening, not only with patience, but with apparent interest, to the most dull and vapid communications, and always replying at the right moment and in the most agreeable manner, by which means he generally contrived to dismiss those to whom he had given audience more than half satisfied, though they had not succeeded in inducing him to admit their claims. A finished voluptuary, he never suffered the duties of his ministry to interfere with the pleasures to which he was addicted; but affecting to retire to his villa at St. Maude, in order that he might work without interruption, he was accustomed to leave a crowd of courtiers in his antechamber, loud in their admiration of the indefatigable labor to which so great a man devoted himself without comment or reluctance, and to descend by a secret stair to a small garden, where he abandoned himself to a most degrading dissipation, in the society of some of the most beautiful and high-born women of Paris, who, seduced by his gold, and careless of their own honor, became the shameful partners of his disgraceful orgies.

Liberal to an excess toward literary men, whom he was able to appreciate and anxious to reward, he became the

friend of Racine, La Fontaine, and Molière, the Mæcenas of Le Brun* and Le Notre; and he pleased himself with the belief that he should be enabled to govern the young king by directing at the same time his official labors and his private pleasures. He deceived himself, however; for, as we have already shown, Louis XIV. had resolved henceforward to act by and of himself.

Such were the three individuals to whom, two hours after the death of Mazarin, the king announced his intention to become his own prime minister; and while Le Tellier and Lionne merely bowed somewhat incredulously, a smile played upon the lip of Fouquet. He held the key of the public chest; and accustomed as he was to guide all around him with a golden rein, he never doubted that in his case, at least, the royal purpose must soon be rescinded.† Hitherto, whenever Louis had applied to him for a supply, he had contented himself by replying, "Sire, the treasury of Your Majesty is empty; but His Eminence will, no doubt, advance you a loan." Now, however, no further appeal could be made to the equivocal liberality of the cardinal, and Fouquet felt that he was himself all-powerful upon the question of finance, while the profuse expenditure and uncalculating magnificence of the pomp-loving young sovereign left him little doubt that his assistance would soon become imperative.

Accident, that providence of princes, had, however, ordained otherwise. After a brief conference with his ministers, Louis had forthwith proceeded to the Louvre; when, on entering his cabinet, the first person whom he encountered was Colbert, who had been awaiting him for

* Charles le Brun, an historical painter, and one of the heads of the French School of Art, was born in Paris in 1619. He was laden with honors and generosity by Louis XIV. His most famous works are the *Battles of Alexander*, the *Penitent Magdalen*, the *Martyrdom of St. Stephen*, &c. He also executed a great number of frescoes in the chateau of Fouquet. He died in 1690.

† Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

the last two hours, and who requested a private audience upon the instant. Startled by the urgency of his manner, the king at once retired with him into the deep recess of the window, beyond the hearing of the courtiers, where Colbert informed him that he came to indicate to His Majesty the different places in which Mazarin had concealed or buried nearly fifteen millions of ready money, of which no mention had been made in his will, and which he (Colbert) consequently imagined had been intended by the cardinal to replenish the treasury of His Majesty, which was at that time utterly exhausted. The young sovereign listened with astonishment, and demanded to know if he were certain of the extraordinary fact that he advanced; to which Colbert replied by furnishing him with proofs of his assertion.

No circumstance could have occurred at that particular moment so welcome to Louis XIV. as the discovery of this hidden treasure, which at once, and for a long period, rendered him independent of the superintendent of finance; nor was the revelation less important to the fortunes of Colbert himself.

Immediate measures were concerted for the recovery of the various sums designated by the zealous and fortunate young secretary, and with almost universal success. At Sedan five millions were found, two at Brisac, six at La Fère, and between five and six at Vincennes. A considerable sum had also been secreted in the Louvre; but although the spot where it had been deposited was found, the money had disappeared; and it was then remembered that Bernouin, the confidential attendant of the cardinal, had left the place on the previous evening for more than two hours before the death of his master, and it at once became apparent how the interval had been employed.

Despite this subtraction, however, Louis XIV. at once found himself one of the richest monarchs of Christendom; for his private funds amounted to no less than from eighteen

to twenty millions, of which the value was greatly enhanced by the fact that no one, not even Fouquet himself, was aware of the extent of his resources.

His first and most anxious care was to regulate the etiquette of his court, which had been necessarily invaded during the extreme and sudden changes to which his reign had hitherto been subjected; for even at this early period Louis XIV. began to manifest that respect for his own individuality which he was not long in exacting from all by whom he was surrounded. He was then in his twenty-third year; and although the cardinal had, as a matter of personal policy, caused his education to be so neglected as to expose him to the frequent mortification of feeling his incapacity to enforce opinions of whose validity he was himself convinced, but which he could not put forth with the propriety exacted from him by a sense of his own dignity, he was, nevertheless, in society, the model of an accomplished gentleman. Of middling height, but admirably proportioned, he increased his stature by the adoption of high-heeled shoes, which raised him some inches. His hair was magnificent, and he wore it in masses upon his shoulders, after the fashion of earlier times; his nose was large and well formed, his mouth agreeable in its expression, his eyes of a deep blue, and his mode of utterance slow and strongly accentuated, lending to all he said a gravity incompatible with his years, but which produced an effect admirably in accordance with the impression that he studied to produce.

No contrast could be greater than that which existed between the royal brothers, both physically and morally. Philip of France was a prince of gentle, or, rather, of effeminate manners; of ardent, but merely impulsive courage, and a perfect type of the luxurious and chivalric nobility by whom the last of the Valois had been surrounded, and who had served to distinguish his reign alike by their vices and their daring; while, with these qualities, it will be

readily understood that Philip had long supported, with undisguised disgust, the superiority assumed by a brother who sought to crush, by his overweening arrogance, all those who were subservient to him. The whole boyhood of the two princes had consequently been one perpetual struggle; but for the last few years the younger had ceased to contend beneath the iron hand which had ascertained the extent of its own strength.

Before the death of the cardinal, *Monsieur* had solicited the Queen-Mother to obtain the consent of the king to his marriage with the Princess Henrietta of England; and Anne of Austria, who was tenderly attached to the young princess, readily undertook the mission. Its accomplishment, however, proved to be a matter of more serious difficulty than she had anticipated; for Louis had never overcome his boyish prejudice against the daughter of Charles I., and excused himself by alledging that an alliance with the English would be displeasing to the French people; nor was Mazarin less repugnant to the marriage; for he had still to resent the refusal of Charles II. to receive the hand of his niece, forgetting that the monarch was never likely, on his side, to forget that his alliance had been coldly declined when he was in misfortune. Nevertheless, the arguments of the queen at length prevailed over the distaste of her son; and it was agreed between Anne of Austria and Henrietta-Maria, that the marriage of their children should take place immediately after the return of the latter from England, whither she was about to proceed with her daughter, in order to enjoy the happiness of seeing Charles II. at length peaceably in possession of the throne of his ancestors.

A short time subsequently to the arrangement, she accordingly took leave of the court, to the great mortification of *Monsieur*, who was vehement in his entreaties that she would shorten her visit for his sake; and on arriving in London she found the Duke of Buckingham, the son of

him to whom Anne of Austria was indebted for the most romantic episode of her life, enamored of her widowed daughter, the princess-royal; but as, like his father, he professed but little constancy in his attachments, he had no sooner been presented to the Princess Henrietta than he became madly in love with this new divinity.

To the young and amiable princess, the transition from an existence of constraint, monotony, and privation, to the glitter and gallantry of a court like that of Charles II., was perfect enchantment; and she began for the first time to experience a happy consciousness of her own individual importance, which was enhanced by the constant receipt of letters from *Monsieur* to the queen, urging her early return to Paris, and the accomplishment of her promise.

The prince was, indeed, most anxious to terminate the marriage, not from any overweening attachment to his promised bride, for he was incapable of violent passion, but because he regarded it as an event which, by creating for him an independent position, must in some degree emancipate him from the authority of his brother; while Henrietta-Maria was the more inclined to comply with his entreaties from the desire which she felt to conduce to the comfort and consolation of Anne of Austria, who, after having seen herself all-powerful during the regency, had lived to witness the gradual decline of her influence, and to feel herself a mere cipher in the brilliant court which had once bowed down before her.

At the death of Mazarin she had made an effort to recover her lost authority; but Louis XIV. had no sooner detected the latent intention than he gave her to understand, what he had already declared to his ministers, that he would brook no rival near his throne; and, moreover, that this was no sudden resolution, fated to be rescinded as lightly as it had been made, but a firm determination, long formed, and which would admit of neither expostulation nor argument.

The Queen-Mother bowed beneath this last disappointment with a patient dignity which astonished all those who were conversant with the inherent haughtiness and impetuosity of her character, and began to prepare at her favorite Val-de-Grâce a retreat, in which the culture of flowers became her principal amusement. Few were yet aware that the fearful malady, to which she ultimately fell a victim, was already making fearful inroads on her constitution, and exposing her to concealed but terrible suffering. Under these circumstances, therefore, the English queen decided upon leaving London without further delay, despite the inclemency of the season; and the Duke of Buckingham, at his earnest entreaty, received permission from Charles II. to escort herself and the Princess Henrietta to Paris.

During the voyage, the vessel in which they were embarked struck upon the sands, and was for a time in imminent danger of going to pieces; and it was during that awful interval that the duke, utterly careless of himself, but maddened by the idea of the peril to which the Princess Henrietta was exposed, put so little constraint upon his passion that it soon ceased to be a secret to those about him. At length the vessel was, with considerable difficulty, rescued from its perilous position, but so much damaged that it was found necessary to put in to the nearest port, where it had no sooner arrived than the princess was attacked by measles. At this new calamity the duke became outrageous in his despair, and committed such excesses that the royal party had no sooner anchored at Havre, where they were to remain a few days in order that the invalid might recruit her strength, than the queen insisted that Buckingham should immediately set out for Paris to announce their arrival. Resistance was of course impossible, and on the evening of the same day the duke proceeded on his mission.

Within a week he was followed by the royal travelers,

who were met by *Monsieur* at a considerable distance from the capital, with all the eagerness of a lover—although, as we have seen, his demonstrations were in reality due to an influence less flattering to the princess than that of her own charms. In his suite was the Count de Guiche, who had become his most intimate friend and favorite, and who was one of the most elegant nobles of the court, and had, moreover, secured in the heart of Henrietta a feeling of gratitude for his gallant championship during the most cruel trial of her girlhood.

Buckingham's first folly in the capital was to parade his jealousy of the Count de Guiche; and he did this with so little discretion that *Monsieur* was soon informed of the circumstance, and made a formal complaint to the two queens, who affected to laugh at his uneasiness—the Queen of England, strong in the virtue of her daughter, and Anne of Austria in the belief that the power which she had possessed over the father would prove equally influential over the son.

Philip was, nevertheless, not to be appeased so easily: a rumor of the headlong passion with which the Princess Henrietta had inspired Buckingham had long been rife in Paris; and she who had, during so many years, been totally overlooked and utterly unappreciated, suddenly became the object of universal curiosity and interest. The jealousy of *Monsieur*, which was easily aroused, would have required no further stimulus than this one fact, even without the presence of the original culprit; but this annoyance, superadded to the other, was too much for his powers of endurance; and he consequently exacted that, after a brief sojourn at the French court, sufficient to enable him to fulfill the necessary formalities of his mission, the duke should be invited to return to England.

Meanwhile the preparations for the marriage were in active progress; and the king presented to his brother, as a wedding present, the appanage of the late Duke d'Or-

leans, with the exception of Blois and Chambord; while the arrival of the English princess, to the great delight of the court, put an abrupt conclusion to the mourning for the cardinal, which gave place to the fashions which she introduced.

From an interesting child, Henrietta, embellished by happiness, and by a consciousness of her exalted rank, had suddenly been transformed into a lovely and dignified woman. Tall and graceful, with a complexion of the most exquisite beauty, and possessed of a refined taste, which taught her to profit by her personal and acquired advantages, she saw herself at once the principal ornament of the most supercilious court in Europe, and the model upon which all the great ladies of the royal circle strove to fashion both their dress and their deportment. The revolution was a startling one; nor was the king himself exempted from its influence.

The austerities of Lent not permitting the celebration of any great public festivities, it was decided that the marriage of *Monsieur* should take place privately at the Palais-royal, in the presence only of the royal family, and the persons of their immediate retinue. On the 31st of March it was, consequently, performed by the Bishop of Valence, having for its principal witnesses the king and queen, the Queen-Mother, the Queen of England, the daughters of the late Duke d'Orleans, the Prince de Condé, and the Duke of Buckingham; and a few days subsequently the latter left the court of France in a state of mind bordering upon distraction.

At this period the king commenced the system of regularity upon which he had already decided, and which became ere long the undeviating etiquette of the court. He rose at eight o'clock, performed his devotions, dressed himself, and then read for an hour, at the close of which time he partook of a light breakfast; left his chamber at ten, attended the council, and at midday heard mass; during the

interval which remained until the dinner hour, he appeared in public, or went to the apartments of the two queens; and after the repast he generally remained a considerable time with the royal family. He then closeted himself with his ministers, either collectively or separately; gave audiences, during which he exhibited great urbanity and patience; and received petitions, to which he replied on days previously reserved for that purpose. The rest of the afternoon he passed in conversation with the queen and the Queen-Mother, or in the little court of the Countess de Soissons; at the card-table, but never for a heavy stake, or at a mere game of chance; in driving, or at the theater, according to the season; and this routine was never interrupted save during the hunting-season, or on the occasion of some extraordinary festivity. Finally, at supper, which was his favorite repast, he collected about him all the princesses and their ladies of honor, and terminated the evening by ballets or assemblies.

At the end of April, the court removed to Fontainebleau, where they were followed by the Prince de Condé and the Duke de Beaufort, who had become two of the most assiduous and popular members of the royal circle; and a month had been spent in perpetual fêtes, when the harmony which had hitherto subsisted between all the members of the illustrious family was suddenly interrupted by the awakened jealousy of the young queen, who one day threw herself at the feet of Anne of Austria, bathed in tears and trembling with emotion, and confided to her, in the anguish of her heart, that the king had fallen in love with *Madame*.

The Queen-Mother was more grieved than surprised by this communication; for *Monsieur*, jealous on his side, had already complained of the same fact; and Anne of Austria had found herself unable, from internal conviction, to advance arguments sufficiently powerful to remove the impression from his mind.

There was, indeed, too much reason for the uneasiness of both parties; for the king, who, during her infancy, had not only felt, but unhesitatingly expressed, his contempt for the English princess—and who, when for a moment her marriage with himself had been mooted by the cardinal, had declared that she was too thin, that she did not please him, and that it was impossible for him ever to love her—had discovered, from the moment in which she became the wife of his brother, that all their tastes and feelings assimilated, and had attached himself to her society with a tenacity that excited universal remark.

Nor was the princess, on her side, altogether blameless. The depreciating remarks of the king had been repeated to her during her girlhood, and had not only produced a dangerous influence over her mind, but become, unconsciously to herself, the motive of her actions. Had any one ventured to tell her that, in accepting the hand of *Monsieur*, when she might have commanded that of one of the reigning sovereigns of Europe, she was impelled by the hope of forcing Louis to recant his opinions and to confess the power of the attractions which he had previously affected to despise, she would have been indignant at the accusation, while such was, nevertheless, the impulse under which she acted.

For this unacknowledged purpose—unacknowledged, doubtlessly even to her own heart—she had studied to become a proficient in all the graces which adorn a court; in all the endearing qualities which are the best charm of woman, whatever may be her worldly rank; and in those intellectual qualities which could elevate her character, and render her superior to the mere butterflies by whom she was surrounded; and she had succeeded only too well in her attempt. Such combined attractions, both of person and mind, could not fail in their effect upon so susceptible a nature as that of Louis XIV.; and an intimacy en-

sued which, although perfectly warranted by the closeness of their family connection, was not without considerable danger to both parties.

There was a bitter exultation mingled with the triumph of the princess, which can be appreciated only by those who, like herself, have been subjected to intense humiliation, and at last experience the power of revenging it upon its author. Henrietta did not believe for an instant that she could love the king; but she nevertheless rejoiced in the conviction that she could sway at will the feelings of the haughty sovereign before whose insults she had formerly quailed; and she consequently left no effort untried to render her circle the center of pleasure and attraction: the favorite amusements of Louis were those of most frequent recurrence in her apartments; the friends whom she selected were precisely those the best calculated to interest and occupy him. In short, ever bearing in remembrance that he had once ventured to underrate her merits and to reject her hand, she experienced a cruel satisfaction in perceiving that she had established her power over the heart of the king.*

As Louis held his court sometimes in her apartments, and sometimes in those of the Countess de Soissons, a close friendship was soon formed between them; but the young queen resolutely refused to become a sharer in their amusements. Sincerely attached to Anne of Austria, whom she rarely quitted; rigid in her devotional duties, and more retiring in her habits than was consistent with her rank, she could ill brook the partial desertion to which the difference in their habits condemned her; and she began to suspect a truth which was well calculated to imbitter her existence.

Despite the beauty of Maria Theresa, upon which Louis XIV. had congratulated himself at their first interview, he had never for an instant loved her. His heart was yet unweaned from a first and serious attachment, and no

* Mémoires de Madame de Motteville.

stranger could replace its object. He treated her, indeed, with the greatest consideration, both as a princess of Spain and as the Queen of France; but so cold a feeling could not satisfy a young and enthusiastic nature. Moreover, Maria Theresa was unfortunate enough to love her husband with all the ardor of her country; and she found herself estranged from his society, and compelled to seek her only amusement in speaking the language, and in dwelling upon the memories of her lost home with the Queen-Mother. As a sense of her moral isolation grew upon her, she shrunk more and more resolutely from the overpowering gayeties of the court, and sought to escape the harrowing spectacle of the gallantries bestowed by Louis upon the bevy of beauties by whom he was estranged from her society—thus unconsciously widening the gulf between them, and rendering the very estrangement over which she wept in secret the more habitual and hopeless.

And while the young queen thus mourned with bitter tears the loss of an illusion which had rendered the period of her marriage one proud and triumphant dream, each day appeared to strengthen the attachment between the fickle monarch and his brother's wife, although no word of passion had polluted the lips of either. Neither the remonstrances of the Queen-Mother, the prospect of the early birth of a dauphin, nor the arduous labors of the state to which he had condemned himself, diverted the attention of Louis XIV. from his devotion to *Madame*; and the magnificent fêtes which he instituted in her honor were a source of such enormous outlay that Fouquet was lost in astonishment as to whence the sovereign could derive the means of sustaining so profuse and uncalculating an expenditure, and awaited with some anxiety the exhaustion of his resources, in order that he might at last attain the coveted ascendancy over his mind through the medium of his necessities.

It was probably with a view to remove the too legitimate suspicions of the queen, by diverting them into another channel, that Louis, about this time, affected a violent inclination for Mademoiselle de la Motte Houdancourt, one of her maids of honor. These ladies were under the guardianship of the Duchess de Navailles,* who owed her place at court to the cardinal. Some privileges, contested between herself and the superintendent, excited the indignation of Madame de Soissons, who, in common with her sisters, had shown the greatest indifference on the death of the cardinal; but who, nevertheless, taunted the duchess by the remark, that in opposing the niece she was guilty of ingratitude toward the uncle; to which Madame de Navailles replied with calm dignity, that, could His Eminence return to earth, he would be more satisfied of her gratitude than of that of the Countess de Soissons.†

The position of the high-principled and scrupulous Duchess de Navailles was already sufficiently arduous before she raised up so powerful an enemy as the heartless and vindictive countess, who never forgave the stinging rejoinder which we have just quoted; for a spirit of gallantry had become diffused over the royal antechamber, which rendered her office by no means a sinecure. Nevertheless, Madame de Navailles continued to struggle against, not only the intrigues of the young

* Wife of Philip de Montault, Duke de Navailles, and de la Valette, peer and marshal of France; originally of Bigorre, where his family traced their descent from the 14th century. Born in 1621, he entered the household of the Cardinal de Richelieu as a page in 1635, abjured the Protestant religion, and attained to the highest military grades. He commanded the right wing of the cavalry at the battle of Senef, in 1674; and, in the following year, received the bâton of Marshal of France. He afterward obtained the ribbon of the order of the Holy Ghost, and the post of governor of the Duke d'Orleans. He died in 1684, without male issue.

† Souvenirs de Madame de Caylus.

nobles who enjoyed her perplexity, but also the folly of the giddy maids of honor themselves, who were but too willing to second their enterprise; for she felt that the dignity of her royal mistress was compromised by the levity of her charge, and she resolved at any sacrifice to enforce regularity and order.

Madame de Soissons had consequently a double motive for encouraging the coquetries of Mademoiselle Houdancourt; as, by so doing, she screened *Madame* on the one hand, and exasperated the Duchess de Navailles on the other; and the pupil whom she had selected proved so apt, that, ere long, Madame de Navailles had reason to apprehend that Louis contemplated an invasion of her apartments. The rumor had no sooner reached her, therefore, than she hastened to request a private audience of the king, with whom she expostulated both as a Christian and as a husband, about to bring disgrace beneath the roof of a young and virtuous wife; and for a time he supported her harangue with so much urbanity, that she began to hope she had convinced him of his error. She was, however, premature in her judgment. The imperious nature of Louis XIV., which loathed even the semblance of opposition, and his extreme selfishness, which led him to disregard every consideration that clashed with his own self-indulgence, soon prompted him to hint to the zealous duchess that she was incurring a great risk of exciting his displeasure; to which she respectfully, but unhesitatingly replied, that she had already reflected upon the probability that such would be the case, and was aware of all the misfortunes which the loss of his royal favor must inevitably entail upon her; being conscious that it was to His Majesty both her husband and herself owed alike their fortune and their position—he the lieutenancy of the light-horse, and she her situation as lady of honor, of both which His Majesty could in a moment deprive them; but that this fact, urgent as it was, could not alter her resolution

to fulfill her duties conscientiously; and then, throwing herself at his feet, she implored him to respect the household of the queen, and to remember that he was himself its master.

The king dismissed her angrily; but, on the morrow, chancing to find her in the circle of the Queen-Mother, he advanced and greeted her with a smile and an extended hand; and Madame de Navailles flattered herself that peace had thus tacitly been signed between them.* If, however, Louis were really sincere at the moment, this better feeling did not long endure; for, having detailed the scene to Madame de Soissons, she sarcastically congratulated him upon his patience; and the vanity of the king at once led him to pursue an adventure from which his better sense would have dissuaded him; and by thus making himself the tool of an ambitious woman, who was only anxious to mortify a rival, he subjected himself to a mortification unworthy of his exalted rank, and of the example which it enforced him to offer to the giddy courtiers about him.

On the other hand, the conscientious lady of honor, feeling, as she had frankly confessed to the king, that the prosperity of her family depended upon his favor; and anxious not to ruin her husband, save on valid and sufficient grounds, consulted her confessor, explaining the difficulty in which she found herself, and her determination to abide by his decision. It was soon given; for he at once declared that, as a Christian, she was called upon to sacrifice all worldly advantages rather than fail in her duty by an unworthy concession. The alternative was, nevertheless, a bitter one; and it was not without a great struggle that Madame de Navailles saw herself compelled to disregard all worldly considerations, in order to prove herself worthy of the confidence which was reposed in her; and the rather, as her resistance against aggression

* Mémoires de Madame de Motteville.

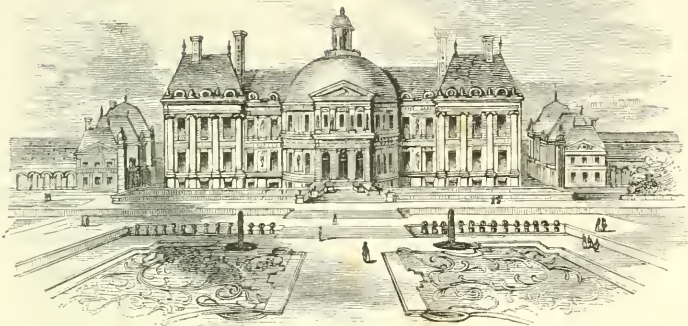
involved not only herself but her husband, whose position was also one of trust and dignity; but she never wavered; and, finding her best consolation in the conviction that she could only suffer in a good cause, she remained firm in her resolution; and, being given to understand that she must place no faith in the apparent repentance of the king, she immediately caused iron gratings to be placed outside the windows of the apartments of the maids of honor.

This extreme step did not, however, entail all the consequences which she had apprehended; for Louis contented himself by dismissing her from her guardianship of the very troublesome office to which she had been appointed, and conferring it upon the superintendent, who would, as he had good reason to know, prove less unaccommodating. This result, which formed a subject of conversation for all the court, sufficed to terminate a fancy which had never, upon the part of Louis, been a serious one; for even at the period when it commenced, his attention had already been attracted by *Mademoiselle de la Vallière*—that *La Vallière*, whose name was destined to become famous throughout Europe, and whose gentleness and devotion almost excused the errors which have thrown a veil of reproach over her name.

There never was, in all probability, an autobiography written, either by man or woman, which bore so thoroughly the stamp of truth and feeling as that of *Mademoiselle de la Vallière*; and there is no attempt, from the first page to the last, to palliate her fault, of which no one was a more severe critic than herself. Never for a moment deceived as to the extent of her error, it embittered even the most brilliant moments of her existence; and nothing, save the intense affection which she lavished upon the king—not as a sovereign, but as a man—not as the monarch

of France, but as the one and only individual who ever touched her heart—could have induced her so long to disregard the reproaches of a conscience which neither pomp nor passion had ever power to silence for an hour.





CHAPTER V.

Girlhood of La Vallière; her Advent at Court—The Court-Ballet—Louis XIV. in a Greek Tunic—The Confidence in the Forest—Suavity of the King—Jealousy of the Count de Guiche The Storm in the Park—The Double Secretary—The Lottery of the Queen-Mother—The Bracelets—Rivalry of Fouquet—The twenty thousand Pistoles—Indignation of La Vallière—Cabal against Fouquet; his Tergiversations; Louis XIV. resolves on his Arrest—The Fête at Vaux—The Journey to Nantes—Arrest of Fouquet; his private Papers—Letter of Madame de Sévigné—Anue of Austria and La Vallière save the Life of Fouquet.

LOUISE-FRANÇOISE DE LA BAUME DE BLANC, the daughter of the Marquis de la Vallière, was born at Tours in the year 1644. She lost her father almost in her infancy; and her mother, who was the daughter of the Seigneur de la Coutellaie, equery of the king's state stable, was left with a proud name and an inadequate income, which induced her to form a second marriage with M. de St. Rémy, who held the situation of controller of the household of

Gaston, Duke d'Orleans. At the court of that prince, Louise passed the early years of her girlhood, while her only brother, the Marquis de la Vallière, whom she seldom saw, spent the principal portion of his time at Tours. As she advanced to girlhood, the position of her step-father procured for her free ingress to the monotonous little court of *Madame*, who welcomed her with kindness, and where, without becoming officially one of her maids of honor, she was invested with all the privileges of the office, and passed most of her time. The circle of a prince, banished virtually, if not ostensibly, from the capital, offered no very great attractions to persons of her age; but to Louise the companionship of other young girls rendered the palace of Blois a paradise; for she guessed not how soon the serpent of passion was to glide among the roses of her peaceful Eden.

We have already recorded the brief visit paid to Blois by Louis XIV., when on his way to the frontier to claim the hand of the Infanta: a visit apparently so unimportant, and yet so fraught with consequence to at least two individuals, that it could not be passed over in silence. During the few hours of its continuance, Mademoiselle d'Orleans lost the last glimpse of the hope to which she had so fondly clung of seeing herself one day upon the throne of France; while Louise de la Vallière learned that the idolized and powerful sovereign of whom she had always thought with awe almost amounting to alarm, had, on his departure from Blois, awakened her to the existence of a new world of feeling, in which she found herself alone, hopeless, and bewildered. Now, for the first time, she began to understand the conversations which were daily taking place in the anteroom among her weary and discontented companions, who were constantly bewailing their exile from the courtly festivities of Paris. Now she began to comprehend that life might indeed present objects of greater interest than her birds, her flowers, or her

sports; but the conviction was confused: she never entertained an idea that she loved the king; she merely pictured to herself the happiness which must arise from seeing him, listening to his voice, and existing in his presence; and her own misery in being exiled, as she believed forever, from such a privilege.

And meanwhile Louis was on his way to Fontarabia, criticising the old-fashioned little court of Blois, and unconscious of the very existence of the fair and bashful girl whose whole being was absorbed in the memory of his transitory visit.

The illness and subsequent death of *Monsieur* supervened; and while she wept over the loss of her protector, Louise de la Vallière little suspected the effect which it would produce on her own fortunes. The result to her family was, indeed, sufficiently serious to absorb her attention, even at that early age; for, by this event, M. de St. Rémy was deprived of his office, and his pecuniary resources were painfully affected. On the dispersion of the regal establishment, some months subsequently, Louise, with an overburdened heart, walked to the palace to take leave of Mademoiselle de Montalais, her favorite friend, who had been appointed to a place in the household of the Princess Henrietta, then betrothed to the king's brother; and the departure of this lady was so bitter a trial that she was faint with weeping when she arrived at the chateau, and found herself in the presence of Madame de Choisy. Her grief was so evident and so sincere that the wife of the chancellor was touched by her emotion, and inquired if she would like to share the fortunes of her old companion by entering the household of the princess.

Louise smiled amid her tears. "In that case," said Madame de Choisy, "wipe your eyes; for all the arrangements are not yet made, and there will be room for you."

The promise was fulfilled. At the termination of a fortnight the appointment arrived; and a week was allowed

to the young maid of honor for the necessary preparations. Within that week the marriage of *Madame* took place; but Mademoiselle de la Vallière only entered upon her duties previous to the departure of the court for Fontainebleau, where she was suddenly lunched into a world of dissipation, splendor, and intrigue. She was soon remarked by the Count de Guiche; but although she received his attentions with gratitude, she repulsed his gallantries and avoided his society.

At this period she had just attained her seventeenth year; and, even while eclipsed in beauty by many of those about her, the charm of her unaffected modesty, the retiring timidity of her manner, the extreme purity of her complexion, her large and languishing blue eyes, and the profusion of flaxen hair which shaded her brow and bosom, gave a singular loveliness to her appearance, of which she alone was unconscious. Her figure, which was not yet formed, and a slight lameness, occasioned by a fall during her girlhood, were the only defects which even her enemies could discern in her appearance, save, perhaps, a slight trace of small-pox, which had in some degree impaired the smoothness of her skin; and, meanwhile, her peculiarly unobtrusive habits exempted her on all sides from either jealousy or suspicion.

Among the festivities at Fontainebleau a ballet took place, in which both the king and *Madame* bore an active part; Louis XIV. figured on the occasion as Ceres; and the *Grand Monarque*, who resented the most trifling want of respect from those around him, made his appearance in a Greek tunic and a coronet of golden wheat-ears; declaimed his own praises in the rhymes of Benserade; and, finally, figured in this unregal costume before the eyes of the whole court.* At the termination of the ballet, the company dispersed themselves about the park, where they

* "The ballet of *The Seasons* was danced by His Majesty, at Fontainebleau, on the 23d of July."—*Gazette de 1661*.

found in every direction tables sumptuously provided, of which the honors were done by nymphs and forest deities, crowned with ivy; but all these magnificent arrangements were almost unheeded by Mademoiselle de la Vallière, who was absorbed by the image of the king-goddess, whom she had so lately seen exhibiting the graces of his person amid applauding crowds; and she at length felt the gayety by which she was surrounded so oppressive that she suggested to Mesdemoiselles de Chalais, de Tonnay-Charente,* and de Montalais, that they should walk into the forest and repose themselves for a time in one of its dim recesses.

To this proposal they willingly consented; and after strolling for awhile, listening to the nightingales and watching the stars, which from time to time peeped through the foliage as it swayed beneath the voluptuous breeze of evening, they finally seated themselves under a large tree upon the border of the wood, and began to discuss anew the pleasures of the day and the chief actors in the gay scene which had formed their principal feature. For a time Louise bore no share in the conversation; but she was at length startled from her silence by an appeal to her judgment, when she unguardedly declared that she could give no opinion upon the subject discussed, and was only surprised that any man should be remarked beside the king.

This reply drew down upon her, as a natural consequence, the sarcasm of the whole party, who accused her of being so difficult that nothing save a crowned head would satisfy her vanity; when the poor girl, anxious to exculpate herself from a charge which she felt must overwhelm her with ridicule, should it become the gossip of the court, hastily exclaimed that they did her injustice; for that his crown could add nothing to his natural advantages; but was, on the contrary, the safeguard of those about him, as without it he would indeed be doubly dangerous.

* Afterward Madame de Montespan.

She had no sooner made this unwise rejoinder than she became aware of the extent of her imprudence; and while her three companions remained silent in astonishment, she sprung from the ground to escape, and discovered that two men were partially concealed behind the tree against which she had been leaning. A faint shriek instantly directed the attention of the whole party to the fact, and, terrified beyond control, they simultaneously fled in the direction of the chateau, where they arrived panting and breathless.

Once alone in her apartment, whither she immediately hastened, Louise de la Vallière wept bitterly over the folly of which she had been guilty. It was the first time that she had ventured to express her feelings, and the long-pent-up secret had escaped her she knew not how, although she was painfully conscious of the ridicule with which it was calculated to overwhelm her. In the agony of her repentance she flung herself upon her knees, and earnestly prayed that the consequences of her fault might be averted; but her emotion and alarm were, nevertheless, so great, that for a couple of days she was unable to perform her duties, or even to leave her room. Now, for the first time, she felt in their full force the difficulties of the position which she had coveted; and she trembled as she looked forward to again appearing before the malicious eyes of the court. There was, however, no alternative; and she was at length compelled to make the trial.

Montalais was, as she well knew, the greatest gossip-monger in the whole city; while Mademoiselle de Tonmay-Charente, who piqued herself upon her wit, was not likely to suffer so favorable an opportunity for its display to remain unimproved; and thus, beset on all sides, and only too well aware of her own want of self-possession, the poor girl stole from her chamber on the evening of the third day to take her place in the saloon of *Madame*. She traversed the anteroom without exciting either word or look which implied the betrayal of her secret; and for a mo-

ment she began to entertain the hope that she had wronged her companions, and that her folly was undivulged ; but a remark from the Duke de Roquelaure, who chanced to be in the circle of *Madame* when she entered, soon undeceived her ; and the shock was so great that she staggered, and would have fallen, had not Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente promptly come to her assistance, attributing her sudden faintness to fatigue : a plea of which she readily availed herself to request her dismissal for the evening.

When she found herself again alone, the unhappy girl more than ever saw the necessity of struggling against a weakness which could only tend to increase the difficulty of her position, and, at whatever cost, to combat the terror and shame by which she was oppressed. Having formed this resolution, she entered the apartments of *Madame*, on the following day, with an apparent composure which belied her real feelings.

As she had anticipated, the king was already there, and engaged in conversation with the different ladies of the suite, carefully addressing a few words to each as he passed down the room. He was yet at some distance from the door near which she sat, and thus she saw him slowly approach, and began to comprehend that she should probably be spoken to in her turn : an honor which had never yet occurred to her, and which caused her heart to beat with mingled joy and apprehension. At length, as she had anticipated, he paused before her, and inquired what she had thought of the ballet of the previous Saturday, if, indeed, she still remembered it ?

With some difficulty she compelled herself to answer ; but her agitation was increased by remarking that the king started as he heard her voice, and looked at her with a marked attention which drew upon them the observation of all by whom they were immediately surrounded. After remaining a few seconds with his eyes steadily fixed upon her, Louis, with a profound bow to the blushing and be-

wildered girl, prepared to leave the room; but, before he did so, he again turned more than once toward the spot where she was sitting.

Thenceforward Mademoiselle de la Vallière found herself the marked object of the attentions of the king; and, fortunately for her composure, she continued unaware that His Majesty had been one of the eavesdroppers of the wood of Fontainebleau, induced to this somewhat treacherous indiscretion by the suggestion of M. de Beringhen, who, seeing the four fair girls retire from the brilliant scene around them to hold a conference in the forest, had laughingly remarked, that they were about to confide to each other the secrets of their hearts, and that the opportunity was a favorable one for ascertaining the identity of their favorite cavaliers. The king had entered willingly into the jest; but as it was too dark to permit either himself or his companion to discover who were the fugitives, they were compelled to trust to their after-penetration to divine this important point; and thus it was that Louis XIV., jealous above all things of being loved for his own sake, had the gratification of discovering that one heart at least acknowledged the power of his attractions, not as a monarch, but as a man. The sequel of the incident we have already shown; and when he recognized the voice of Mademoiselle de la Vallière, it was scarcely wonderful that he should examine with attention the person of whose attachment he had obtained such unequivocal testimony.

The delight of Louise was consequently great, when she perceived that the king looked upon her with an eye of favor; while his manner was at the same time so guarded, and so respectful, and he so carefully abstained from any allusion which could lead her to look beyond the present moment, or to imagine that his courtesy was intended to imply more than a mere generous interest, that she soon found herself enabled to converse with him with easy and graceful composure; and thus to exhibit all the charm of a young,

pure heart, still uncontaminated by its commerce with a court.

Every evening, when he joined the circle of *Madame*, after having paid his respects to the princess and the principal ladies of her circle, he contrived to secure a brief conversation with Mademoiselle de la Vallière; and as the passion of Louis for *Madame Henriette* was at least suspected, it became a matter of general belief that it was for her sake alone he made his visits so long and so continuous: a faith which Louise entertained in common with those about her, and which blinded her to the peril to which she was exposed.

One individual alone was not, however; to be so deceived, and that one was the Count de Guiche, who, as we have already stated, had been attracted by the modest graces of La Vallière from her first appearance at Fontainebleau; and conscious that should this new caprice of the king gain strength by time, he could no longer entertain the hope of succeeding in his own suit, he resolved at least to ascertain its effect upon the mind of Louise herself; for which purpose he paid a visit to her apartments, where he exhibited a jealousy which terrified the poor girl into a remonstrance upon the unreasonableness of his reproaches, unmerited on her part, as she had never felt or affected toward him a warmer feeling than that of respectful esteem. Nevertheless the count was not to be appeased; and conscious of the weakness of his cause, he overwhelmed her with the most stinging sarcasms, and finally withdrew, declaring that although she had despised his passion, he doubted not but it would prove acceptable elsewhere.

This outbreak of offended vanity in a man whom she had avoided was a sincere annoyance to Mademoiselle de la Vallière, who had the greatest reason to apprehend the effects of his enmity from the fact that he had latterly attached himself exclusively to *Madame*, while there could not exist a doubt but the same circumstance which had

excited the annoyance of M. de Guiche must have awakened the indignation of the princess, and that the sudden alliance which had been formed between them owed its existence to their mutual mortification. Be this as it may, however, it is certain that the intimacy thus commenced ultimately led to the unfortunate attachment which endured throughout their lives.

Only a few days subsequent to the visit of the Count de Guiche a great hunt took place, at which all the ladies of the court were present; and at the termination of the sport, tables were spread under the trees in the park, at a considerable distance from the chateau, about which the whole party assembled. The repast was a gay one, but the heat excessive, while the clouds which were gathering above their heads foretold a storm. Nevertheless, heedless of the warning, the feast proceeded; nor did it suffer any interruption until the large drops that had been for some time plashing heavily upon the leaves, suddenly gave place to a burst of rain, which descended in such torrents that all idea of etiquette was forgotten; and the different individuals of the royal party rushed away in every direction to shelter themselves as best they might.

In the confusion, Mademoiselle de la Vallière was running she knew not where, when she found the king beside her, who, politely taking her hand, hurried her toward a large tree, whose massy foliage offered a sure protection from the storm. Grateful for such distinguished care, but conscious of the observation it would not fail to create, Louise would have retired; but the first words of the king, full of grave reproach, arrested her purpose; and throughout the whole of the two long hours that the storm endured, remorsefully pouring down upon feathered toques and satin draperies, it was remarked by those who were sufficiently near to note the circumstance, that Louis remained bare-headed, with his plumed hat in his hand; and that he maintained an earnest and animated conversation with his

fair companion, to which only one interpretation could be given.

Thenceforward the king avoided all particular notice of Mademoiselle de la Vallière, when they met in the apartments of *Madame*; but when, in the evening, the ladies drove through the different avenues of the park, he quitted after a time the carriage of the princess, and mounting his horse, soon stationed himself beside the window of that which was occupied by Louise—while not content with thus expressing the increase of his passion, he sustained with her a daily correspondence, which convinced her only too well, had such a conviction still been wanting, of the extent of his attachment and the refinement of his mind.

Alarmed by the extreme beauty and eloquence of the letters which she thus received, lest the comparative imperfections of her own style should shock the taste of her royal admirer, Mademoiselle de la Vallière at length decided, after painful misgivings and an almost unconquerable reluctance, to apply to the Marquis de Dangeau* to undertake the task of replying to them, little suspecting that those which had so much excited her apprehension proceeded from the same pen. Nor, strange to say, would this fact ever have transpired had not La Vallière herself, on an occasion when she felt oppressed by the compliments

* Philip de Courcillon, Marquis de Dangeau, was born in La Beauce in 1638. He commanded a troop of cavalry under Turenne, and distinguished himself in Flanders in 1658. After the peace of the Pyrenees, he offered his services to Spain, which was then endeavoring to reconquer Portugal; and, on his return to France in 1667, he served throughout the campaign of Lille, and attended the king in all his expeditions as aide-de-camp. In 1673-4, he was appointed envoy-extraordinary to the electors of the Rhine, governor of Touraine, and councilor of state. His talents also caused him to be elected a member of the French Academy, and of the Academy of Science. Dangeau died in 1720, leaving behind him his *Memoirs*, and a *Journal of the Court of Louis XIV.*, in 53 quarto vols. MS.

of the king on her rare talent, confessed to him with a trembling heart that she was unworthy of his praises, and revealed the name of their true author. To her great relief, Louis was equally frank, and they were enabled to laugh together over their mutual misgivings. This little incident, however, trifling as it was in itself, exhibited, in their common friend, a discretion so rare at court, that it founded the fortunes of M. de Dangeau.*

At that period the fashion of lotteries had obtained greatly at court, and the Queen-Mother, who, despite her increasing malady, was anxious not to be altogether overlooked, although unable to leave her own apartments, was one of the most constant in providing these entertainments, to which, having only a small circle of her own, she was careful to invite *Madame* and her immediate friends and retinue. On one occasion the king drew the principal prize, which was a pair of bracelets of great value, when an immediate anxiety was felt to ascertain to whom they would be offered, although little doubt was entertained that they would become the property of *Madame Henriette*; and, accordingly, all eyes were turned in her direction, to detect at once the mingled pleasure and triumph with which she must welcome such an offering.

Meanwhile, Mademoiselle de la Vallière stood apart, thinking not of the ornaments, but of the hand which held them, and anxious merely for the moment when, released from the trammels of her service, she should once more see the king at her side, and listen to his words addressed only to herself. For a moment Louis sat motionless with the glittering baubles in his hand, as his keen eye swept the circle, and then slowly rising, he made his way through the throng of ladies, and presented them to La Vallière, who, having attentively examined their workmanship, returned them with a profound courtesy, remarking that they were indeed extremely beautiful.

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

“In that case, Mademoiselle,” said the king, graciously, “they are in hands too fair to resign them;” and, with a salutation as stately as her own, he returned to his seat.

Madame bit her lip and turned pale; but she soon recovered her self-possession, and made her acknowledgments most gracefully for the honor conferred upon one of her own suite, while the queen looked on with a quiet smile, utterly unsuspecting of the truth. Feelingly does La Vallière exclaim, as she records this incident of her life, “That confidence was a sad misfortune for us all. One tear from her would have saved me!”*

While the passion of Louis was augmenting from day to day, heightened by jealousy of every one who approached its object, a new candidate for the favor of the fair maid of honor presented himself in the person of the superintendent of finance, Nicholas Fouquet, who, accustomed to see every thing yield before the power of his gold, never doubted for an instant that he should be as successful in his pursuit of Mademoiselle de la Vallière as he had proved with so many other ladies of the court; and, accordingly, proceeded with little scruple and less delicacy to make his designs known to her, and to solicit her affections. He was, however, so coldly and sternly repulsed, that any other suitor would have comprehended at once that his pursuit was hopeless; but Fouquet was unaccustomed to opposition, and disdained to perceive discouragement in the frowns of an indignant woman. Merely, therefore, changing his tactics, he deputed Madame du Plessis-Bellièvre, who was one of his fastest friends, to mention to his new idol that he had at her service the sum of twenty thousand pistoles, if she would condescend to accept it. Outraged by the proposal, La Vallière fixed her eyes steadily upon the unworthy messenger, and, in a voice audible to all the circle, she desired that M. Fouquet might be informed all further advances on his part were

* Mémoires de Madame de la Vallière.

needless, as twenty millions would not induce her so to degrade herself.

It is believed that this circumstance, which soon reached the ears of the king, contributed, in no trifling degree, to hasten the fall of the depraved minister; but Louis XIV. was by no means the only individual in his empire who had vowed the ruin of the licentious superintendent. M. de Laigues, who had privately married Madame de Chevreuse, and who was dissatisfied with Fouquet upon his own account, urged the duchess to injure him in the estimation of the Queen-Mother; upon which Madame de Chevreuse, whose love of intrigue we have already mentioned, at once invited Anne of Austria to visit her at Dampierre, where she was met by Le Tellier and Colbert, and it was there arranged that she should ascertain, if possible, the feeling of her son toward the offending minister.

As for some time past the king had refused to grant every favor solicited by the Queen-Mother, he was delighted, on the present occasion, to appear as if convinced by her arguments upon a point long decided in his own mind, and it was soon resolved between them that the superintendent should be arrested; but as he had a strong party in Paris, it was not deemed prudent to attempt his seizure in the capital, and a journey to Nantes was ultimately determined on, in order that Fouquet might be made prisoner in that city, at the same time that the island of Belleisle, which the minister had lately purchased, and which he was reported to be at that moment engaged in fortifying, should be taken possession of in the king's name.

Louis XIV. had, even from the very appointment of Fouquet, looked upon him with an unfavorable eye. We have already mentioned that during the life of Mazarin he rendered the sovereign more dependent than ever upon His Eminence, by compelling him to submit to the mortification of receiving, as a loan at his hands, the sums necessary to his ordinary expenditure, which should at once have

been delivered to him by the superintendent himself. Nor was the feeling of distrust lessened by the dying words of the cardinal, who, while he expatiated to his royal master upon the official talents of Fouquet, at the same time warned him against his cupidity and licentiousness, which were rendered only the more obnoxious by the intemperate conduct of the abbé his brother, who, although he did not scruple to profit by his relationship to the profligate minister, nevertheless exposed his vices and betrayed his confidence.

The king acted in this emergency with both wisdom and indulgence. He took an early opportunity of informing Fouquet that he was aware of his extortions, and the uses to which he had applied their proceeds; but declared that he was willing to forget the past, and to retain him in office, provided he were disposed to do his duty with fidelity for the future; that he was resolved to ascertain the state of the public finances, as the most important feature of his government; and that as Fouquet was the only person who could afford him the necessary information, he entreated him to do so without disguise or subterfuge; assuring him, moreover, that he would find it difficult to deceive him, and that any such attempt would inevitably subject him to the most condign disgrace.

Somewhat startled by such an address, the superintendent had no sooner returned home than he consulted some of his friends as to the most prudent steps which he could adopt under circumstances so stringent, when they unanimously advised him to profit by the warning of the king, who had been forbearing enough to leave him an opportunity of retrieving himself while it was yet time; but Fouquet, after having listened to their arguments, still remained of a different opinion. He could not bring himself to believe that a young sovereign of three-and-twenty would willingly imprison himself in his cabinet for hours together, day after day, in order to examine dry reports and intri-

cate calculations, when he could command pleasure and festivity without. He entertained no doubt that Louis would become disgusted by so arid an occupation long before he had obtained one glimpse through the complicated labyrinth; and even should it prove otherwise, Fouquet still flattered himself that he should find it an easy task to mystify and mislead a mere novice, and to compel him to renounce his undertaking, more than ever impressed with his dependence upon a minister able enough to regulate the movements of so stupendous a piece of machinery.

It is more than probable that the crafty superintendent would, in fact, have succeeded in his purpose, had not the king secretly confided to Colbert every evening the returns and reports furnished to him daily by Fouquet, which the young secretary was employed throughout the night in examining with untiring zeal, in order that he might be enabled to point out their errors, and to explain their perfidy. He laid bare before the king alike the exaggerations and deficiencies which were necessary to blind him to the extent of the rapine committed on his treasury; and, on the morrow, Louis addressed such observations to the superintendent as were calculated to convince him that he did not for a moment lose sight of his object, his aim being, if possible, to induce him to act with sincerity, although he soon lost all hope of being enabled to accomplish so desirable an object.*

Thus had several months elapsed, Fouquet striving to deceive, Louis appearing to be deceived, and Colbert preventing him from being so, when the insult offered to Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and the representations of the Queen-Mother, determined the king to rid himself of so dishonest a minister; and we have shown the precaution which it was considered necessary to take in order to accomplish this end.

Fouquet had so long held sole control over the finances

* Louis XIV., sa Cour, et le Regent.

of the kingdom, and had been so little scrupulous in its expenditure, that there was scarcely an individual of the court who had not received from him either a present or a pension; he was said to have numerous partisans in Brittany, his birthplace, so zealous in his cause that they could raise all Provence at his slightest bidding; while the island of Belleisle was represented as his intended retreat should he ever incur the displeasure of the king, where, secure within his bristling walls and guarded ramparts, he might either defy the royal power or deliver the island to the English, as the price of an asylum in that country.

It was, consequently, not surprising that the king should be anxious to avoid all chance of failure in his attempt to secure the person of the superintendent, who, although his subject, had, in a great degree, emancipated himself from his authority by his own precautions; and the first step upon which he resolved was that of marching troops into Brittany, on the pretext of certain seditious movements, in consequence of a demand which he had made that the province should raise a sum of money as a gratuitous gift to the crown, and the next that of proceeding there himself, and of causing Fouquet to bear him company.

The superintendent was, at the moment when this proposition was made to him, suffering from an attack of fever; but he made no plea of illness, being anxious to let the king see and understand the extent of his influence in Brittany, feeling convinced that it would secure to him the twofold advantage of throwing Colbert into the background, and of impressing upon Louis the importance of his own support.

Still it would appear that Fouquet was not altogether free from apprehension; for on the arrival of the august party at Nantes, which was the term of the journey, he established himself in a residence at the extreme end of the town, whence, as it was afterward ascertained, a subterranean passage opened upon the Loire, where a boat,

thoroughly equipped, victualed, and provided with excellent rowers capable of overcoming all obstacles, was prepared to transport him, on any alarm, to Belleisle.

He had, moreover, caused couriers to be posted at different stations on the high road, with relays so disposed, that, without being either seen or prevented, he could gain whatever place of safety he might select. Nevertheless, it is equally certain that he did not apprehend immediate danger, as he declared that he confided in the king, who was aware that during the lifetime of Mazarin he had acted on many occasions in obedience to the express orders of that minister, while, in what had subsequently occurred, he had been sincere and faithful; and the king had appeared so satisfied with his explication that he firmly believed he had nothing to fear.

Rocking himself in this delusion, he was unguarded enough to invite Louis and all his court to a fête at his chateau at Vaux, upon which he had expended the enormous sum of fifteen millions.* No step could have been more weak or ill-advised; for the king was little likely to forget, as he looked upon the splendor of Vaux (by which that of Fontainebleau and St. Germain was utterly eclipsed), that its owner had derived all his wealth from the public coffers, and that it had been accumulating at a period when

* The palace of Vaux le Vicomte, now called Vaux-Praslin, or, simply, Praslin, is a dependence of Maincy, a small village about a league from Melun. When purchased by Fouquet it was merely an obscure seigneurial residence; and a short time after his disgrace it became the property of Marshal Villars, and thence received the name of Vaux Villars. The son of the marshal suffered the ornamental water to run to waste, destroyed the gardens, and finally sold the estate to the Duke de Praslin, from whom it derived its new alias, and in whose family it still remains. It is surrounded by a moat filled with running water; the great entrance-court is ornamented with porticoes, the subordinate buildings are spacious and magnificent, and the paintings which decorate the apartments in excellent preservation. The park is of considerable extent.

he was himself in need of the funds which had here been so profusely lavished.

Every one who bore a distinguished name in France was bidden to this princely festival, which was destined to be commemorated by La Fontaine and Benserade, and where a prologue by Pélisson* was to be spoken, and a comedy by Molière to be played. The king arrived at the chateau, accompanied by an escort of musketeers, and was received at the gates by his imprudent host, who had no sooner welcomed him than he entered the park, followed by the whole court, and found himself surrounded by a scene of enchantment, for which, despite all that he had heard of the gorgeous palace of his minister, he was still far from being prepared. A cloud passed over his brow, and the smile was very bitter with which he turned toward Fouquet, and remarked, "I shall never again, sir, venture to invite you to visit me; you would find yourself inconvenienced."

The epigram was too pointed to fail in its effect, and for a moment Fouquet turned pale; but he soon rallied, and persisted in doing the honors of his sumptuous home to the mortified sovereign, with an ostentatious detail which left no one of its marvels unremarked.

The first surprise was the sudden play of the fountains, a luxury at that period almost unknown in France, where a solitary attempt of this description had been made by

* Paul Pélisson Tontanier was a native of Béziers, and was born in 1624. He was the descendant of a Protestant family long distinguished in the legal profession. He fixed his residence in Paris in 1652, and purchased the charge of royal secretary; became a state councilor in 1660, and head clerk of Fouquet, of whom he shared all the fortunes. When imprisoned in the Bastille he compiled, in defense of his friend, three Memorials, which are considered to be master-pieces of judicial eloquence, and monuments of the most unalterable friendship. After a captivity of five years he was liberated by order of Louis XIV., who honored his consistency, and appointed him historiographer to the crown. In 1693 he died, a member of the French Academy.

Henry IV. at St. Germain. The astonished admiration of the spectators may therefore be imagined, when it is stated that the superintendent had purchased and pulled down three villages, in order that the water by which they were supplied might be conducted, from a distance of five leagues in every direction, into vast reservoirs of marble, manufactured in Italy.

As twilight deepened, the waters suddenly ceased their play, and a splendid banquet supervened; after which the *Fâcheux* of Molière was represented, and succeeded by a splendid pyrotechnic display; while the ball, which terminated the amusements, was protracted until daylight. Before its commencement Louis made a tour of the chateau, accompanied by its owner, and was compelled to acknowledge that nothing, in all probability, existed throughout Europe which could compete with it in magnificence.

During the ball Mademoiselle de la Vallière, having danced several *courantes* with the king, became fatigued by the noise and excitement, and expressed a wish to retire for a time from the saloon; upon which Louis, drawing her arm through his, led her, in her turn, through the splendid suite of rooms by which he had been at once astonished and offended, and bade her remark the ostentation with which M. Fouquet had introduced his armorial bearings on all sides, and in every compartment of the ceilings. The shield bore a squirrel, with the motto, *Quò non ascendam?* and, as she was engaged in reading it, Colbert chanced to enter the apartment, of whom she inquired its meaning.

“It signifies, ‘To what height may I not attain?’ madam; and it is understood by those who know the boldness of the squirrel, or that of his master,” replied the secretary, with marked emphasis.

Louis bit his lip.

At that particular moment M. Pélisson chanced to pass, and overhearing the rejoinder, he remarked, with a pro-

found bow, as he fixed his eyes steadily upon Colbert, while he addressed the king, "Your Majesty has probably not remarked that, in every instance, the squirrel is pursued by an adder;" and then, with a second salutation, he disappeared.

Colbert turned pale and his eyes flashed, while the anger of the king was so violent that he desired the captain of his musketeers might be instantly ordered to attend him.

Mademoiselle de la Vallière, who understood only too well the meaning of this summons, immediately threw herself at his feet, and entreated that he would not compromise his dignity by arresting a man who was his host, whatever might be his crime, or terminate a fête, given in his own honor, by making it the medium of an act of violence. Fortunately, she at the moment caught sight of the Queen-Mother, who was entering a lateral apartment, and hastily springing from her knees, she hurried to inform her of the king's intentions, and besought her interference. Not a moment was lost; and with considerable difficulty Louis was at length induced to delay his vengeance, and to return to Fontainebleau, only in part consoled for the humiliation to which he had been subjected by a firm determination that the insult should never be repeated.

A fortnight after the ill-omened fête at Vaux, the court proceeded to Nantes, the king pretexting the state of his health, and his anxiety to show so fine a city to the queen. He was preceded by the three ministers—Fouquet and his friend Lionne in one barge impelled by eight rowers, and Colbert in a second similarly provided; and as they passed along the river, each endeavoring to pass the other, a courtier remarked that one of the two would suffer shipwreck at Nantes. The king arrived on the following day, having traveled post, attended by several of his confidential friends, among whom was the Marquis de Péguilain, whose fever continued undiminished, and his first question was if Le Tellior had preceded him. On being answered in the

affirmative, he desired that inquiries might be made as to the health of M. Fouquet, whose fever had augmented, and how he had borne the journey, as he wished to see him in the course of the day.

The messenger, however, met the superintendent on his way to his castle of Nantes to pay his respects to His Majesty; but on the morrow the same ceremony was observed, when M. de Brienne found him much worse in health, but in high spirits; and after he had acquitted himself of his embassy, and was taking his leave, the invalid inquired, in a cheerful tone, what were the news at court.

“That you are about to be arrested,” was the reply.

“You are misinformed, my good friend,” said Fouquet, with a smile; “it is Colbert who is about to be arrested, and not myself.”

“Are you sure of this?” asked Brienne.

“Perfectly; for it was I who gave the order for him to be conducted to the castle of Angers, and it was Pélisson who paid the workmen intrusted to place the prison beyond all chance of successful assault.”

On his return, Louis XIV. questioned the young secretary very minutely with regard to the health of the superintendent, who was attacked by his malady on alternate days; but his manner convinced Brienne that the minister was lost, as, in speaking of him, the king no longer styled him M. Fouquet, but simply Fouquet; and when he was at length dismissed, Louis desired him to be in attendance at an early hour on the following morning, and to bring Fouquet with him, as he was going to hunt.

He was, however, again anticipated by the superintendent, who having been informed that the king desired to see him before he left the castle, was in attendance at six o'clock, little suspecting that all was prepared for his arrest; and, after a conference of half an hour, he was returning quietly through the gallery, when he was met by M. de la

Feuillade,* who told him in a low voice to be cautious, as orders had been issued against him.

For the first time Fouquet began to quail, as he could not conceal from himself that the manner of the king had been constrained and absent; and this fact, coupled with the hint of the duke, induced him, when he gained the court-yard, to throw himself into the carriage of one of his friends, instead of his own, with the intention of making his escape. He had already succeeded in passing the gates and entering the town, when Artagnan, who commanded the musketeers, and to whom his arrest had been intrusted, seized him as he was about to turn into a lateral street, transferred him to his own coach, and conveyed him, without stopping either day or night, to the castle of Angers, which he had caused to be prepared for the reception of Colbert; and thus this modern Haman found that the pains which he had taken to strengthen the external fortifications of the prison only rendered his own prospect of escape utterly hopeless. His wife and children were at the same time removed to Limoges, and seals placed upon all his property; while an attendant, who was present at his arrest, hastened to secure one of the private relays which had been prepared in case of emergency, and made the journey to Paris with such speed that the news of his capture was known to all the friends of the fallen

* Francis d'Aubusson, Duke de la Feuillade, was a descendant of the dukes of Aubusson; served under Louis XIV., and became a marshal of France and colonel of the French guards. In 1664 he commanded the French forces at the battle of St. Gothard, and was created Duke de Roanne. In 1668 he went to the relief of Candia, then besieged by Achmet-Kioperli. He made the campaign of Holland; followed the king in Franche-Comté, and terminated the conquest of that province by the capture of Dôle, Salins, &c. In 1676 he commanded the army in Flanders; and in 1678 he was at the head of the navy. In 1691 he obtained the government of Dauphiny, and ultimately died in 1681. He erected, at his own expense, a statue of Louis XIV., in the *Place des Victoires*.

minister twelve hours before the arrival of the courier dispatched to the Queen-Mother.

During this interval many of Fouquet's papers might have been secured, especially in his house at St. Maude, where he had deposited a vast number; and the abbé, his brother, suggested that, without delaying to examine them, they should at once be collected and burned to the last fragment, declaring that the value of what would be thus destroyed on the one hand would bear no proportion to the benefit of that which would be annihilated on the other. Madame Duplessis-Bellièvre, however, who was the fast friend and confidant of the minister, objected to so extreme a measure, feeling convinced that, in the anxiety of mind which he had lately suffered, he could not have failed to obliterate every thing which might injure either himself or others. She was, however, unfortunately mistaken. The superintendent was in the habit of preserving every communication which he received, whatever might be its nature—proposals, requests, acknowledgments, propositions, billets-doux; nothing was destroyed; and the result of such a system, pursued by such a man as Fouquet, may be readily understood. All these multitudinous papers were rigidly examined by the king and the Queen-Mother; and a great and well-founded terror spread through the court when this fact was ascertained; for numerous were the hitherto fair and noble names which were destined to be forever sullied by the disclosures they contained.

Few there were, either married or single, says Madame de Motteville, who had not sacrificed to the golden calf; and it was proved that the poets well understood their vocation when they wrote the fable of Danaë and the Shower of Gold.

After the arrest of Fouquet the royal party had immediately returned to Fontainebleau; and while the examinations were pending, all his friends became greatly alarmed for the result; and the rather as being principally artists

and men of letters, without any interest at court, they were unable to make an effort in his behalf. It was soon rumored that among his female correspondents the superintendent had numbered Madame de Sévigné, whose letters had, like the rest, passed through the hands of the king; and more than one of those who knew themselves to be compromised rejoiced at the idea of being partially excused by the companionship of this hitherto irreproachable name. Their triumph was, however, of short duration.

The life of Madame de Sévigné, despite the buoyancy of heart which she retained until her death, had been one of suffering and difficulty. Married in youth to a profligate, who eventually lost his life in a duel, disgraceful to his memory both as a husband and a father—a widow at five-and-twenty, agreeable in person and accomplished in mind, Madame de Sévigné had withstood every temptation to a second alliance, devoting herself to the care and education of her children with a tenderness and perseverance perfectly exemplary; while that she did not meet with all the support and encouragement from her own family which she might justly have claimed under these circumstances, is sufficiently evident from a letter addressed to her by her cousin, Bussy-Rabutin, so early as the year 1654, in which that shallow-hearted and libertine nobleman, who was aware that both Fouquet and the Prince de Conti had made dishonorable advances to Madame de Sévigné, and who feared that from her continued resistance they would become wearied of their pursuit, attacked her by arguments as disgraceful as they were revolting, in order to induce her to comply with their proposals.

He did not, however, estimate at its just value the noble nature which he strove to abase. The wages of immorality had no attraction in the eyes of Madame de Sévigné. Her path of duty lay well defined before her, and the thorns and briars by which it was beset she was content to pluck away as she advanced, strengthened in the

heaviest hour of her toil by the aid of an approving conscience.

It was stated that both Anne of Austria and her son were startled when the signature of Marie Rabutin Chantal met their eyes; but their consternation was not of long continuance; while the subject of her communication, and her own perfect and womanly feelings on learning the discovery of her letters among the private papers of Fouquet, are admirably developed in the following note to M. de Pomponne :*

“ At the Rocks, this 11th Oct., 1661.

“ There is nothing more true than that friendship becomes more warm when people are interested in the same subject; you have so obligingly written to me to that effect, that I can make you no better reply than by the assurance that I have the same sentiments toward yourself which you entertain for me; and that, in one word, I both honor and esteem you in a high degree. But what say you of all that has been found in these caskets? Should you ever have believed that my poor letters, full of the marriage of M. de la Trousse, and all the affairs of his family, would have been discovered so mysteriously situated? I assure you that, whatever credit I may derive from those who do me justice for having had with him no other commerce than this, I am nevertheless painfully wounded to find that I am compelled to justify myself, and perhaps very uselessly, toward a thousand people who will never comprehend the fact. I think that you will easily understand the grief caused by such a necessity to a heart like mine. I beseech you to say all you know upon this point; I can not have friends enough upon such an occasion.”†

Strong in her innocence, Madame de Sévigné did not, consequently, hesitate to accompany Mademoiselle de Scu-

* Simon Arnauld, Marquis de Pomponne, afterward minister for foreign affairs.

† Lettres de Madame de Sévigné.

déry,* when she declared her intention of waiting upon La Vallière, to solicit her interest in favor of the condemned minister; and they found a willing coadjutor in the gentle Louise, who was as anxious to preserve the life of Fouquet as the warmest of his friends, and who exerted all her influence over the mind of the king to induce his mercy: an attempt in which, seconded by the Queen-Mother (who, amid all her indignation, was desirous that he should not suffer the extreme penalty of his offenses), she happily succeeded.

* Madelaine de Scudéry was born at Havre, in 1607, and went at an early age to Paris, where she became an authoress, from necessity: a fact which did not, however, militate against her admission to the best society, while her wit made her a welcome addition to all the literary circles of the time. Her novels are numerous, and obtained great success, although they are wanting in nature, and essentially French as regards the persons described. Her principal works are *Cyrus*, *Clelia*, *Ibrahim*, *Matilda of Aquilar*, *Almahida*, *Célanira*, &c. She died in 1701.



CHAPTER VI.

Birth of a Dauphin—Prosperity of Louis XIV.—Favor of La Vallière—Court Festivals—Insult to the French Ambassador in London—Apology of Philip IV.—Rupture between France and Rome—Fall of La Vallière; her Remorse; exiled from the Court of the Queen-Mother; her Flight to the Carmelite Convent; the Reconciliation; she returns to Court—Marriage of Marianne de Mancini—Commencement of Versailles; its Progress—Fête at Versailles—La Princesse d'Elide of Molière—Three first Acts of the Tartuffe; the Representation forbidden—Perseverance of Molière—National Monuments—The Knights of the Holy Ghost—The Blue Over-coats—M. de Condé a Courtier—Unhappiness of La Vallière—The surreptitious Letter—The Victims—The Conspiracy—The Letter intercepted—Treachery of the Marquis de Vardes—Severity of Madame to La Vallière—La Vallière becomes a Mother—Arrival of the Crown-Prince of Denmark—Mademoiselle wearies of her Exile—The Hand of Mademoiselle is offered by Louis XIV. to the Prince of Denmark; she returns to Court; she rejects the Prince—Declaration of the King—Depravity of the French Court—La Vallière received by the Queen-Mother; publicly acknowledged as the Mistress of the King—Passion of the Count de Guiche for Madame; he is sent to Lorraine to take the command of the Royal Forces.

THE pleasures of Fontainebleau soon effaced all memory of the imprisoned superintendent; and the birth of a dauphin, which took place on the 1st of November (1661), completed the happiness of Louis XIV. Every thing by which he could be affected appeared subject to the influence of his will: the treaty of the Pyrenees had terminated a long and exhausting war; Mazarin, by whose authority he had been oppressed, was in his grave; Fouquet, by whom he had been rivaled in the magnificence upon which he prided himself, was his prisoner; the queen, to whom he was indifferent, had given him an heir to the throne; and Mademoiselle de la Vallière, whom he loved, already began to resist less steadily the encroachments of his passion; while the religious struggle, which was fated to recommence hereafter was for the moment appeased by the dispossession of the Calvinists of all the privileges which the Edict of Nantes was intended to secure to them, and who only continued their opposition through the medium of a secret system of proselytism, destined on a future day to convulse once more the whole face of the kingdom. This was, moreover, so cautiously pursued, that no suspicion of its extent disturbed, even for a moment, the apparent calm; and Louis, satisfied that he had at length accomplished a general pacification which he should be enabled to maintain, resigned himself wholly to a career of pleasure.

Every festival had Mademoiselle de la Vallière for its object; and although it professed to have no view save that of gratifying the queen, it was not only a homage offered by the king to the reigning favorite, but it also conduced to the aggrandizement of royalty, by weakening the resources of that haughty nobility which, since the reign of Francis II., had perpetually disturbed the repose of France; for, in order to compete with the magnificence of the monarch, the greater portion of those around him mortgaged and even dissipated their patrimony, and, when these measures were no longer practicable, became involved in debt;

and, once ruined, found themselves entirely dependent upon the sovereign; while the extraordinary number of foreigners who were attracted to Paris by the perpetual fêtes produced a revenue from the customs which exceeded that disbursed by the treasury. It was during this period that the famous tilting-match took place in the Place Royale, to which it gave the name that it still bears.

Throughout the whole of the winter the court continued immersed in pleasure, and several ballets were produced, in which the king bore a conspicuous part, seeking so little to disguise his passion for La Vallière that he was careful every evening to ascertain the colors she would wear on the morrow, in order that he might appear in the same. In order, also, to excite her to a greater display of magnificence, he overwhelmed her with jewels and costly dresses; but she shrunk so resolutely from all which could tend to make her conspicuous, that he could not induce her to abandon the simplicity in which she gloried to perceive that she was equally attractive in his eyes.

On one occasion the king had joined the evening circle of *Madame*, and was, according to his usual habit, conversing with her fair maid of honor, when some dispatches were delivered to him which were declared to be of immediate importance. He accordingly seated himself near a table to examine them, and it was soon remarked by every one that his cheek became blanched, and that he bit his lips with a violence which indicated suppressed passion. Nevertheless, not a word escaped him until he had read them to an end, when he rose, and crushing the dispatches convulsively between his fingers, exclaimed, haughtily,

“Here are news for you, gentlemen! Our ambassador in London has been publicly insulted by the Spanish envoy. What think you of this, gentlemen? Shall I wait to revenge the insult of my father-in-law until my mustache is as long as his own? He, without doubt, imagines that we are still under the guardianship of the cardinal. M. le

Tellier, let my ambassador at Madrid leave that city instantly, and the Spanish envoy quit Paris within four-and-twenty hours. The conferences of Flanders are at an end; and if the superiority of our crown is not recognized publicly by Spain, she may hold herself prepared to renew the war."

The consternation excited by these words will admit of no description, and even Le Tellier hesitated for a moment as though he doubted the evidence of his senses; but he was soon undeceived by Louis, who, in a still higher tone, demanded if he had not understood his orders, desiring him, at the same time, to assemble the council, at which he would preside within an hour.

This done, the king once more approached the ladies who were present, and continued the conversation which had been so unpleasantly interrupted, as calmly as though nothing had occurred to ruffle his temper. The affront he had received was, nevertheless, of a very serious character, and one to which, constituted as he was, he could not fail to be susceptible. An ambassador from Sweden had arrived in England, and, on his entrance, the Count d'Estrade, the French representative, and the Baron de Vateville, the representative of Spain, had disputed a point of precedence. The Spaniard, by a greater profusion and a more numerous retinue, had gained over the populace; and having caused the horses which drew the carriages of M. d'Estrade to be killed, and his attendants wounded and dispersed, the Spaniards had taken possession of the contested right without sheathing their swords.

The orders of Louis XIV. were obeyed. M. d'Estrade was recalled; the Baron de Vateville dismissed the kingdom; and the conferences which were still in progress in Flanders, on the subject of the limits of the respective nations, were suddenly terminated; while a message was dispatched from the French king to Philip IV. to inform him that if he did not immediately recognize the supremacy

of his crown, and repair the insult to which it had been subjected, by a formal apology, the peace was at an end.

The Spanish sovereign, who was unwilling to plunge his kingdom once more into bloodshed for so insignificant a consideration as the precedence of an ambassador, consented to heal the wounded pride of his tenacious son-in-law; and, accordingly, on the 24th March, 1662, the Count de Fuentes waited upon the offended monarch at Fontainebleau, where, in the presence of all the foreign ministers then resident at the court of France, he declared, in the name of his royal master, that thenceforward the Spanish ambassadors should never again compete with those of France: a concession which, if it did not altogether admit the preëminence of Louis, at least betrayed the weakness of Spain.*

Scarcely had this trifling affair been settled in a manner which redounded so greatly to the honor of the French king than he found himself called upon to decide another of a similar description, but in which he was less personally interested. The Duke de Créqui,† who was ambassador at Rome, had revolted the Roman people, and still more the Roman nobility, by his overweening haughtiness, and had, consequently, become eminently unpopular; while his servants, exaggerating his error, had committed many excesses, even proceeding so far as to attack the night-watch of the city; and, upon one occasion, some of his lackeys amused themselves by charging a squadron of the

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle. *Francheville.*

† Charles de Créqui, de Blanchefort, et de Canaples, Prince de Poix, governor of Dauphiny, peer and marshal of France, became Duke de Lesdiguières by his marriage with Madelaine de Bonne, daughter of the celebrated Connétable de Lesdiguières. His duel with Don Philip-pin, the bastard of Savoy, on the subject of a scarf, in which he killed his antagonist, contributed, in no small degree, to establish his reputation. He took Pignerol and La Maurienne in 1630, was sent ambassador to Rome in 1633, defeated the Spanish forces at the battle of Tésin, in 1636, and was killed by a cannon-ball at the siege of Bremen.

Pope's Corsican guard, sword in hand, and putting them to flight.

The whole corps, incensed, and privately encouraged by Don Mario Chigi, the brother of Alexander VII., who detested the Duke de Créqui, assembled in arms round the residence of the ambassador, and fired upon the carriage of the duchess as she was in the act of alighting, killing a page, and wounding several of her attendants; upon which M. de Créqui immediately left Rome, accusing the relatives of the Pope, and even the Pope himself, of having sanctioned the assassination. Alexander delayed, as long as he was able to do so, any offer of reparation, having so little opinion of the steadiness of the French as to believe that if he temporized they would soon forget their annoyance; but, finally, he caused one of the Corsicans and a constable to be hanged at the end of four months, and banished the governor of the city, who was suspected of having authorized the outrage. He was, however, compelled to more definite measures by the intelligence that Louis XIV. threatened to besiege Rome, that he was already landing troops in Italy, and that the command had been given to the Marshal du Plessis-Praslin.* The affair had become a national quarrel, and the King of France was evidently resolved that it should involve no dishonor to his own kingdom; while the Pope, on his side, was equally determined not to yield so long as he possessed one hope of overcoming his adversary, and, accordingly, he supplicated the mediation of all the Roman Catholic princes; but the holy father had fallen upon evil times: Germany was threatened by the Turks, and Spain was hampered by an unsuccessful war against Portugal.

* Cæsar de Choiseuil du Plessis-Praslin, duke and peer of France, was created marshal of France in 1645, and in 1648 won the battle of Francheron, and in 1650 that of Réthel against Marshal Turenne, who at that period commanded the Spanish army. He died in Paris in 1673, at the advanced age of seventy-eight years.

The Roman court, consequently, only irritated Louis, without having it in its power to injure him; while the parliament of Provence cited the Pope and seized the *comtat* of Avignon. In earlier times an excommunication from Rome would have been the immediate result of so decided a proceeding; but such an expedient had now ceased to be available, and would only have excited ridicule. Thus the Head of the Church found himself compelled to bend to circumstances, to exile his own brother from Rome, and to announce his intention of sending his nephew, as *legate à latere*, to France, to offer satisfaction to the offended dignity of its monarch.*

Shortly after this event the unfortunate La Vallière sacrificed her reputation to her ardent passion for the king; but her remorse was so great, that, far from parading her disgrace, as most of those around her would have done, she was so prostrated by shame as to absent herself, so far as her court duties would permit, from all society; and the agony of her repentance was so violent as to occasion much embarrassment to her royal lover; while the reproaches of the Queen-Mother, and the deep melancholy of Maria Theresa, added to his annoyance. The young queen had reluctantly admitted the conviction of this new misfortune; but two incidents soon occurred which robbed her even of the equivocal happiness of doubt.

A young valet-de-chambre of the king, named Belloc, had invented a species of interlude, consisting of dialogues interspersed with dances, which obtained great favor at court, where they were enacted by all the principal persons of the royal circle, including Louis himself. On a particular occasion one of these interludes, of which the subject had been prompted by the king, was represented in the queen's apartments; and the boldness with which it shadowed forth the love of the monarch for La Vallière was so great that, long ere its conclusion, a score of whispers

* Siècle de Louis XIV.

had identified the characters, and she herself retired to her chamber, trembling at its probable effect upon those whom it was so well calculated to wound.

A few days only passed over ere she was summoned to the presence of the Queen-Mother, and the circumstance was so unusual that Louise hesitated whether she should obey without previously consulting the king. A second messenger, however, urging her to hasten, left her no alternative; and with a sinking heart she was ushered into the apartment of Anne of Austria, whom she found closeted with *Madame*. There was an expression of triumph playing about the lip of the princess which at once convinced Mademoiselle de la Vallière that she was summoned on no indifferent subject, and one glance at the clouded brow of the Queen-Mother confirmed her in her conviction. Her fears had not outrun the truth. Coldly, haughtily, and peremptorily, Anne of Austria declared her dismissal from the court, adding that she was immediately to return whence she came, and that *Madame de Choisy* would conduct her to her home.

With a trembling heart La Vallière attempted to inquire the nature of her offense; but Anne of Austria indignantly interposed, saying that it sufficed that there could not be two queens of France; after which she rose, and, followed by *Madame*, retired to an inner apartment.

The unhappy girl staggered back to her room almost unconsciously. A full conviction of the disgrace which she had brought upon herself bowed her to the dust. She was about to be ignominiously driven from the court, to meet her mother as a guilty and condemned wretch, to whom the whole world was now only one wide desolation; while, at intervals, the idea that she was to be forever separated from the king dried her tears with the scorching fever of despair. No one intruded upon her solitude throughout the day, and she gave a free course to the anguish by which she was oppressed; but with the twilight Louis en-

tered her apartment, and, finding her exhausted with weeping, insisted on learning the cause of her distress. Anxious though she was that he should know all, she shrunk from exciting the storm which she was well aware must follow, and she persisted in withholding her secret, despite the entreaties, reproaches, and even threats of the king, who eventually, displeased by her pertinacity, rose from her side, and without uttering another word, left the room.

As he disappeared, Mademoiselle de la Vallière sunk back tearless and hopeless. She was now, indeed, alone; for even he for whom she had suffered had abandoned her, and hours went by before she again ventured to lift her head. After a time, however, she remembered that a compact had once been made between herself and her royal lover, that, in the event of any misunderstanding, a night should not be suffered to elapse without a reconciliation. Her heart again beat more freely. He would not fail her; he could not forget his promise—he would write to tell her that his anger against her was at an end. And so she waited and watched, and counted every hour as it was proclaimed by the belfry of the palace; but she waited and watched in vain; and when at length, after this long and weary night, the daylight streamed through the silken curtains of her chamber, she threw herself upon her knees, and praying that God would not cast away the victim who was thus rejected by the world, she hastened with a burning cheek and a tearless eye to collect a few necessary articles of clothing, and throwing on her veil and mantle, rushed down a private stair-case, and escaped into the street. In this distracted state of mind she pursued her way to Chaillot, and reached the convent of the Sisters of St. Mary, where she was detained for a considerable time in the parlor; but at length the grating was opened, and a portress appeared, who, on her request to be admitted to the abbess, informed her that all the com-

munity were at their devotions, and could not be seen by any one.

It was in vain that the poor fugitive entreated, and asserted her intention of taking the vows; she could extort no other answer; and the portress withdrew, leaving her sitting upon a wooden bench, desolate and heart-struck. For two hours she remained motionless, with her eyes fixed upon the grating, but it continued closed; even the dreary refuge of this poor and obscure convent was denied to her—even the house of religion had barred its doors against her. She could bear up no longer; from the previous morning she had not tasted food; and the fatigue of body and anguish of mind which she had undergone, combined with this unaccustomed fast, had exhausted her slight remains of strength: a sullen torpor gradually overcame her faculties, and eventually she fell upon the paved floor, cold and insensible.

Early in the morning the king was informed of the disappearance of *Mademoiselle de la Vallière*; and he had no sooner learned the fact than he hastened to the Tuileries to question *Madame*, who either was, or affected to be, utterly ignorant of her fate. Nor was he more fortunate in his inquiries of the Queen-Mother, who, while she declared her inability to give him the information that he sought, reproached him with his want of self-command, remarking that he had no mastery over himself.

“It may be so,” he exclaimed, goaded by her words; “but if I can not control myself, I shall at least know how to control those who outrage me.”

As yet he had obtained no clew to the retreat of his mistress; but Louis was not to be discouraged, and he adopted such efficient measures as, ere long, led him to a knowledge of the convent to which the unhappy fugitive had been seen to bend her steps. In another instant he was on horseback, and, followed by a single page, galloped off in the direction of Chailot, where, as no warning had

been given of his approach, the grating remained inhospitably closed, and he found the wretched girl still stretched on the pavement.

It was long ere Louise was aware whose tears were falling fast upon her face, and whose hands had clasped her own. After a time, however, she recognized the king, and at length was enabled to confide to him the reason of her flight, and to implore him to leave her free to fulfill the resolution she had formed; but Louis was deaf to her entreaties, and finally succeeded in inducing her to pardon the past, and to return. It was not without compunction that she suffered herself to be persuaded, but her passion for the king ultimately triumphed over her scruples; and the page was dispatched for a carriage, in which, bathed in tears, half joy, half bitterness, she reached Paris, and once more found herself under the roof of that palace which, only a few hours previously, she believed that she had quitted forever.

It was with considerable difficulty that the king prevailed upon *Madame* to restore to Mademoiselle de la Vallière the place in her household from which she had been so abruptly dismissed; but he was firm in his determination; and eventually, although with a reluctance which she made no attempt to disguise, she consented to his wishes; when, regardless of the manner of the concession, Louis thanked her for her compliance, and hastened to inform the anxious maid of honor of the success of his suit.

A short time subsequently, the Duke de Bouillon became the husband of Marianne de Mancini, the only niece whom the cardinal had left unmarried; but this alliance created little sensation at court. Madame de Soissons gave a supper on the occasion, at which the queen consented to appear; and then the affair was forgotten.

Meanwhile, Louis had never overcome the mortification to which he had been subjected at Vaux, and the deter-

mination which he had then formed to construct for himself a palace, of which the splendor should be unapproachable by any subject, whatever might be his resources. He resolved not to build only for the age, but for futurity; and after considerable hesitation, he at length fixed upon the park of Versailles as its site.* Louis XIII., whose hunting-parties frequently took place in the forest of Versailles, and who, on one occasion, overtaken by the darkness near a small elevation above the road leading to St. Leger, was compelled to pass the night in a mill, while his attendants and the hounds were housed in the cottage of a wagoner, caused a small pavilion, of which some traces may still be seen in a street of the town, to be erected for his future accommodation, should he again chance to be benighted in that neighborhood, and ultimately purchased a sufficient extent of land to enable him to erect a chateau, and to form a park in the center of the forest; when, having decided that the house should stand upon the rise then occupied by the windmill in which he had formerly taken shelter, he left his architect, Lemercier, at liberty to construct it according to his own taste.

* "Versailles possessed, as early as the 10th century, a fief and a seignorial manor, situated on the slope of the hill which overlooks the wood of Satory, on the spot since covered by the labyrinth known as the Queen's Grove; and labor had not yet lowered this soil, which was on the same level as the sheet of water. Several large farms, acquired at different periods, extended the domain to the village of Choisy-au-Beuf, which Louis XIV. inclosed in the great park. The most ancient deed referring to Versailles bears the date of 1037. * * * L'Etoile, in his *Memoirs* (vol. i. p. 26), asserts that Catherine de Medicis caused the secretary of state, Loménie, to be strangled, in order that the Count de Retz might possess the chateau of Versailles; but this fact is improbable. Anthony de Loménie, who enjoyed the intimacy of Henry IV., could easily have obtained the restitution of the domain, if it had been thus usurped; while, on the contrary, it is well known that it was from the tutor of the children of Martial de Loménie that Albert de Gondi purchased the chateau, which was at the time in a state of ruin."—*Versailles Ancien et Moderne*.

The result was by no means commensurate with the dignity of its owner; for although the building was not devoid of a certain elegance, it was insignificant in size, and was styled, by St. Simon, a "pasteboard palace;" while Bassompierre asserts that it was a residence of which no nobleman would have had cause to feel vain. Nor did Louis XIV., when he finally resolved to embellish Versailles, in all probability, contemplate the vast changes which were ultimately effected there; for, in the first instance, he made no outlay save upon the gardens, leaving the little palace precisely as it stood; in which state it still existed so late as in 1664, when he gave there those marvelous entertainments which became matter of European celebrity, and whose effect he had awaited before he resolved upon the great pecuniary sacrifice which a more extended undertaking must necessarily involve.

Le Notre, intrusted with the disposition of the gardens, profited by a moment of enthusiasm on the part of the king, while examining the plan which he proposed, and of a consent wrung from him with considerable difficulty, to cut down, during a single night, a great portion of the masses of ornamental timber which had been planted by Louis XIII.; and the magnificence of the result excused him in the eyes of his royal master for having ventured to exceed his orders.

Mansard,* however, to whom the erection of the palace was confided, was less fortunate; for by no argument

* Jules Hardouin Mansard, born in 1635, became first architect to the king, knight of St. Michael, and controller and director-general of buildings, arts, and manufactures. It was after the designs of this famous architect that the gallery of the Palais-Royal, the Place Louis-le-Grand, and that des Victoires were constructed. He also built the dome of the Hôtel des Invalides, and planned the establishment of St. Cyr, the cascade of St. Cloud, the menagerie, orangery, and stables of the palace of Versailles, and built the Trianon. He was protecting member of the royal academy of painting and sculpture, and died in 1708.

which he was able to adduce, could he prevail upon the monarch to sanction the demolition of the *pasteboard palace*, which had been the chosen refuge of his father, when, offended by the haughtiness of Mary de Medicis toward the cardinal, he sought to escape from becoming the witness of scenes which wounded alike his pride and his filial respect. In vain did Mansard represent, that by his persistence in preserving the chamber where he was born, the Cardinal de Richelieu had ruined the plan of the chateau which he had built; the king only smiled; and when the architect, as a last hope, dilated upon the bad condition of the present edifice, his reply was to the effect that, if it were found absolutely necessary to pull it down, he should not oppose the measure, but that it must be rebuilt precisely as it stood; and thus the unfortunate Mansard found himself without any alternative, save that of concealing as much as possible the obnoxious edifice by the regal pile which was about to rise around it.*

We have alluded, in this rapid sketch, to the magnificent fêtes given in the gardens of Versailles in 1664; but they were so remarkable as to merit more special mention, alike from their magnificence, their singularity, and their intellectual attractions, which added a new grace to the profuse splendor that was their main characteristic. Versailles had even then become a delightful residence, although it as yet betrayed no vestige of its after-greatness.

Early in the spring, the king, followed by a court composed of six hundred individuals, the whole of whose personal expenses were defrayed, as well as those of their respective attendants, took up his abode at Versailles; and the marvelous rapidity with which his artificers erected the stages, amphitheatres, and porticoes, all elaborately ornamented, which were required in succession to give effect to the various entertainments, was not one of the least prodigies of the festival. The fêtes com-

* Versailles Ancien et Moderne.

menced by a *carrousel*, in which all those who were to compete appeared in review order on the previous day, preceded by heralds-at-arms, pages, and equeries, who bore their shields and devices, on the former of which were inscribed, in letters of gold, verses written for the occasion by Périgni and Benserade.

The king represented Roger; and all the crown jewels sparkled upon his dress and on the housing of his charger. The queen, attended by three hundred ladies, seated under triumphal arches, were the spectators of the procession. The cavalcade was followed by a gilded car, eighteen feet in height, fifteen in width, and twenty-four in length, representing the chariot of the sun. The four ages of gold, silver, steel, and iron, the signs of the zodiac, the seasons, and the hours, followed immediately behind it; while the lists were carried by shepherds, and adjusted amid flourishes of trumpets, contrasted at intervals by the music of bagpipes and violins.

When the tilting terminated, and twilight threatened to cause a cessation of the festivities, four thousand immense torches suddenly illuminated the space destined to the banquet; and the tables were served by two hundred attendants, habited as dryads, wood-deities, and fauns; in the midst of whom Pan and Diana approached the august circle on the summit of a moving mountain, whence they descended only to superintend the arrangement of a repast which combined all the luxuries attainable by art or expense. Behind the tables, which formed a vast crescent, an orchestra was suddenly erected as if by magic, and peopled with musicians; the arcades surrounding the banqueting-hall and theater were lighted by five hundred girandoles of green and silver, and a gilt balustrade inclosed the whole of the immense area.

The fêtes lasted seven days, and the prizes prepared for the victors in the lists were most magnificent.*

* Siècle de Louis XIV.

On this occasion the *Princesse d'Elide* of Molière was produced in the presence of the sovereign and the whole court, and was succeeded, on a subsequent day, by the three first acts of the *Tartuffe*, upon which he had been engaged at intervals for several years. He was quite aware of the obstacles which must be overcome before it could appear upon the public stage; and in the hope of obtaining, in the first place, the powerful protection of royal favor, he had urged that he should be permitted to cause its representation at Versailles. He was not, however, fated to see the whole of his hope fulfilled; for he had not adopted the necessary precautions which might have insured the acceptance of ideas at once so bold and so novel as those which he had put forth in the *Tartuffe*. He had neglected to define the delicate shades by which piety and bigotry were to be distinguished; and thus the court, although at that period much less scrupulous than it afterward became, took offense; and the king, upon the grounds we have stated, forbade a repetition of the performance.

This order was a heavy blow to Molière; but nevertheless, feeling that in the *Tartuffe* he had presented his master-piece, he would not permit himself altogether to despair; and, accordingly, during the next five years, he applied all his energies to its improvement, corrected all that was already written, and completed what was still wanting. For this purpose he made his studies in the varied society of the capital, and became the censor rather of the looks and bearing of those about him than of their words. It is scarcely necessary to state that opportunities for such observation were not wanting; the interdict which had been pronounced against his work had, more than ever, excited interest in its author, and Molière became the fashion.*

At the close of 1664, having become convinced of the perfect eligibility of the site which had been chosen, Louis XIV. finally authorized the commencement of the stupen-

* Vie de Molière, par M. Petitot.

dous work which was destined to immortalize his name; and the foundations were laid of the palace of Versailles, fated, before its completion, to swallow up the enormous sum of one hundred and sixty-five millions, a hundred and thirty-one thousand, four hundred and ninety-four livres.

But this was by no means the only great undertaking accomplished by the French king at this period. In the solitude of the cabinet he concerted with Colbert most of those splendid measures which tended to illustrate his reign. Under the prompting of this far-sighted and zealous minister, he encouraged men of letters, and founded the manufactories which were destined to render France a great commercial nation. Vessels were lunched which suddenly rendered his naval strength respectable; a reinforcement was sent to the Emperor of Austria against the Turks; the Duke de Beaufort was intrusted with the command of the expedition of Gigeri, which was succeeded by that of Cyprus, where he was fated to perish; the Louvre was completed as the walls of Versailles began to rise above the soil; an Indian company was organized; and the manufacture of the Gobelins was purchased in the king's name; while, as regarded external relations, both Spain and Rome, which had ventured to contest his supremacy, were compelled to make reparation to the authority they had failed to recognize.

Nor must mention be omitted of the creation, at the same period, of no less than seventy knights of the Holy Ghost, by Louis XIV., who, as a signal and unprecedented favor, left one nomination at the disposal of the Prince de Condé; and beside this national recompense, originated by Henry III., his descendant also instituted another for personal services, which, however puerile it must appear to posterity, was too characteristic of Louis, and too much sought after by the greatest nobles of the court, to be passed over in silence. This extraordinary distinction, which he retained the right of bestowing and withdrawing at his

pleasure, was the privilege of wearing a blue outer-coat, embroidered with gold and silver, precisely similar to his own, and was accorded by a patent authorizing the wearer to accompany the king in his hunting-parties and his drives.

From that moment his favorites, more fortunate than his soldiers, had a uniform by which they might be known; and Condé the Conqueror solicited and obtained the favor of donning this envied habit, not because he had gained half-a-dozen battles for France, but because he had efficiently played the courtier at Fontainebleau.* It may be expedient to remark that these outer-coats were worn over vests ornamented with ribbons, and that above the coat was slung a shoulder-belt supporting a sword, while a throat-band of muslin, edged with fine lace, and a broad-brimmed beaver, surmounted by a double row of plumes, completed the costume, which continued in vogue until 1684, and became the fashion throughout all Europe, with the exception of Spain and Poland.

Meanwhile, the position of Mademoiselle de Vallière was far from being a happy one; for, superadded to the remorse which she never ceased to feel, she was exposed to perpetual suffering from the intrigues which were set on foot on all sides to separate her from the king; which, combined with the harshness she continually experienced from *Madame*, kept her in a perpetual state of anxiety. Nevertheless, she bore all patiently, and forbore to utter a complaint, conscious, as she herself feelingly declares, that she was only paying the penalty of her faults. She was not, however, long fated to confine her grief to her own bosom; for, on one occasion, when it was her tour of duty about the person of the princess, and that she was preparing to attend her to the funeral service of the Queen of Bohemia, then recently deceased, the Count de St. Aignan entered her apartment and delivered to her a note from the king, in which he requested her to return home immediately

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

after the ceremony, as he had an affair of importance to communicate.

Naturally anxious to ascertain its nature, Mademoiselle de la Vallière questioned the messenger, who informed her that her enemies had just concerted a new plot, intended to ruin her in the king's affections; and that, on this occasion, they had involved the peace of the young queen, by affecting to serve her in order to accomplish their purpose. He was about to be more explicit, when she was summoned to *Madame*; but she had heard enough to excite her uneasiness to a degree which she found it difficult to conceal. Nor did the expression of the king's countenance during the mass tend to remove her fears; he was pale, and occasionally looked fiercely round him, as though he sought some one upon whom he could wreak the anger by which he was evidently agitated; while, contrary to his usual rigid attention to the services of the church, he addressed perpetual questions to the Marquis de Vardes, who knelt behind him.

It was, consequently, with increased alarm that La Vallière awaited his advent in her chamber on her return; but one glance convinced her that she at least had not incurred his displeasure, and he at once revealed to her the circumstance by which he was so deeply moved. A letter had been addressed to Maria Theresa, which was delivered to the Señora Molina, her Spanish waiting-woman, who, suspicious that it might contain something calculated to distress her royal mistress, had forthwith carried it to the king. It was written in the Spanish language, but a translation had been appended which enabled the trembling Louise to read as follows:—

“The king is involved in an intrigue of which Your Majesty alone is ignorant. Mademoiselle de la Vallière is the object of this unworthy passion. This information is given to Your Majesty by faithful servants. You must decide if you can love your husband in the arms of another,

or if you will prevent a circumstance whose duration can not tend to your honor."

While the unhappy La Vallière, drowned in tears, was endeavoring to conjecture from the hand of what new enemy this bolt had sped, the king himself, whose indignation increased every moment, informed her that it was a device of Madame de Navailles, and that nothing short of the ruin of herself and her husband would satisfy his vengeance for the affront which had been put upon them both; nor was it without the most earnest entreaties that Mademoiselle de la Vallière could induce him to promise that he would limit their punishment to an immediate exile from the capital.

It may be well to mention in this place that the unfortunate duke and duchess, who were deprived of their position at court and banished, without a hope of future pardon, were totally guiltless of the letter which had excited the wrath of the king. The Countess de Soissons, hopeless of any change in the affection of Louis toward La Vallière, to whom she bore a mortal hatred, suddenly imagined that, could she succeed in acquainting Maria Theresa with the truth of a passion in which she had hitherto resolutely refused to place credence, her Spanish jealousy must inevitably cause a separation between the monarch and his favorite; and in this belief she secured the envelop of a letter which the queen had received from Madrid, and which she had thrown aside.

This done, she proceeded to the apartments of *Madame*, whom she requested to exert her influence in inducing the Count de Guiche to translate into Spanish for her a note of which she had brought a rough sketch in French. The princess, who imagined that nothing more was intended than a jest to mystify some person about the court, immediately sent for De Guiche, and having explained to him the service which Madame de Soissons required at his hands, left them while he accomplished his task. The

count had, however, no sooner run his eye over the paper which was placed in his hand than he indignantly refused to lend himself to so nefarious a proceeding; nor could all the blandishments of the countess succeed in winning his compliance. The discussion lasted so long that *Madame* returned to the room while it was at its height, and was immediately addressed by Madame de Soissons, who bade her place no further faith in the professions of the Duke de Guiche, as, after vowing himself to her interests, he had refused to further them by participating in a measure which would insure the dismissal of La Vallière from the court.

Suffice it that the arguments of the princess, combined with those of her confidant, at length prevailed over the honor of the Count de Guiche, who affected, in order to serve his own passion for *Madame*, to become gradually convinced that, although the means employed were somewhat questionable, the motive was one of pure morality; there was, according to Madame de Soissons, an immoral connection to terminate—a husband to be restored to his wife, and a queen to be saved from a life of sorrow; in short, a good action to be accomplished without difficulty, and, if carefully conducted, without danger.

While the countess was speaking, *Madame* held in one hand the note which was to be translated, while, with a smile that she knew he would be unable to resist, she pointed to a writing-stand beside her, and then motioned to the count to seat himself. He obeyed, but with a compunction which still made him hesitate, until the princess, motioning to Madame de Soissons and the Marquis de Vardes to leave the room, commenced dictating the sentences he was to translate, with another sunny smile, which he answered by exclaiming,

“Be it so, then, since it is your will; fortunately it involves my life, should it ever be discovered, for nothing save the scaffold will expiate such a crime. But it is your

pleasure; and for your sake I am ready to become an anonymous assassin—to lose my self-respect—to write this letter.”

Unhappily, the princess, strong in her aversion to *Mademoiselle de la Vallière*, and confident in the good management of the countess, considered all discovery impossible; and thus the letter was translated with a careful imitation of the writing of the Queen of Spain; and it was no sooner finished than the countess hastened to inclose it in its cover, well aware that if she suffered it to remain in the hands of the Count de Guiche, a return of better feeling would induce him to destroy it. *M. de Vardes* undertook its transmission to the Louvre, through a courier who was about to quit his service; and the count saw it carried away with a pang of remorse, which not even the gracious acknowledgments of *Madame* had power to overcome.

As we have already stated, the letter was delivered to the *Señora Molina*, who, well acquainted with the autograph of the Queen of Spain, and discovering in the address certain indications of an imperfect attempt at its imitation, immediately conceived the idea that it was some anonymous communication calculated to wound her mistress; and believing that with such a suspicion she ran no risk by confiding in the Queen-Mother, she immediately carried it to Anne of Austria, who, delighted to have an opportunity of giving this additional proof to her son of the public indignation excited by his attachment for *Mademoiselle de la Vallière*, desired *Molina* to deliver the letter to the king.

The waiting-woman seized the opportunity of his leaving the council-chamber to approach Louis with the open letter in her hand, and to inform him, that by a providential inspiration, fearing it might contain intelligence of the death of the King of Spain, who had long been dangerously indisposed, she had unsealed the packet before giving it to the queen.

Louis unfolded the paper, and the blood rushed to his brow as he perused its contents; and then, after compelling the bearer to pledge her oath that she had not communicated its contents to her royal mistress, he hastened to the apartments of Madame de Soissons, believing that her sagacity would enable her to discover the delinquent. It is needless, however, to state that, although the countess was not backward in pointing his suspicions in more than one direction, she afforded him no clew to the actual culprit; and it was reserved to M. de Vardes, when questioned in his turn by the monarch, to center them upon the unhappy Duchess de Navailles, who paid the penalty of his treachery during three weary years.

Shortly after this event Mademoiselle de la Vallière became the mother of a son, who lived but ten months, and whose existence, from the caution of those about her, was known only to a few persons. Immediately after its birth, the king expressed a wish that while she retained her post at the court of *Madame*, she should cease to fulfill its functions; but to this La Vallière objected, upon the ground that such an arrangement was without precedent, and would only increase the virulence of her enemies; and as Louis was silenced, if not convinced by the argument, she was comparatively surprised when, on presenting herself as usual at the toilet of *Madame*, Her Royal Highness informed her that thenceforward she would dispense with her official services, which under present circumstances no longer became her, adding that she did so by command of the king.

The extreme harshness with which this favor was accorded rendered it eminently painful to the erring maid of honor, who was crushed beneath the weight of her conscience, and found her only consolation in the conviction that she was indebted for the scorn and coldness of the princess rather to the jealousy with which she regarded a rival than to her horror of the crime she

affected to condemn. Nevertheless, this constant recurrence of mortification preyed upon the mind of Mademoiselle de la Vallière; and, combined with her separation from her child, affected both her health and spirits to a degree which not even the augmented tenderness of the king had power to remove.

During the carnival of 1663, the Crown Prince of Denmark, who was making the tour of Europe, arrived in Paris, where he was welcomed with great distinction; and MADemoisELLE, who had been exiled to her estate of St. Fargeau, for having refused to marry the King of Portugal, received constant letters from the court, in which her correspondents expatiated on the fine person of the prince, his exquisite dancing, and the perfection with which he spoke the French language, coupled with assurances that he aspired to her hand; and that, having expressed to the king a desire to wait upon her in her exile, His Majesty had readily given his consent to the visit.

MADemoisELLE was, however, just then in the vein of opposition, and declared her resolution to decline the proffered honor; alledging, as an excuse, that her house was not yet in a state which would enable her to receive guests of his quality. Her mood was, moreover, rendered still less complying by the fact that she had endeavored to temporize with the king, by offering thus tardily to accept the hand of the Duke of Savoy, which had been proposed to her; but Louis rejected the compromise, telling her, in a bitter manner, that he should marry her as might best serve his own interests; and during her banishment, this very Duke of Savoy, whose gallant bearing and personal advantages had produced their effect even upon her haughty nature, during his apparition at Lyons with the Princess Marguerite, had become the husband of her sister, Mademoiselle de Valois, whose reception at the court of Turin had been most brilliant.

It is probable, however, that *MADemoiselle* afterward repented her abruptness; and finding that the pleasures of the court were preferable to the monotonous occupation of building and furnishing, with which she had endeavored to beguile her banishment, became anxious to quit her solitude; for she, ere long, wrote to the king to state that, having caused a swamp upon her estate to be drained, the air had become so overcharged with miasma that her health was giving way; and she was shortly afterward recalled.

Soon after her return to Paris,* there was a grand gala at court, on Twelfth-night; when, either by chance or design, the Prince of Denmark drew the bean,† and immediately selected *MADemoiselle* as the companion of his transitory honors: a circumstance which gave evident satisfaction to the king, who had already privately offered the hand of his cousin to the young heir of Denmark, affecting to be urged to this measure by political considerations, but probably anxious to rid himself of the continual annoyances to which he was subjected by her overweening pretensions and perpetual discontent.

MADemoiselle, however, rejected this new prospect of a throne as decidedly as she had refused that by which it had been preceded, even declining to adduce any reason for her decision; and thus again incurred the king's displeasure immediately after her restoration to favor so greatly, that he did not scruple to remark that he could not in any way account for her conduct, save by the supposition that she still preserved a hope of becoming queen of France, as she refused all the princes who were pro-

* Jour des Rois.

† The ceremony of "drawing characters" in France is different from our own. A single bean is mixed with the ingredients of the cake, and the person in whose portion it is discovered becomes king or queen for the evening, and chooses a consort; and both are afterward attended, by the rest of the company, with all the ceremonial due to their temporary rank.

posed to her; in which case, he added, that she was only injuring herself, for that should it please God to spare him longer than the queen, it was assuredly not Mademoiselle de Montpensier who would afterward share his throne.

Were any further proof requisite of the extreme depravity of the French court at that period, it would be supplied by the fact that the king, undeterred by the increasing devotion and piety of his royal mother, who now passed the greater portion of her time in the convent of Val-de-Grâce, importuned her to receive Mademoiselle de la Vallière, even at a time when she was scarcely visible to the most attached of her friends; nor could the undisguised repugnance which she evinced to profane the holy retreat, where she sought to forget all worldly passions and worldly animosities, induce the infatuated monarch to withdraw his request.

Deeply attached to Maria Theresa, to whose forbearance and uncomplaining patience she was no stranger, she naturally shrunk from all contact with a person by whom she had been so deeply wronged; and the many amiable qualities of the erring woman whom she was required to welcome, in order to assure to her a position in society to which she was entitled neither by her birth nor her conduct, could not blind her to the extent and mischievous nature of her fault. But Louis was resolute; and surely the devoted and deceived Mary de Mancini was revenged, when at length a royal carriage drove into the court-yard of the pious nuns of Val-de-Grâce, and that the son of Anne of Austria ascended the stairs, entered her oratory—that sanctuary which should have been her refuge from the profligacy and vices of a court—and presenting his mistress, said, with a calm smile upon his lips, “*Mother*, here is Mademoiselle de la Vallière, whom you have condescended to send for.”

The soul-stricken Magdalen, as she looked on the stern

brow and cold eye of the coerced and indignant queen, would have knelt; and even when the hand of her royal mistress raised her from the floor to a low stool beside her own seat, she could not, during the brief interview, sufficiently control her feeling of humiliation to remember any portion of the conversation. With the king she could be, and she was to the last, only a loving and devoted woman, who had sacrificed all, even her self-esteem, to a passion too mighty for resistance; but in the presence of his injured and dying mother she forgot her love in her remorse.

The affection of the king for Mademoiselle de la Vallière being now recognized, the cessation of mystery caused an equal cessation of interest on the subject, save as regarded those who were affected by its existence; but it was far otherwise with the passion of the Count de Guiche for *Madame*; and accordingly, after the birth of her daughter, Maria Louisa d'Orleans, it once more became a general topic of conversation at court, and so extremely displeased the monarch that he desired the Marquis de Vardes to inform him of all he knew on the subject.

De Vardes, who feared that the imprudence of the count would, ere long, betray his secret, and who was, consequently, anxious to remove him from the court while there was yet time, did not affect to deny the truth, although he endeavored to palliate his fault; but the anger of the king, who lost sight of his own errors while condemning those of others, was so vehement, that the marquis endeavored to calm him by applauding his expressed determination to separate De Guiche from the object of his passion—only suggesting that the interest of both *Monsieur* and *Madame* exacted that his dismissal should not carry with it the appearance of disgrace, and hinting that it would be politic to give to the imprudent courtier the command of the troops at Nancy, which would impart to his exile the air of a signal favor.

Louis XIV., delighted by a measure which would at the same time terminate the romantic attachment of the count, and gratify his father, the Marshal de Grammont, instantly acted upon this advice ; and De Guiche departed for Lorraine with despair in his heart, after having been compelled to receive the congratulations of half the court.

CHAPTER VII.

Deaths of the Duke de Longueville and the Marshal de la Meilleraye—Increasing Danger of the Queen-Mother—Illness of the King and Queen—The King at St. Cloud—Arrival of the Pope's Legate; his Reception—Diplomacy of Louis XIV.—The Legate and the Dramatist—Condescension of Louis XIV. to Molière—Submission of the Duke de Lorraine—Jealousy of the Count de Guiche—Impetuosity of Madame—The Countess de Guiche—The King at Nancy—The extorted Confession—The Count de Guiche departs for Poland; his Gallantry—The Miniature—The King recalls M. de Guiche—Displeasure of Monsieur—The Chevalier de Lorraine—Insolence of M. de Vardes—Indignation of M. de Guiche—The Challenge—Madame betrays the Countess de Soissons—The Conspiracy revealed—Banishment of Madame de Soissons—Imprisonment of M. de Vardes—M. de Guiche is sent to Holland—The Duke de Mazarin and St. Genevieve—The Visions of Louis XIV.

ABOUT this time, intelligence reached the capital of the death of the Duke de Longueville at his government of Normandy, and of another actor in the Fronde in the person of the Marshal de la Meilleraye, whose son had become Duke de Mazarin by his marriage with Hortensia de Mancini. But what was still more calculated to shed a veil of mourning over the festivities which had hitherto succeeded each other in rapid succession, was the fact that the illness of the Queen-Mother increased so rapidly as to excite the fears of all around her.

Anne of Austria had enjoyed the rare privilege, so seldom accorded to her sex, of growing old without in any very eminent degree losing her personal advantages. Her hands and arms, which had always been singularly beautiful, remained smooth and round, and delicately white; not a wrinkle marred the dignity of her noble forehead; and her eyes, which were remarkably fine, lost neither their

brightness nor their expression; and yet for years she had been suffering physical pangs, only the more poignant from the resolution with which she concealed them. Compelled at last to confide in the faculty, she had in vain applied in succession every remedy which had been suggested to her, and at length the disease made such inroad upon her constitution that her strength began visibly to give way. The summer sojourn of the king at Versailles, in 1664, was consequently abandoned, while the young queen was so painfully affected by the state of her royal mother-in-law, to whom she was tenderly attached, that her health gave way beneath the shock, and she was so violently attacked by measles that her life was endangered.

On this occasion all the better feelings of the king were awakened; and regardless of the expostulations of those about him, he could not be induced to leave her bedside, where he remained day and night till he became infected with the complaint, and for the first four days was not expected to survive. On the fifth, however, the disease weakened, and he was removed to St. Cloud, where *Madame* was then residing, and where he was consequently under the same roof with *Mademoiselle de la Vallière*.

During his sojourn in that palace, the *legatè à latere* arrived to make the *amende honorable*, which had been demanded by Louis XIV. for the insult offered to his ambassador at Rome, and was received by the king in his bed-chamber, within the balustrade, where, as a signal honor, he was permitted to seat himself.* All the principal nobles of the court were present, and heard, with natural exultation, from the document read by the cardinal, that the Pope, recognizing the justice of the displeasure of the French monarch, consented to disband the Corsican guard, and to raise within the walls of Rome a pyramid commemorative of the insult and its reparation.

The Cardinal Chigi was the first legatè ever dispatched

* Versailles Ancien et Moderne.

by the Roman court to sue for the pardon of a European sovereign; their province had hitherto invariably been to give laws and to impose tithes. But on this occasion Louis XIV., not satisfied by so temporary a manifestation of repentance on the part of His Holiness as the disbanding of a regiment of guards, and the erection of a monument which might readily be removed, or which must in any event disappear in the lapse of time, insisted on the restoration of Castro and Conciglione to the Duke of Parma, and that the Duke de Modina should receive a compensation for his claims on Comachio; thus making an insult to his ambassador subservient to investing himself with the solid advantage of standing forth as the protector of the Italian princes.*

The treaty of reconciliation was no sooner concluded than Louis XIV. gave a series of *fêtes*, in honor, as he publicly asserted, of his distinguished guest, but which he privately dedicated to La Vallière. Races at the ring, concerts on the water, balls and banquets, succeeded each other with a rapidity and splendor which dazzled and delighted the Roman envoy; while, on his side, that dignitary rendered himself extremely popular with the whole court—an effect the more easily produced from the fact of his being a handsome man, not more than thirty years of age, tall in stature, with finely-arched black eyebrows, hands which became the envy of half the ladies of the royal circle, and an air of dignified suavity that savored more of the courtier than the churchman.

Notwithstanding the pleasure which he evidently derived from the amusements into which he so readily entered, his hosts were nevertheless somewhat startled on witnessing the relish with which he assisted at the performance of the *Princesse d'Elide*, and still more so by his request, on its conclusion, that the author might be presented to him; when the Prince de Conti lost no time in introducing

* Le Siècle de Louis XIV.

Molière, who was overwhelmed with praise by the legate, and with assurances that he had never seen any farce by which he had been so much diverted.

The admiration of the cardinal was very gratifying to Louis XIV., who regarded the great dramatist as one of the most distinguished men in his kingdom, and who had, on perceiving Molière (who in his official capacity of court upholsterer was, in conjunction with his colleague, Delobel, engaged in arranging the tapestries of the orchestra), on an occasion when he was about to take his frugal breakfast of bread and weak wine and water, desired his attendants to bring forward a folding stool, and made the dramatist take a seat by his side, in order to impress upon those about him, who affected to despise the plebeian genius, the estimation in which he was held by their monarch.

The greater portion of the summer of 1663 had been passed amid these perpetual festivities, when, in the month of August, France was again threatened with a war, which was, however, averted by the weakness of her adversary. It may be remembered that the Duke de Lorraine had signed a treaty by which he bequeathed his principality to France after his death, on condition that the king would allow him to raise a million of revenue during his life; and that the princes of the blood of Lorraine should be recognized as princes of the blood of France; while, on his side, Louis XIV. had exacted that one of the frontier fortresses of the principality should be forthwith surrendered to the French. The unfortunate Charles IV., a brave soldier, but a feeble vacillating, and imprudent prince, although he had authorized the verification of this treaty by the parliament, after a thousand subterfuges and delays, had at length refused to fulfill his compact, and it was decided that he should at once be compelled to do so.

Meanwhile, the Count de Guiche—whose honorable exile was imbittered by constant letters from the Marquis de Vardes, who, during his absence, was endeavoring to sup-

plant his friend in the affections of the Duchess d'Orleans, whose smiles were also sought by the Prince de Marsillac and the Chevalier de Lorraine, to both of whom she was utterly indifferent, and who, in order to conceal his own turpitude, hinted at her marked preference of the prince—became highly incensed, and wrote reproachfully to *Madame*, who, in her indignation, complained to M. de Vardes of the presumption of her old favorite.

This was precisely the point at which the marquis had aimed, and, far from endeavoring to defend his friend, he immediately seized the opportunity of alarming the fears of the princess, by representing the danger to which she was exposed from the jealousy of the count, and the necessity there existed for the restoration of her letters; which, however inconsequent they might really be, would, in the event of their becoming suspected, be assuredly misinterpreted, and thus injure both parties. In the first burst of her displeasure, *Madame* acted upon this insidious advice; and De Guiche, revolted by a want of confidence which impugned his honor, did not attempt to remonstrate, but at once confided to the marquis the casket which contained the correspondence.

This was no sooner in the possession of the princess than she repented her precipitancy, for she felt the wound which her implied suspicion must have inflicted upon a high-minded man, whose only error had been his headlong and uncalculating passion for herself; but it was too late to regret the step when she held in her hands the letters she had reclaimed, and learned that the Count de Guiche had fallen dangerously ill at Nancy.

The latter intelligence had no sooner reached the Countess de Guiche than she resolved to join her husband, in order to solace his sickness by her attentions; and the heart-stricken invalid could not remain insensible to such a sacrifice, although he had never affected any attachment toward a wife who had been forced upon him by his fam-

ily.* He consequently exerted himself to render her sojourn with the army less monotonous than she must have been prepared to find it; and all Paris ere long learned that the countess was surrounded by gayety, and the object of her husband's unceasing devotion.

No one experienced more gratification from this intelligence than the king, who had lately purchased Dunkirk from the English, and was preparing to seize Marsal from the Duke de Lorraine; and in his satisfaction at so happy a change in his old playfellow, he caused it to be announced to him that he was about to arrive in person at Nancy to superintend the siege, accompanied by *Monsieur*. The count was careful to profit by so admirable an opportunity of recovering the good graces of the monarch; and, aware of his taste for display and ceremony, he accordingly lost no time in preparing for him a triumphal entry into the city, which so much gratified Louis that no shade of displeasure remained toward M. de Guiche, who suddenly found himself once more on the very pinnacle of court favor.

Notwithstanding this extreme graciousness, however, the king retained considerable curiosity to learn all the details of the intimacy which had existed between *Madame* and his host; and in order to accomplish this, he affected in their private interviews to know far more than he was in reality aware of, and mentioned the secret meetings of the count and the princess as matters with which he was so well acquainted that it was needless for De Guiche to deny them.

Duped by this apparent candor, and glad, in all probability to be enabled to convince his royal master of his frankness without betraying the confidence which had been reposed in him by the princess, the count related every circumstance which had occurred, insisting throughout that nothing had taken place which could in any way affect the honor of Her Royal Highness. Had Louis XIV. been

* Mademoiselle de Béthune, Countess de Guiche, was the daughter of the Duke de Sully, and granddaughter of the chancellor Seguier.

discreet no evil consequences could have arisen from this revelation, even extorted as it was by the subtil inferences of the king himself; but, unfortunately, it afforded so favorable an opportunity of intimidating *Madame*, that he was unable to deny himself the gratification of informing her that he was master of her secret; and she was the more enraged by the discovery from the fact that, after the departure of Louis for Lorraine, she had written to M. de Guiche to warn him, if he valued her friendship, not to suffer the king to prevail on him to make the slightest disclosures.

Before her letter arrived at Nancy, however, there remained no more to tell; and on the return of the monarch to Paris, he had no sooner proved that he was aware of all the detail of the intrigue than she addressed a letter to the count, in which she commanded him never to appear in her presence, or to utter her name, under pain of her lasting hatred. In vain did he write, again and again, explaining all the circumstances under which he had been betrayed; his letters were returned unanswered; and at length, despairing that he should ever be able to justify himself in her eyes, he requested permission of the king to serve in the Polish army—a measure to which Louis was at first opposed, but which he ultimately conceded, on learning how much he had himself been instrumental in its adoption.

The taking of Marsal, where he had fought bravely, permitting M. de Guiche to resign with honor the command which he held in Lorraine, he embarked for Dantzic, careless of the fate which might await him. The monarch was, however, sufficiently generous to reassure *Madame*, after his departure, on the nature of the confidence which he had extorted from the self-exiled count; and when she learned that, far from having boasted of her favor, he had convinced the king that her sole error had been that of permitting him to love her, the princess

thought only of the means of recompensing him for all the suffering which he had undergone on her account; and ere long she dispatched her miniature by a trusty messenger, who transmitted it to the count in Poland, where, a short time afterward, it saved his life in battle, a ball having struck the case in which it was contained suspended by a chain about his neck.*

The continued victories of the King of Poland began, however, after a time, to make Louis regret the assent which he had given to the request of the Count de Guiche to serve in his army; and the annoyance that he felt whenever he encountered the name of one of his best officers, in the dispatches which reached him filled with details of the engagements gained over the Muscovites, despite all the glory which accrued to the name of France from the gallantry of the count, induced him to determine on his return; and he accordingly desired the Marshal de Grammont to recall him in his name. The letter of the marshal reached M. de Guiche on his return from Varsovie, while John Casimir was arranging a peace with the insurgents of the Ukraine, and an armistice with the Turks; and scarcely allowing himself time to take leave of the king, and to communicate to him the order which he had received from his own sovereign to return home, he commenced his journey the same night, and arrived in Paris, exhausted with fatigue and wild with joy.

Monsieur, when he first saw him in the circle of the king, bowed gravely without uttering a syllable of welcome; *Madame* affected an indifference which she was far from feeling; and the Marquis de Vardes, conscious that by his treachery he must have converted a friend into an enemy, met him with an elaborate politeness which was as elaborately returned.

The position of each party was embarrassing, but it soon

* Histoire de Madame Henrietta d'Angleterre, par la Comtesse de la Fayette.

became more so; for the Chevalier de Lorraine, piqued by the coldness of the princess, affected extreme devotion to several ladies of the court; and his universal homage created such amusement, that he was tormented by all his friends to confess who was the real object of his preference. Thus urged he mentioned Mademoiselle de Fiennes, one of the maids of honor of *Madame*, when the Marquis de Vardes, who was present, and who had his own subject of annoyance, asked him superciliously why he did not rather address his vows to her mistress.

The Count de Guiche overheard the inquiry; but from respect to the queen, in whose circle the conversation had taken place, he made no rejoinder until the next morning, when he sent a challenge to De Vardes. The king was, however, immediately informed of the circumstance, and forbade the meeting; while *Madame*, to whom it had also been confided, hastened to complain of the indignity to His Majesty, who sent the marquis to the Bastille. In her anger the princess did not spare the Countess de Soissons, to whose influence she attributed the insult; and among other remarks which she addressed to the king, she said that she was not surprised to find herself the victim of the superintendent's malice, when those who were most dear to His Majesty could not escape; and upon an inquiry of her meaning, she informed him that on one occasion, when *Madame de la Vallière* had taken precedence of the wife of a president, the countess had remarked to the Duchess de Ventadour, that she was aware that La Vallière was lame, but she never before knew that she was blind.

The anger of the king was unbounded, and he immediately ordered that the Countess de Soissons should be banished from the court; while the astonishment and fury of the superintendent were beyond bounds when the order was conveyed to her. She uttered invectives against the sovereign, who had, she said, sacrificed her to a nobody; against the two queens, who ought to intercede for her;

but especially against *Madame*, upon whom she declared that she would soon have ample revenge. She kept her word, but in a manner which, although it was eminently mortifying to the princess, proved far more fatal to herself; for it was possible that the king would after a time have forgiven her offense, had she not, in her weak desire for revenge, after accusing alike friends and enemies of crimes which in all probability were the offspring of her own malice, ended by relating to Louis the whole history of the Spanish letter, although in a manner which exculpated both herself and M. de Vardes, and cast all the stigma upon *Madame* and the Count de Guiche.

The king, more and more exasperated by what he heard, instantly summoned the princess; who, on being confronted with the Countess de Soissons, related the whole plot, even to its minutest details, and so thoroughly laid it open that Louis became convinced of her sincerity; and on ascertaining that the original draft of the letter was in the handwriting of M. de Vardes, ordered his immediate transfer to the fortress of Pignerolle, declaring to Madame de Soissons that if he could conceive any punishment more heavy than that which he had inflicted on herself he would condemn her to its endurance.

Madame, who felt that neither herself nor the Count de Guiche had been quite blameless in the affair, obtained a promise that her accomplice should not be in any way subjected to the royal displeasure; but on the intelligence of M. de Vardes's arrest, the Marshal de Grammont became alarmed, and sent his son to Holland, although he was at the time laboring under a severe indisposition.

This event divided the whole court into two distinct parties. The Queen-Mother headed that of the superintendent; but her interest was powerless against the will of the king. Maria Theresa refused to interfere in any way; while *Monsieur* could not conceal his delight at this third exile of the Count de Guiche. With the exception of a

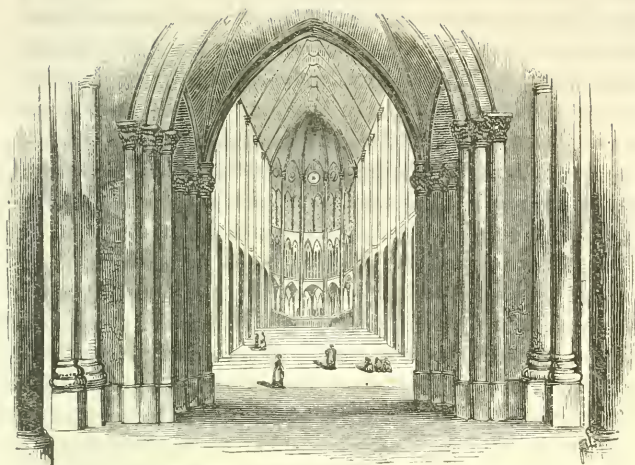
few of the younger nobility, who missed the brilliant saloon of Madame de Soissons, and the immediate friends of Anne of Austria, who, as a matter of course, regulated their feelings by hers, little regret was, however, really experienced at the banishment of the haughty and sarcastic countess; the greatest commiseration was bestowed upon M. de Vardes, who was, nevertheless, the greatest culprit of all, but no one dared openly to espouse his cause; and in a court constituted like that which we are endeavoring to describe, he was ere long forgotten. The Duke de Mazarin was the only individual who ventured to lift up his voice against the sentence of the king; for, although he had no great affection for his sister-in-law, the eccentricity of his character always induced him to act differently from those about him, and in this instance it prompted a proceeding so extraordinary, that it became the subject of universal comment.

Having waited upon the monarch at his *lever*, he approached him with an air of profound mystery, and said, solemnly, "Sire, St. Geneviève appeared to me last night. She is much offended by the conduct of Your Majesty, and has foretold to me that if you do not reform your morals the greatest misfortunes will fall upon your kingdom."

The whole circle stood aghast; but the king, without exhibiting the slightest emotion, replied slowly and sternly, "And I, Monsieur de Mazarin, have recently had several visions, by which I have been warned that the late cardinal, your uncle, plundered my people, and that it is time to make his heirs disgorge the booty. Remember this, and be persuaded that the very next time you permit yourself to offer to me unsolicited advice I shall act upon the mysterious information I have received."

The duke attempted no reply, and shortly afterward left the apartment, much disappointed at the ill success of his stratagem.*

* Mémoires de Madame de la Vallière.



CHAPTER VIII.

Decline of Anne of Austria—Recovery of the young Queen—A Courtier's Compliment—Susceptibility of the Queen-Mother—Death of Philip IV. of Spain—Projects of Louis XIV.—Sufferings of Anne of Austria—Renewed Festivities at Court—The royal Death-Bed—Ill-timed Etiquet—The Holy Oils—Death of Anne of Austria—Condescension of Mademoiselle—The Archbishop and the Queen's Heart—The Royal Funeral at St. Denis—Birth of Mademoiselle de Blois—La Vallière created a Duchess—Legitimation of La Vallière's Children—Birth of Louis de Bourbon—Madame Colbert Governess to Mademoiselle de Blois and the Count de Vermandois—Reconciliation of La Vallière with her Mother—Distaste of Louis XIV. for Madame de St. Rémy—Decline of the King's Passion for La Vallière—A new Favorite.

MEANWHILE, the Queen-Mother rapidly declined, and the regular faculty having failed to stay the progress of the evil, she placed herself in the hands of empirics, by whom it was aggravated ; while Maria Theresa gradually recov-

ered her health, and was enabled once more to devote all her care and attention to her suffering relative. Vallot, the king's physician, and Seguin, who was the medical attendant of Anne of Austria, could not agree upon the system to be pursued; and while the invalid was in suspense as to their final decision, the insidious disease made rapid way. On the 15th of December, after a restless night at the convent of Val-de-Grâce, of which she had for several years been a frequent inmate, she felt convinced that, beyond all doubt, the evil had become incurable; and although, during the last twelve or fifteen years, she had seen many cases of the same kind among the nuns (by which she had been so terrified as to make it her daily prayer to God that she might be spared so bitter a trial as theirs), she nevertheless no sooner ascertained the nature of her affliction, than she summoned all her fortitude to support it; and frequently expressed a trust that she should be enabled by means of her physical sufferings to expiate her sins.

Ere long she was perfectly aware of her danger; but even had she sought to deceive herself as to its extent, the want of caution observed by those who approached her would have rendered such a delusion impossible. As an example of this extraordinary and ill-timed frankness, on one occasion, when she had suffered more than usual and was greatly exhausted, her immediate end being anticipated, M. de Beringhen, the first valet-de-chambre, who was one of the oldest and most faithful of her attendants, was admitted to her bedside, and on seeing him she exclaimed, "Ah! monsieur, we must part!" To which the court servitor coolly replied, "Madam, you will readily understand with what grief your servants receive such an assurance; but it must be a consolation to them as well as to yourself to feel that by dying at once Your Majesty will escape great torment and great inconvenience, inasmuch as the disease under which you labor becomes after a time very noisome."*

* Anne of Austria died of cancer.

The afflicted queen made no reply, but turned upon the pillow as if to avoid all further sight of so awkward a consoler; and the congratulation which he had attempted to couple with his condolence was the more inconsiderate, as the unfortunate queen, despite the prediction of her medical attendants, was still fated to linger several months before she was released from her bitter trial.

The sufferings of the unhappy Anne of Austria must indeed have been extreme, when, superadded to the physical agony of which she was so long the victim, her peculiar fastidiousness of scent and touch are remembered. Throughout the whole of her illness she had adopted every measure to conceal even from herself the effects of her infirmity. She constantly held in her hand a large fan of Spanish leather, and saturated her linen with the most powerful perfumes; while her sense of contact was so acute and so irritable that it was with the utmost difficulty cambric could be procured sufficiently fine for her use; and upon one occasion, when Cardinal Mazarin was jesting with her upon this defect, he told her that "if she were damned, her eternal punishment would be sleeping in linen sheets."*

Immediately that the danger of the Queen-Mother became imminent, *Monsieur* hastened to her bedside; and it was only some hours afterward that she was visited by the king, who did not suffer private feeling to interfere with public business, even in the case of a dying parent, and whose tardy visit might have been indefinitely postponed could he have foreseen that the agony upon which he compelled himself for a short time to look was incident only upon a crisis of the complaint; for partial convalescence enabled the unhappy sufferer to support the melancholy tidings which soon afterward reached her of the death of her brother, Philip IV. of Spain.

This intelligence produced very varied effects upon

* Louis XIV., sa Cour, et le Regent.

the different members of the royal family. The young queen was overwhelmed with grief, and mourned for her father with unaffected sorrow. Anne of Austria shed but few tears, for she felt that she should soon join him in the tomb; while Louis XIV. looked upon the event as a sovereign rather than a kinsman, and saw at once the benefit which might accrue to himself from the event; and it is probable that from that very moment he meditated the succession to the Spanish crown.

Philip IV. had become, by his first wife (the sister of Louis XIII.), the father of the Princess Maria Theresa, now married to her cousin, Louis XIV.; a marriage by which the Spanish monarchy had at length fallen into the house of Bourbon, so long its enemy. By his second marriage, with Mary-Anne of Austria, he had issue, Charles II., the heir to the throne—a weak and sickly child, and sole survivor of three sons, two of whom had died in their infancy. It is true that, at the period of his alliance with Maria Theresa, the French king had, in his marriage treaty, agreed to resign every claim to all and any of the kingdom of Spain; but he instantly remembered that on the other hand that treaty had been already violated, inasmuch as the five hundred thousand crowns which were the dower of his wife had never been paid; nor did he care to call to mind that the dower of the daughter of Henry IV. had also been merely nominal. And, under these circumstances, he decided that Flanders and Franche-Comté must, according to the jurisprudence of those provinces, return to his wife, notwithstanding her renunciation. He accordingly caused his right to be investigated by his own council, who declared it to be incontestible; but the council and the confessor of the widow of Philip IV. decided precisely the reverse; and the Spanish queen had in her favor one powerful argument in the law laid down by Charles V., had the laws of Charles V. been acknowledged by the French court.*

* Le Siècle de Louis XIV. *Francheville.*

Meanwhile the Queen-Mother was lingering on, a prey to the greatest physical agony, and had become so much exhausted by her long-continued suffering as to faint when she was removed from one bed to another. But when the winter brought its habitual train of festivities, as she still survived, the court gradually resumed its accustomed habits; for she had been so long an invalid that those about her had become inured to the sight of her suffering.

On the 5th of January *Monsieur* gave a ball, at which the king appeared in a suit of violet-colored velvet, as mourning for his royal father-in-law, so covered, however, with pearls and diamonds that the color of the material could not be distinguished; and on the following day the unfortunate Anne of Austria became so much worse, that a stop was put to all amusements. Her illness increased during the night, and although in the morning she slept for an hour or two, the disease made such rapid progress that it was evident her end was fast approaching; and she accordingly began to prepare for death, and received with great and Christian fortitude the assurance of her physician that she had only a few hours to live. She then asked for her confessor and requested every one to retire, declaring that she wanted nothing, and could think only of God.

The king, the queen, *Monsieur*, *Madame*, and *MADemoiselle*, accordingly passed into her cabinet, while an express was dispatched for the sacrament; and when there, says the latter, with supreme self-possession, "in order to not to remain useless, we settled the ceremonials of the mourning, and spoke of other matters which required arrangement, and the division of the apartments at St. Germain, determining that the king should leave for Versailles the moment that she should be no more; that *Monsieur* should go to St. Cloud; and that I should remain to order what was necessary. The king himself commanded the carriages."*

* Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

When the approach of the Archbishop of Auch, attended by the other almoners, with the Holy Viaticum was announced, a discussion arose among the illustrious party in the cabinet with regard to the ceremonial which should be observed, and an appeal was made to Madame de Motteville, who replied that in the case of the late king the princes had advanced as far as the outer door of the palace to receive the procession, and that she thought it would be wise to act upon that precedent.

MADemoisELLE, however, objected with considerable haughtiness to so extreme a measure, declaring that she could not consent to establish any custom of the kind; and that as it was her privilege to walk first, she should not advance beyond the middle of the court of the Louvre, which she considered quite sufficient for the holy pyx, as no more could be done for the sacrament itself. Her decision was admitted; and the royal party consequently proceeded no further than the distance she had named.*

When about to receive the extreme unction, as the priests were preparing to anoint her ears with the holy oils, the dying queen desired Madame de Flex, her lady of honor, to be careful to raise the borders of her cap, lest the oil should touch them and give them an unpleasant smell; and the ceremony was no sooner at an end than the king fainted, and was carried into an adjoining apartment, where he was with difficulty restored to consciousness. Finally, at six o'clock on the following morning, she expired, and Madame de Flex carried her keys to the king; her will was then brought from the cabinet, and read before the whole of the royal family save *Monsieur*, who refused to remain; and M. le Tellier had no sooner completed the reading than the king got into his carriage and departed.†

When the funeral equipage arrived which was to convey

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

† Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

the heart of the deceased queen to the convent of Val-de-Grâce, to which she had bequeathed it, MADemoisELLE, in a mourning cloke, attended by Madame de Longueville and the Princess de Carignan, met the Archbishop of Auch at the foot of the grand stair-case, and desired him to deposit the heart in the seat of honor, and to place himself beside it, declaring that on this occasion she would yield to him the privilege of her rank; and upon some hesitation on the part of the prelate, she added, with more frankness than civility, "I shall prefer placing myself on the back seat, on account of the disease of which she died."

This reasoning was unanswerable; and the archbishop accordingly shared the cushion which bore the senseless relic of the once powerful Queen-Regent of France.*

On the following evening,† at seven o'clock, the body of the Queen-Mother left the Louvre, and arrived at St. Denis at eleven, where the mourners were detained an hour and a half in the church, listening to the harangue pronounced by the Archbishop of Auch at the portal on delivering up the body, and the reply of the prior; after which the funeral obsequies were performed, and only brought to a conclusion at two o'clock in the morning—a similar service having taken place simultaneously at Nôtre-Dame—and this ceremony over, the court returned to Paris.

In the following October, Mademoiselle de la Vallière became the mother of a daughter;‡ and about six months subsequent to that event, despite her earnest solicitations that he would permit her to remain in her partial obscurity, Louis XIV. formally conferred upon his mistress the estate of Vaujours and the barony of St. Christophe, which he had caused to be erected into a duchy-peerage; and

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

† 21st January, 1666.

‡ Anna Maria of Bourbon, afterward legitimized, who married, in 1680, Louis Armand de Bourbon, Prince de Conti.

legitimized her child, by an act passed at St. Germain-en-Laye at the commencement of May, 1667, and registered by the parliament in the same month.

On the second of December, in the following year, Mademoiselle (or, as she was now called, Madame) de la Vallière gave birth to a third child, a son—who was legitimized, like his sister, under the name of Louis de Bourbon—and was afterward known as the Count de Vermandois.

Thenceforward all privacy was impossible. M. Colbert, who owed every thing to the king, intrusted the education of the (now) royal children to his wife, by whom they were brought up under his own eye. The elder, who took the name of Mademoiselle de Blois, was of surpassing beauty, and the gradual decrease of the king's passion for their mother never for an instant induced any diminution of tenderness toward her children, whom he idolized.

At this period the Marquise de St. Rémy, upon the representations of the Dowager-Duchess d'Orleans, consented to see her daughter, whose lapse from virtue she had hitherto resented so much as to have altogether withdrawn her countenance from her in consequence; but she did so with a coldness that convinced her erring child she had obeyed the wishes of her royal mistress rather than the impulse of her own will; and the king never forgave her this demonstration of her feelings. In vain did La Vallière endeavor to make him comprehend that to a parent the reputation of her daughter must be dearer than any thing on earth. Louis XIV., strong in his egotism, would not understand that his love could be otherwise than an honor to all who might become involved in its effects; and thus he was with difficulty induced to tolerate the marchioness, and never evinced toward her a single mark of favor.

This fact alone might have convinced the unhappy duchess that her power over the affections of her royal lover

was actually, even if not ostensibly, diminishing. Some months previously he would have listened to her arguments and yielded to her reasons; but now, although she had acquired as a mother a more feasible claim upon his heart, she had begun to fade beneath anxiety and care; and as her bloom had been her greatest attraction, she was no longer so well able to compete with the younger and happier beauties by whom she was surrounded; nor was so supreme an egotist as Louis XIV. likely to remain long blind to such a fact; while it is certain that one of the handsomest women of the court not only perceived but resolved to profit by the change.

Would that we could present a faithful picture of the reign of Louis XIV. without finding ourselves perpetually compelled to sully our pages by a record of heartless intrigues, which are so intimately involved with the history of the time as to enforce even detailed mention. To Mary de Mancini Louis XIV. was indebted for his first intellectual ambition; Mademoiselle de la Vallière had taught him the real value of a devoted heart, and Madame de Montespan was about to impart to him the still more important secret of self-government.

When Louis succeeded in overcoming the resistance of La Vallière he was still young, and loved with a respectful and timid passion, which, constituted as he was, he afterward exchanged toward his mistresses for the same arrogant and disdainful domination that he exhibited toward his subjects, and which a modest submission, like that of the unfortunate favorite whom we have seen the heroine of the fêtes of Versailles and St. Cloud, only tended to augment. He required, in order to contend with and overcome his self-love, a character as haughty and as imperious as his own; and he found what he needed in the beautiful, intellectual, but unprincipled and self-centered Marquise de Montespan.

CHAPTER IX.

Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente—Lady of the Palace; her Superb Beauty—"The Wit of the Mortemars"—Her Subtilty—Humility of La Vallière—Ambition of her Rival—Marriage of Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente—The Marquis de Montespan—Horror of the Marquis at the Position of La Vallière—Madame de Montespan refuses to leave the Court—Departure of the Marquis; his Letters—Preparation for War—Sale of Dunkirk by Charles II.—Louis fortifies the City—Alliance with Portugal and the United Provinces—Admirable Condition of the Army—The Spanish Minister; his Arrogance; his Weakness—A Courtly Campaign—A luxurious Camp—Triumphant Progress of Louis XIV.—The King in the Trenches—The Veteran's Warning—Gratitude of Louis XIV.—The Cousin of M. de Charost—Alarm of the Citizens of Brussels—Increasing Favor of Madame de Montespan—La Vallière Insulted by the Queen—Departure of La Vallière for Paris; her Return; her Imprudence—Verbal Morality of Madame de Montespan—Misunderstanding between Louis and Maria Theresa—The wounded Arm—La Vallière in the Queen's Coach—The Montespan Correspondence—The Public Mourning—Accommodating Principles.

FRANCES Athenais de Rochechouart de Mortemar,* whom we have already introduced to our readers as one of the companions of La Vallière, when, in the park of Fontainebleau she betrayed her secret passion for the king, and who was at that time Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, had obtained, through the interest of the Duchess de Navailles, an appointment as lady of the palace to the Infanta-queen, and by her superb beauty and brilliant wit

* "The antiquity of the family of Montemar is registered in its name, since the genealogists affirm that a noble who accompanied Godfrey de Bouillon in his crusade obtained, as his share of the conquest, that portion of Syria bordering upon the Dead Sea (*Mermorte*). Thence the name of *Mortimer* in England, and of *Mortemar* in France."—*Louis XIV. et son Siècle*.

soon attracted the attention of the whole court; but this homage, flattering as it was, did not suffice to the ambition of Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, so long as the king continued insensible to her attractions; and as he was constantly absorbed by her old companion, La Vallière, she could devise no better method of directing his attention to herself than by exhibiting an extraordinary affection for the favorite. She saw at a glance that the timid, tranquil, and unobtrusive affection of La Vallière was unaccompanied by any mental exertion; and that, satisfied with the mere fact of looking at and listening to the king, she was incapable of amusing him in a moment of tedium, or of assisting him in a season of difficulty. Resolute in her determination never to be involved in any political cabal, to solicit favors either for herself or others, or to parade the triumph of her fault by making herself conspicuous in the court circle, she was ignorant of all the graceful gossip in which Louis, in his private hours, delighted to indulge. Absorbed in her affection for her royal lover and his children, she was careless of literature and ignorant of art. In short, she lived in her own little world of devotion and remorse, and often met the monarch with tears, which banished the smile from his lips and chilled the ardor of his greeting.

Athenais de Mortemar felt her advantage, and profited by it to the utmost; and this constant contact ere long produced its effect. The king was struck by the affectionate devotion which she exhibited to her friend, the amiable zeal with which she superintended even the details of her toilet, and the ready wit with which she furnished her at every crisis with both words and ideas. His visits to La Vallière became more agreeable when he found that the high spirits of the handsome lady of the palace relieved him from the annoyance of a repentance which wounded his self-love, by imparting a portion of their buoyancy to his gentle mistress; and the "wit of the Mortemars" which had passed

into a proverb not likely to be negated in the person of Mademoiselle de Tonnay-Charente, proved an agreeable episode in his communion with his acknowledged favorite, for which he felt by no means disposed to be ungrateful.

Thus were things situated when the subtil beauty was compelled by her family to accept the hand of the Marquis de Montespan,* having, as she herself acknowledged, already bestowed her affections elsewhere.

During the first months of their union the marquis expressed considerable satisfaction at her high station, and extreme popularity at court; but, by his violent and unconcealed disgust at the attachment existing between the king and La Vallière, forewarned her of the little indulgence which she might anticipate at his hands should she be betrayed into any levity likely to dishonor his name. It is probable, however, that ere long he became weary of seeing his wife devoted to vanity and pleasure, and of the restraint imposed by her official duties; for, on succeeding to an inheritance in Provence, he urged her strongly to obtain leave to accompany him when he went to take possession of the property.

Madame de Montespan, however, young, beautiful, and admired, and, moreover, not sufficiently attached to her husband to make any sacrifice to his wishes when they interfered so fatally with her own private views, instantly made a pretext of her position, and pleaded with great earnestness the duty which she owed to her royal mistress; suggesting that he should dispose of the estate to some member of his family, and reside entirely in the neighborhood of the court in which she aspired to shine.

Unable to prevail, and angered by her resistance, the marquis at length resolved to leave Paris alone; and having, on his arrival at his new property, found every thing greatly dilapidated, he applied all his energies to its im-

* Henry Louis de Pardailan de Gondrin, Marquis de Montespan, of an illustrious family of Gascony.

provement—still writing, however, from time to time, to urge the marquise to join him. His entreaties and expostulations were of no avail. Madame de Montespan had become satisfied that the king began to feel pleasure in her society, and she resolved not to quit the court.

While this new intrigue was thus commencing, Louis XIV., who had never for a moment lost sight of his Spanish interests, began to make preparations for a campaign. He had no apprehension as regarded the result of this contemplated war; for he was enabled to place himself at the head of thirty-five thousand men—to dispatch eight thousand to Dunkirk, which, as well as Mardik, the needy and prodigal Charles II. had sold to him for five millions of livres—and to march four thousand troops upon Luxembourg. Well aware of the importance of Dunkirk, so rashly ceded and so eagerly acquired, the French king had at once employed thirty thousand men upon the works, and fortified the city on all sides. Between the town and the citadel a basin had been dug, capable of containing thirty vessels of war; and Dunkirk was no sooner beyond the power of the English than even their improvident monarch himself was compelled to feel that his cupidity had raised him up a formidable enemy.

Moreover, not content with his internal resources, but anxious also to weaken the hands of his adversary, Louis made an alliance with Portugal and the United Provinces, who saw with misgiving a bigoted and superstitious nation so close upon their frontiers; while Turenne was to act as general of the army, and Colbert had spared no exertion to enable the state to support without injury the expenses of the war.

Louvois, the new war minister, had, on his side, made extraordinary preparations for the campaign. Stores of every description were distributed along the frontier, and the rigid discipline which he had introduced, and enforced by his inflexible austerity, kept every officer to his post;

while the presence of a young king, the idol of his army, was well calculated to reconcile them to increased stringency of their duties.

Military advancement began from that period, in France, to be more certainly secured by merit than by birth; and services, instead of ancestors, were counted—a circumstance hitherto unprecedented, but most effective upon the spirit of the troops.

Such a campaign could scarcely with propriety be termed a war; for on one side there was, as we have seen, an ambitious monarch, an able general, and a zealous minister; a large body of the best soldiers in Europe, animated by a new and honorable hope; and two allies ready to play their part in the game of conquest, whenever their services might be required against the ill-defended province of a kingdom, ruined in its resources and rent with feuds. On the other hand, there was a widowed queen, whose timid and feeble rule left the monarchy weak and defenseless, and whose prime minister was her confessor, a German Jesuit, called Father Nitard, a man perfectly able to subjugate the will of a penitent, but utterly incapable of governing a state—full of ambition and arrogance, but totally devoid of the necessary qualities calculated to render him eminent either as a minister or a priest. Even before his appointment to the high office for which he was subsequently indebted to the weakness of the widow of Philip IV., he had the insolence to exclaim to the Duke of Lermata, who was reproaching him with his assumption, and reminding of the deference due to his own rank:

“It is you who owe respect to me; I who have every day your God in my hands and your queen at my feet.”

And yet this presumptuous priest, who was so ready to assert himself even thus blasphemously and disloyally, left the treasury without funds, the fortifications all over the country in a state of ruin, the ports without shipping, and the army undisciplined, unpaid, ill-officered, and utterly

incapable of contending with such troops as were about to be brought against them; while the frontiers of Flemish Spain were almost destitute alike of fortresses and of garrisons.

Louis XIV. was so well aware of these facts, that he caused himself to be accompanied throughout the campaign by all the ladies of the court, and the expedition was a mere series of easy triumphs and elegant revel. Luxury of every description was thus introduced into the army at the same period as the rigid discipline to which we have already alluded. Marshal Turenne had for years used nothing but iron dishes at his table; and the Marquis d'Humières was the first who, at the siege of Arras, in 1658, had displayed a service of plate, and introduced the refinement of complicated cookery. In the campaign of 1667, however, when Louis XIV. paraded all the magnificence of his court amid the turmoil of a camp, every individual strove to outvie his neighbor in splendor and expense.

The progress of the French was one continued triumph. Louis presented himself before Charleroi, and entered the city as he would have entered Paris; Ath and Tournay were taken in two days; Furnes, Armentières, and Courtrai held out no better; he descended the trench in person before Douai, and took it the next day;* but the most remarkable event of the campaign was the siege of Lille, on which occasion the Count de Brouai, its governor, sent to ask him which quarter of the camp he occupied, in order that he might not fire upon it. His answer was, "All quarters."

When the action took place he exposed himself considerably, and a page of the royal stable was killed immediately behind him in the trench; upon which a soldier, alarmed at his danger, seized him abruptly by the arm and dragged him back, exclaiming, "This is no place for you!" As the king hesitated, startled by the words and action of

* Le Siècle de Louis XIV.

the trooper, the veteran Marquis de Charost* snatched off his plumed hat, which was too remarkable, and placed his own upon the head of the king, whispering as he did so, "Sire, the wine is drawn, and it must be drank." The young monarch heard and appreciated the admonition, remained in the trench, and felt grateful to him throughout his life for the timely lesson.

Every day M. de Brouai, finding that there was no ice in the camp, sent a given quantity to the king, who, on one occasion, desired the gentleman by whom it was brought to request the governor, if he could conveniently do so, to increase the supply.

"Sire," answered the Spaniard, bowing gravely, "he is chary of it, because he hopes that the siege will be of long duration, and he is apprehensive that Your Majesty may ultimately suffer from the deprivation." And he made a second profound bow.

"Tell M. de Brouai," exclaimed the Marquis de Charost, "not to act as the governor of Douai did, who surrendered himself like a rogue."

"Are you mad, Charost?" asked the king.

"Not at all, sire," answered the veteran, composedly; "for M. de Brouai is my cousin."†

The hope of the brave veteran was realized, as Lille held out for nine days before it capitulated, although the Spaniards had only eight thousand men to oppose to the victorious troops of Louis; and the vanguard of even this little army was cut to pieces by the Marquis de Créqui,

* Charost was celebrated for his courage in the field, and had greatly distinguished himself during the wars of Henry IV. He had been the *protégé* of Richelieu, who made him captain of the body-guard; and Mazarin, who affected to protect all who were the favorites of his predecessor, became his friend, and recommended him first to the Queen-Mother, and subsequently to the king. His son married the only daughter of Fouquet by his first marriage, but even the disgrace of that minister never diminished the court favor of the Charosts.

† Louis XIV., sa Cour, et le Regent.

while the main body took refuge under the walls of Brussels and Mons, leaving the French king master of the field without any further engagement.

The rapidity of these conquests spread alarm in Brussels, whose inhabitants hastened to transport all their property to Antwerp, uncertain whether Louis would not terminate the campaign by making himself master of the whole of Flanders, which it is extremely probable he might have done, had his army been strong enough to enable him to garrison the towns which were ready to open their gates. He was, however, advised by Louvois rather to leave large bodies of troops in the cities already taken, and to fortify them in an efficient manner; to which he acceded, confiding the direction of the works to Vauban,* one of those wonderful men of genius who were the best illustrations of his reign; and this arrangement completed, the victorious monarch hastened to return to his capital, to enjoy the acclamations of the people, the adoration of the courtiers, and the festivities of the court.

The Flemish campaign had, however, other results beside those which we have already recapitulated. The king had been brought into frequent contact with Madame de Montespan both at Versailles and St. Germain; but during the journey to the frontier she had still better opportunities

* Sebastian Leprestre de Vauban, a celebrated engineer, was born at St. Leger de Foucheret, in the department of the Nièvre in 1633, and in his seventeenth year entered the regiment of Condé, to whose fortunes he attached himself. He was soon distinguished for his talents in engineering, and greatly assisted in the sieges of Stenai, Clermont, Landrecies, Condé, Valenciennes, Montnédi, Ypres, Gravelines, and Oudenarde. He directed that of the fortress of Luxembourg in 1683. Appointed marshal of France in 1703, commissary-general of fortifications, and governor of Lille; he died in 1717. Vauban restored 300 ancient fortresses, and constructed 33 new ones; conducted 53 sieges, and was in more than 140 engagements. He left behind him several writings; among others, a *Treaty on the Attack and Defense of Fortified Cities*, a work on the *Royal Tythe*, and *Hours of Idleness*, a literary miscellany.

of ingratiating herself; nor had she been less careful to conciliate the favor of the queen, of which she availed herself to undermine her partiality for La Vallière so successfully, that the latter was subjected to constant affronts which reached their culminating point on an occasion when she chanced to be somewhat late in joining the dinner-party, and found, on entering the room, that the queen had so filled the table that no seat remained unoccupied; upon which she immediately retired to her apartments, where she learned that Her Majesty had expressly forbidden that refreshments should be furnished to her, a command which was, however, disobeyed.*

The mortification she had experienced, nevertheless, determined Madame de la Vallière to return at once to Compiègne, where she had left Madame Colbert and her children, and thence to proceed to Versailles to await the conclusion of the campaign; and she had actually taken leave of the queen, after writing to inform the king of her intention, and made a day's journey toward the capital, when a letter from her royal lover, reproaching her with her precipitation, at once caused her to retrace her steps.

It was late in the evening when she was overtaken by the messenger, and a long day's journey separated her from the king; she therefore resolved to travel all night, in order to overtake the court by dawn, and just as the sun rose she arrived at Guise.

On inquiring for the queen, she found, however, that she had left the town an hour previously; and terrified lest the royal pair should meet before she had secured an opportunity of explaining to Louis the reasons which had induced her abrupt departure, she desired her attendants to increase their speed, and to overtake the army at any risk.

She was obeyed; but as the carriage was advancing through a gorge of the mountain, she was unable to calculate her progress, until, arriving in a spot that commanded

* Le Siècle de Louis XIV.

the plain, she suddenly perceived the whole body of the army with a small detached group a short distance in advance, and at once recognized the personal staff of the king, from which she was only separated by a newly-ploughed field encumbered with stones.

As her coachman hesitated to advance, fearing an accident, she repeated her commands, and ere long was in considerable peril from the severe shocks occasioned to her equipage by the masses of rock that were scattered in every direction; but she, nevertheless, persisted in advancing, as she found that she was gaining ground upon the queen, who followed the beaten road. She had, however, scarcely time to distinguish the figure of the king, when a violent crash warned her that her carriage had given way, and in another instant it was overturned. A sharp pain in her arm convinced her that she had sustained a severe hurt; but she was too anxious to justify herself to heed the accident, and she was no sooner disengaged from the fallen vehicle than she insisted that it should be raised, in order that she might pursue her journey. With some difficulty this was accomplished, and she soon reached the king, which she had no sooner done than, with an exclamation of delight, she showed herself at the window.

“What! before the queen!” said Louis, so soon as he had recognized the adventurous traveler; and with these few but reproachful words, he turned the head of his horse, and moved forward toward the advancing equipages of the royal retinue.

Maria Theresa, who had witnessed the whole proceeding, was pale with anger, and was about to send one of her attendants to arrest La Vallière on the spot, when her ladies entreated her to desist, representing the probable consequences which would ensue to herself from such a measure; and she was at length appeased by the blame which they liberally bestowed upon the insolent favorite, of which no one was more lavish than Madame de Mon-

tespan, who wound up her objurgation by exclaiming, "Heaven preserve me from being the mistress of the king! But if I were so unfortunate I should never have the effrontery to appear before the queen."

Maria Theresa thanked her by a look of gratitude; for she had never for a moment suspected the virtue, and far less the rivalry of the marchioness, who was her almost constant companion, and who was accustomed to bear her company every evening while she awaited the arrival of the king in her apartments. Insensibly the lady of the palace acquired a habit of lingering near her royal mistress after his entrance, and Louis, on his side, of including her in the conversation which ensued; and as she possessed, in an eminent degree, the "wit of the Mortemars," and was caustic, agreeable, full of anecdote, and an admirable mimic, he soon acquired a marked taste for her society; while the queen, thoroughly deceived by her professions, and the fact that she even joined her in her private devotions, encouraged her in her exertions to amuse the monarch, flattering herself that, by rendering her own circle more agreeable, she should ultimately succeed in weaning him from his passion for La Vallière.

But to return to the perilous exploit of the duchess. The queen, although she had permitted herself to be dissuaded from giving any public sign of her displeasure, nevertheless returned the greeting of her royal consort, when he reached her carriage, with such marked coldness that he inquired its cause, when she overwhelmed him with reproaches for having permitted her to be subjected to such an affront as she had just experienced. Soon wearied by her complaints, the king, after a brief attempt to calm her anger, in which he was unsuccessful, withdrew his hat, and, after a cold but graceful salutation, galloped off in the direction of the troops; but in five minutes more he was beside the equipage of La Vallière, whom he found drowned in tears. Their reconciliation was the work of an instant;

and, on ascertaining that she had experienced an accident, he ordered his surgeon to be immediately summoned, who soon discovered that the arm was injured, and must be instantly bound up.

The king remained to support the duchess during the operation in a state of the most painful agitation, after which he himself accompanied her in a carriage to Guise, where he lodged her in the best house that the town afforded, and ordered M. Séguin not to leave her for a moment. A slight fever supervened; but on the morrow she was declared convalescent, and Louis, who had little sympathy for lingering indisposition in those about him, sent a carriage to convey her to the mass, and his own equery to attend her. She consequently appeared with her wounded arm in a sling, and at the conclusion of the service the king insisted upon her resuming her place in the queen's carriage.

In the interval the royal pair had again met, and when Madame de la Vallière presented herself at the moment of departure, all the ladies by whom it was already occupied hastened to offer their places, not even excepting MADemoiselle, who was seated beside the queen; nor did Maria Theresa herself fail to greet her trembling rival with more than ordinary graciousness. In the evening, as the supper was served, Madame de la Vallière prepared to withdraw, but was detained by the queen herself, who motioned her to a seat opposite her own, while the king exerted himself to evince his satisfaction at what was taking place about him. On glancing round the table La Vallière remarked that Madame de Montespan had not joined the circle; nor was she the only individual who had noticed her absence. In the course of the evening she, however, appeared, and was immediately besieged with inquiries and reproaches, to which she pleaded a violent headache; and, contrary to her usual custom, instead of seeking to enliven the party by sallies of wit or brilliant freaks of fancy, she assumed a

melancholy demeanor which attracted the attention of the king.

On one or two occasions she approached Madame de la Vallière and conversed with her in an under tone; but the moment she saw the monarch about to join them, she moved away, and, eventually, she seated herself at a card-table, and motioned her unsuspecting rival to her side. The king shortly afterward followed, declaring that he would give her advice which would insure her success; but she played willfully wrong; and, after having for a short time supported his remonstrances, remarked that she saw His Majesty wished her to leave the table, and that, as such was the case, she would ask Madame de la Vallière to take her cards, in order that the party might not be broken up, which would displease the queen; and, so saying, she rose, gave her chair to the duchess, and seated herself in the recess of a window. For a time the king continued his instructions to La Vallière, but with evident absence of mind; and, eventually, he followed the marchioness, and stood conversing earnestly with her. Maria Theresa smiled; but it was far otherwise with the wretched Louise, who became suddenly conscious that her day of triumph was drawing to its close.

Another circumstance sufficed to assure her of the fact. The king had altered the arrangement of the apartments, and given to Madame de Montespan that which had previously been occupied by the Duchess de Montausier,* which was only separated from his own by a short stair-case; and this change had no sooner been made than it was remarked that the marchioness frequently quitted the queen's card-table, or the drive, and retired to her room, and that the king disappeared at the same time and shut himself into his own.

* Julia d'Angennes, first lady of honor to Anne of Austria, who in 1654 married Charles de St. Maure, Duke de Montausier, and was subsequently governess to the dauphin.

But however prosperously the wily marchioness might be conducting her intrigue, she was not without misgivings on the subject of her husband. His frequent and urgent letters broke in frightfully upon her dreams of ambition; and at length she received one in which he offered to pledge himself that if she would devote five or six years exclusively to his interests, he would then restore her, for the remainder of her life, to the gayeties of the court. "Come and take a near view, my dear Athenais," it concluded, "of these stupendous Pyrenees, whose every ravine is a landscape, and every valley an Eden. To all these beauties yours is alone wanting; you will be here, like Diana, the divinity of these noble forests."

The flatteries of a husband had, however, unfortunately, no attraction for Madame de Montespan. In reply to this urgent appeal she contented herself by asserting that his impatience and ill-humor made her wretched; and that, as five or six of her colleagues* were either sick or absent, it was impossible for her to abandon her post, but pledged her honor that in the autumn, on the return of the court from Fontainebleau, she would immediately join him.

This compromise by no means satisfied the marquis, who had already been apprised that she was endeavoring, under the mask of friendship for Madame de la Vallière, to attract the attention of the king; and he consequently wrote, coldly and imperatively, to inform her of the extent of his knowledge, and to announce his intention of returning to Paris, in order to ascertain the exact nature of her imprudence, which he threatened to expose, not only to her own family, but to the world; commanding her, at the same time, to confide her son to the guardianship of his messenger, that he might not become contaminated by contact with a mother who had thrown off all restraint; and

* After the death of Anne of Austria Louis XIV. increased the number of ladies of the palace from six to eighteen.

adding, that on his arrival in the capital, he would shut her up in a convent, if she had not previously intrigued to send him to the Bastille.

The threat came, however, too late to produce the desired effect upon the erring wife. She had already secured a powerful protector; but it nevertheless operated so greatly on her fears, that on the evening of the day on which it reached her the king detected her agitation, and insisted upon learning its cause. Madame de Montespan replied by placing the letter in his hand. The king changed color as he read; and then observed that their position was one of difficulty, and exacted great precaution, but that he would take care that no violence should be offered to her; and advised her at once to give up her son, who "was useless, and perhaps inconvenient;" while the fact of being deprived of his child might drive the marquis to some act of severity.

To this, however, Madame de Montespan would not consent, declaring that she would sooner lose her life; and her tears so moved the king that he ultimately desired her to retain the boy near her, and he would endeavor to obviate the consequences. The marquis redeemed his word. Ere long he arrived in Paris, and cited his wife before the authorities of the Chatelet. He addressed a firm and reproachful letter to the king, and applied to the Pope for a *reclamation*, urging him to authorize a divorce; but although he unweariedly pursued his solicitations through three entire months, His Holiness, fearful of offending Louis XIV., refused to accede to his petition; and he no sooner became convinced that he should not succeed than he assumed the deepest mourning, hung the carriage entrance of his house with black, and covered his servants and his equipages with the same sable drapery. He then ordered a funeral service to take place at the parish church, to which he invited the whole town and neighborhood, and publicly asserted that he had no longer a wife; that

Madame de Montespan had died of an attack of levity and ambition; and even declared his intention of contracting a second marriage at the termination of his year of widowhood.

This exhibition of contempt for the marchioness, so ludicrously displayed, greatly annoyed the king, who could not shut his eyes to the fact that he was himself involved in the ridicule which it excited. But fortunately for his self-love, the marquis, having satisfied his vengeance by this exposure of the intrigue, shortly afterward left France.

“Not being naturally of a bad disposition,” says Madame de Montespan, with great complaisance, after having given the above detail, “I never would allow M. de Louvois to send him to the Bastille. On the contrary, I secretly paid his debts, which amounted to more than fifty thousand crowns, very glad to do him this service in return for the evil which he said of me.”*

It is a strange proof of the perverted feeling and accommodating morality of the time, that although, upon the evidence of his guilty wife, M. de Montespan had left no measure untried to reclaim her, there is nevertheless not one historian of the century who does not seek to cast upon the forsaken husband the odium of this revolting intrigue, and affect to say that, from motives of base and sordid interest, he encouraged a crime which made his home desolate and induced him to forsake his country. We have faithfully quoted the account of the whole transaction from the words of Madame de Montespan herself, who can not be suspected of exhibiting too great a partiality toward a man whom she had so greatly wronged, and consider all argument upon such a question as worse than supererogatory.

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.



CHAPTER X.

The Daughters of Gaston, Duke of Orleans—La Grande Mademoiselle—Mademoiselle de Valois, Duchess of Savoy—Mademoiselle d'Orleans, Grand Duchess of Tuscany—Mademoiselle d'Alençon, Duchess de Guise—Letter of Madame de Sévigné—Mademoiselle and the Duke de Lauzun: his Portrait by St. Simon; his Court-Favor; his Advancement; his Indiscretion; his Insolence; his Imprisonment in the Bastille; his Pardon—Mademoiselle becomes attached to him—Reluctance of Lauzun—Mademoiselle offers him her Hand—Preliminaries—Interview of Louis XIV. and Mademoiselle—The King consents to her Marriage with Lauzun—Consternation of the Court—Donation by Mademoiselle—Louis XIV. withdraws his Consent—Agony of Mademoiselle—Submission of Lauzun—The private Marriage—New Arrest of Lauzun; his Ingratitude.

AND now we will glance for a moment at the family of Gaston, Duke d'Orleans. MADemoisELLE, the sole heiress of all the fiefs of Orleans, and mistress of an income of seven hundred thousand livres, who had refused an em-

peror, three reigning monarchs, Philip of France, and half a dozen sovereign princes, still remained unmarried, and was about, in her fortieth year, to bow her pride before a passion as weak as it was ill placed.

We have seen that this princess had, in the first instance, peremptorily declined an alliance with the Duke of Savoy, the only reason which she condescended to adduce existing in the fact that Madame Royale, being still alive, and a daughter of Henry IV., governing her duchy with unlimited authority, she should be compelled to yield her precedence, being herself only the daughter of a younger son of France, who died in banishment.

By no means driven to despair by his first failure, the young duke next asked the hand of her sister, Mademoiselle de Valois, as we have stated elsewhere; and this princess, whose disposition was all mildness and obedience, at once complied with the wish of her mother that she should accept so desirable an alliance. The arrangement was, however, kept secret from MADemoisELLE, who was then in exile at St. Fargeau; and who was, in her ignorance of what had taken place, betrayed into her offer of marrying the once rejected duke as an alternative to avoid the alliance of the King of Portugal.*

Mademoiselle de Valois, who was the handsomest of the four sisters, did not long profit by the affection of her new family, to whom she at once endeared herself by her amiable qualities, being cut off in the pride of her beauty and the height of her happiness, in the year 1664, nearly at the same period as Madame Royale and the Duchess of Parma—the high-minded Princess Marguerite, who never recovered the mortification of her abortive journey to Lyons.

Mademoiselle d'Orleans, the elder sister of the second wife, was a fair and pretty woman, but indiscreet in her conversation and undignified in her manner; who at the

* Madame de Montespan.

period when her marriage was mooted with the Prince Medicis, Grand Duke of Tuscany, had already bestowed her affections upon her maternal cousin, Prince Charles of Lorraine—a fact of which the king was cognizant, but would not countenance the connection, as he secretly desired to possess himself of the principality of the suitor—and the duchess-dowager consequently entreated her daughter to become Grand Duchess of Tuscany. The marriage proved an unhappy one; which was attributable to the fact that they were in constant dissension on the subject of etiquette, upon which they could never come to a satisfactory understanding.

The younger of the three princesses, Mademoiselle d'Alençon, had she possessed more animation and intellect might have been esteemed a beauty; but she was alike devoid of mind and of ambition, and her fine black eyes were cold and expressionless. She had for some time been the guest of MADMOISELLE, by whose assumption and arrogance she was rendered miserable, when Mademoiselle de Guise,* the last representative of the original House of Lorraine, whose immense wealth secured to her a brilliant position in the world, resolved, if possible, to secure her hand for her nephew, the young Duke de Guise, then only seventeen years of age; but in order to accomplish this object it was necessary to obtain the consent of the king, who was averse to the marriage, but by whom it was, nevertheless, ultimately permitted. The bridegroom, astonished at his good fortune, and totally devoid both of pretension and ambition, could not suppress his surprise when the monarch, instead of a dowry, presented to the young duchess a magnificent set of tapestry hangings and a service of enameled gold, studded with jewels.

The unfortunate duke had, however, little reason to

* Sister of the celebrated Cardinal de Lorraine, archbishop of Rheims, &c.

congratulate himself upon his unequal marriage, for it had been arranged that Mademoiselle d'Alençon was to retain all her privileges as a member of the royal house; and, consequently, M. de Guise could only occupy a folding-seat* in her presence. When she seated herself at table he presented her dinner-napkin, and when she was established in her arm-chair and had unfolded the *serviette*, M. de Guise meanwhile standing behind her, she ordered a plate to be placed before him, which was always ready upon the sideboard. This plate was then carried to the bottom of the table, where she desired him to sit down. Every other ceremony was observed with the same punctiliousness, and recommenced every day without any increase of condescension on the part of the wife; nor did he ever venture to address her save as "Your Royal Highness."

The duchess became a widow in 1671, when the duke was carried off by small-pox, leaving a son, who also died four years subsequently. Madame de Guise thenceforward grew extremely devout, and attached herself to the celebrated Abbot of La Trappe, whom she survived only a few months.†

MADemoisELLE was, therefore, as we have already stated, the only one of the sisters who remained unmarried; and we can not better announce the next phase of her career than in the sprightly words of Madame de Sévigné in a letter to M. de Coulanges, her cousin.

"I am about to inform you of the circumstance the most astonishing, the most surprising, the most miraculous, the most triumphant, the most bewildering, the most unheard-of, the most singular, the most extraordinary, the most incredible, the most unforeseen, the most immense, the most minute, the most rare, the most common, the most conspic-

* A *pliant* or folding-seat was a compromise of etiquette: more honorable than a stool, and less dignified than a chair.

† Mémoires de St. Simon.

uous, the most secret until to-day, the most brilliant, and the most enviable—in short, a circumstance of which there has been but one example throughout past centuries, and even that one is not precisely similar. * * * * I can not make up my mind to tell it—guess it—I will give you three guesses: *do you throw your tongue to the dogs?* Well, then! here it is. M. de Lauzun is to marry, on Sunday next, at the Louvre—guess who? I will give you four, I will give you ten, I will give you a hundred guesses. Madame de Coulanges says: It is by no means difficult to guess; it is to Madame de la Vallière: not at all, Madame. It is, then, to Mademoiselle de Retz: not at all, you are a mere country gentlewoman. The truth is, we are very dull, say you; it is to Mademoiselle Colbert. Still less. It is, then, assuredly, Mademoiselle de Créqui: you are wrong again. It must end by my telling you: he marries on Sunday next, at the Louvre, by permission of the king, Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle de—Mademoiselle—guess the name: he marries Mademoiselle—ou my word, by my word, my solemn word!—**MADemoisELLE**, the great Mademoiselle; Mademoiselle, the daughter of the late **MONSIEUR**; Mademoiselle, the granddaughter of Henry IV.; Mademoiselle d'Eu, Mademoiselle de Dombes, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Mademoiselle d'Orleans; Mademoiselle, cousin-german to the king; Mademoiselle, destined to the throne; Mademoiselle, the only match in France which was worthy of **MONSIEUR**. There is a fine subject of gossipry. If you exclaim, if you are beside yourselves, if you say that we have fibbed, that it is not true, that we are quizzing you, that it is a poor jest, and a tame fancy enough; if, in short, you abuse us, we shall consider that you are right; we should have done as much to you. Adieu; the letters which go by this post will show you if we tell the truth or not."

This ejaculatory letter will prove the extent of the astonishment felt by the patrician families of France at the in-

telligence which Madame de Sévigné hastened to impart to her family. It was even so: the punctilious, fastidious, arrogant, and self-worshipping MADemoiselle, after amusing herself by rejecting, during her years of bloom and grace, half the sovereign princes of Europe, had, indeed, in the autumn of her life, bestowed her unsolicited affections upon a mere handsome adventurer; and, what is still more extraordinary, the haughty Louis XIV., imagining a parallel between the attachment of his cousin for Lauzun and his own for La Vallière, had actually suffered himself to be persuaded to permit a marriage wholly without precedent, and calculated to shock the prejudices of all the royal and noble families throughout his kingdom.

We have already mentioned the presentation of M. de Péguilain to Louis XIV. by his uncle, the Duke de Grammont, and the immediate effect which he produced upon that monarch.

Antonin Nompar de Caumont, Duke de Lauzun, born in 1632, arrived in Paris under the name of Marquis de Péguilain; and, according to St. Simon, was "a little beau, well made, with an open and intellectual countenance; full of ambition, whims, and fancies; envious of every one, never satisfied with any thing; always anxious to exceed his limits; without any literary taste or knowledge; naturally irritable, misanthropical, and abrupt; very profuse in his habits; constitutionally ill-natured; eminently jealous; a warm friend, when he thought proper to be so, which was rare; a ready enemy even toward those who were indifferent toward him; clever in detecting defects, and in discovering and bestowing ridicule; a merciless quizzer; extremely and dangerously brave; a clever courtier according to circumstances; haughty to insolence or pliable to servility; in short, to define his character in three words, as his actions have proved him, the boldest, the most dexterous, and the most cunning of men."

Such as he is here described, the crafty marquis soon

won upon the king, who required constant amusement, and found it in the conversation of this new favorite, for whom he raised a regiment of dragoons, appointing him shortly afterward adjutant-general, and finally colonel-general of cavalry.

Some months subsequently, the Duke de Mazarin, having decided upon retiring from the court, was anxious to dispose of his charge of grand-master of the artillery; and this fact had no sooner reached the ears of Lauzun than he applied to the king for the appointment, who promised it to him without difficulty, provided he kept his intention perfectly secret, telling him that it should be arranged on the day fixed for holding a council of finance. This day had no sooner arrived than Lauzun established himself in the anteroom through which Louis passed to the council-hall, and entered into conversation with Nyert, the first valet-de-chambre on duty, who inquired in a friendly manner the nature of his business. Lauzun, who now considered himself sure of the appointment, believed that he should secure the interest of this man by informing him of what was about to take place, and accordingly betrayed his secret; upon which Nyert offered his congratulations, drew out his watch, and perceiving, as he asserted, that he had still time to execute a pressing order given him by the king, which would not occupy more than five minutes, left the room, sprung up a private stair-case which led to the study of Louvois, and briefly communicated to him the intelligence which he had just gained.

Lauzun was the friend of Colbert, and this fact alone sufficed to insure to him the enmity of Louvois, who, moreover, feared the influence of the reigning favorite in a charge operating so powerfully and interfering so closely with the war department. He accordingly dismissed Nyert with warm thanks, begged him immediately to resume his post, and hastily gathering up a few papers to serve as his introduction, walked through the anteroom, where he found

Lauzun and Nyert again conversing together. The latter affected extreme surprise at his appearance, and represented to him that the council was still sitting; to which the minister replied that he was compelled to enter, as he had pressing business with the king, and proceeded on his way.

When he entered Louis rose, and, retiring with him to the recess of a window, inquired the cause of his coming; to which he answered that he understood His Majesty was about to declare M. de Lauzun grand-master of the artillery, who was awaiting the declaration of his appointment at the close of the council; that he was quite aware of the power of the sovereign to bestow his favors as he saw fit, but that he considered it his duty to venture to represent to His Majesty the incompatibility which existed between M. de Lauzun and himself; that His Majesty was aware of the haughty willfulness of the former, who would inevitably make serious changes in the administration of the artillery without consulting any one; while that particular charge was so intimately connected with the war department that it was vitally impossible for the service to be carried on, should there exist a declared misunderstanding between the grand-master and the secretary of state, as that misunderstanding would involve His Majesty in the annoyance of being every day importuned by their mutual claims, upon which he alone was competent to judge.

The king, greatly vexed to find that his secret had been discovered by the very individual from whom he had been most anxious to conceal it, reflected for a moment, and then saying "It is not yet done," turned away and resumed his seat at the council.

When the members separated, Lauzun presented himself to the king as he passed out, and was unable even to catch his eye. Twenty times during the day he placed himself upon his path, but Louis never alluded to the appointment. At length, as he was assisting at the *petit*

coucher, the duke ventured to ask if his commission were signed; when the king answered coldly that it could not be done yet, but that he would think about it. Several days having, however, elapsed, without any further mention of the matter, Lauzun requested a private audience, and, after a few inconsequent remarks on both sides, the insolent favorite claimed the fulfillment of the royal promise, in terms equally imperious and unbecoming. To this arrogant appeal Louis replied that he considered his promise to be annulled, inasmuch as it had been made only on a condition of secrecy on his own part, which he had violated; when Lauzun, moving a few paces aside, turned his back upon the king, drew his sword, broke the blade across his knee, and swore that he would never again serve a prince who was capable of so *fouly* falsifying his word.

The eye of the king flamed for an instant; but as he raised his cane to strike the audacious courtier, a feeling of what was due to his own dignity caused him to throw it through the window near which he stood, as he said, sternly, "I should be sorry to strike a man of quality," and forthwith left the room.*

Lauzun felt his error when it was too late. The next day he was an inmate of the Bastille, and the artillery was given to the Count de Lude.†

While a prisoner, the duke committed for a while a thousand follies, suffered his beard to grow, and talked like a madman; but soon wearying of his incarceration, he became more rational, and accused himself of his downfall, declaring that the king had been more lenient than he deserved, and that he regretted nothing save the royal favor, although his fortunes were utterly marred.

As he anticipated, all these loyal expressions were reported to the sovereign, who, flattered by such extraordinary devotion to his person, and anxious to regain the

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

† Afterward Duke de Lude.

companionship which he had lost, caused it to be intimated to him that, conciliated by his repentance, His Majesty was willing to bestow upon him the captaincy of the guards; but, contrary to the expectations of Louis, the favorite, upon learning this sudden and unhoped-for revolution in the royal mind, flattered himself that he was indispensable, and might make better terms; and the result of this conviction was a respectful but firm refusal to accept the appointment. The king was not, however, to be denied; the proposition was repeated, and eventually Lauzun, with an affected reluctance which savored of condescension, agreed to consent to the wishes of the sovereign. He accordingly passed from the Bastille to the most confidential post at court, paid his respects to the king, took the oath, and found himself more than ever popular at court.*

It was at this period that he first attracted the attention of MADemoiselle, who, after giving a very partial and garbled account of the transaction which we have just narrated, declares that he performed his duties with a noble, graceful, and easy demeanor that gratified the king; and that, when she congratulated him upon his restoration to favor, he assured her he was quite conscious of the honor which she conferred upon him by thus evincing an interest in his fortunes. In short, the princess confesses that she thenceforth began to look upon him as an extraordinary man, whose conversation was so agreeable that she sought opportunities of enjoying it, and discovered that he expressed himself in a manner unapproachable by any other person.† Indeed, her whole account of the advances which she made to the handsome courtier are inexpressibly amusing: his evident reluctance to involve himself with a mistress of forty years of age is shadowed out legibly, even while the deluded lady herself supposes it to be merely the awe inspired by her high birth and her personal attributes;

* Lauzun was appointed captain of the guard in 1669. (*Dangeau*.)

† Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

and this inconvenient respect became at last so apparently unconquerable, that MADemoiselle was compelled not only to turn upon him all her "nods, becks, and wreathed smiles," but actually to hint to him that her hand was at his service. Thenceforward she encountered no opposition—his ambition was aroused—he remembered her rank, her wealth—and that her husband would become the cousin of the King of France—and the whole court contained no other lover whose devotion could emulate that of the happy M. de Lauzun.

MADemoiselle, his senior by twelve or fourteen years, never imagined that he could love her from interested motives; for even conscious as she was both of the dignity of her rank and the value of her possessions, her vanity was more powerful than her reason; and, involved at the age of four-and-forty in a first passion, she obeyed its dictates as though she were still in the bloom of her youth and beauty, and forgot that other eyes must detect a change to which she continued willfully blind.

Lauzun, whose numerous irregularities revenged him on the follies of his elderly mistress, encouraged her in her weakness—affecting the languishing glances and lover-like demonstrations exacted by her folly; and their attachment, once reciprocally declared, drew from her in their private conversation a detailed account of her possessions, which she revealed to him, even to the value of her plate and jewels. This done, the passion of the wily courtier reached its culminating point, for, by careful calculation, he ascertained that she was the mistress of at least forty millions. Having satisfied himself on this point, he next proceeded to inquire what would be his own position, should the king be induced to ratify their marriage, and if he should be elevated to the rank of a prince. This, however, she frankly told him that she had not sufficient influence to accomplish, but that she would make him Duke de Montpensier, with an independent income of five hundred thousand

livres. Then he desired to know if their united escutcheon would bear the coronet of the husband or the crown of the wife; to which she answered that, as she should not change her name, she could not change her shield, and that her armorial bearing must remain entire, supported by the crown with its *fleur-de-lis*. The next inquiry was whether their children should be princes *de facto*; to which she declared that she saw no impediment; and finally, if there was a probability of his being ultimately raised to the rank of prince, and recognized as a *highness* from the signing of the contract?

This last inquiry plunged MADEMOISELLE into a train of uneasy reflection; for, although blinded by her passion and misled by her vanity, she did not discover the supreme egotism of her lover, but rather rejoiced to find him punctilious upon points which were so important to herself and so precious in her own estimation, she was suddenly aroused to a serious doubt of the acquiescence of the king in such unprecedented arrangements; but as she was not easily induced to yield any point upon which she had resolved, and that in the present case she believed the whole happiness of her future life to be involved in her marriage with her lover, she determined at once to remove her doubts by a personal interview with the king. She accordingly ordered her equipage and her equeries; and having taken up her gloves and fan from the table, bade a hasty farewell to the anxious Lauzun, and drove to the Louvre.

The astonishment of Louis XIV. was unbounded. He reminded her of the thrones she had rejected; of the fact that she had entered her forty-fifth year; he endeavored to make her sensible of the absurdity of her attachment; he essayed alike remonstrances and ridicule; but MADEMOISELLE was not to be repulsed; and ultimately, annoyed and even disgusted by her pertinacity, he desired her, as she was resolved to commit so great a folly, and

was quite old enough to judge for herself, to rid him at once of her tears and sighs, and to do as she pleased.*

It must not, however, be supposed, that a monarch like Louis XIV. conceded so extreme a point as this to the absurd demonstrations of an elderly coquet, and thus compromised his own dignity by a weakness which was unworthy of him, for such was far from being the case. The lamentations of MADemoiselle were so lengthy that they afforded him ample time for reflection; and there can be no doubt but he became, ere long, conscious that it might be more consonant to his own interests to permit the marriage than to persist in his opposition. MADemoiselle was the sole remain of the once formidable party of the Fronde, and was even yet reluctant to forget her past triumphs; by marrying a prince of the blood she would retain at least a reflection of her former importance, while in becoming the wife of an obscure individual like Lauzun, the richest heiress in France would descend from her pedestal, and figure merely as a simple gentlewoman; and thus, by suffering a reluctant consent to be wrung from him, he would rid himself of a troublesome and arrogant adversary.

On the morrow, therefore, the marriage was publicly announced; on the following day MADemoiselle and her betrothed received congratulatory visits from all the court; and on that which ensued the princess, for the purpose of investing M. de Lauzun with the titles and honors requisite to adorn their contract, made him a formal donation of four duchies—the countship of Eu, the first peerage in France, giving precedence of all other peers; the duchy of Montpensier, of which he immediately assumed the name; the duchy of St. Fargeau; and the duchy of Châtellerault—the whole estimated at twenty-two millions.

Nothing then remained save to sign the contract, to which it was anticipated that the king would append his

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

name on the ensuing morning; but in the course of the day the queen herself, who seldom ventured to give an opinion upon any transaction in which she was not personally involved, spoke indignantly against the alliance; while *Monsieur* declared that he would attend the marriage, if such were the will of His Majesty, but that on leaving the church he would blow out the brains of the bridegroom.* Hence the king passed into the apartments of Madame de Montespan, who informed him of the extravagant donation of the princess; and this fact sufficed to irritate him beyond all bounds. He immediately summoned both MADemoiselle and Lauzun to attend him, and then, in the presence of the Prince de Condé, he declared, without preface or apology, that he absolutely forbade them to think any further of their marriage. The suitor received this order with all the submission and respect which could be anticipated; but MADemoiselle threw herself into an agony of grief, and besought Louis, upon her knees, to revoke a sentence which condemned her to a life of misery. Her entreaties were, however, unavailing; the king was inexorable, and she left his presence drowned in tears, and careless of concealing her despair.

Nothing could exhibit the overweening and egotistical vanity of Lauzun more fully than this failure, which was produced by his having delayed his marriage for a week, in order to prepare new liveries, to form an immense establishment, to secure magnificent attire, and to appear at the ceremony with all the splendor of a royal personage—an imprudence which gave his enemies time to work upon the mind of the king, and thus induced his defeat; while the resignation with which he received the royal command to forego his ambitious hopes astonished and confounded all who were aware of the arrogance and impetuosity of his character. But ere long it was ascer-

* Mémoires du Marquis de la Fare.

tained that, having secured the services of a needy priest by a large bribe, he had accomplished his marriage with the infatuated princess in secret—a fact of which the king no sooner became cognizant than he caused him to be arrested and conveyed to the fortress of Pignerol, where, while MADemoiselle was consuming her days in an uncontrolled grief that soon destroyed every trace of the good looks upon which she still prided herself, and lamenting to every one by whom she was approached her cruel separation from “her dear and tender friend, the prisoner,” the duke himself was committing every description of excess of which his position was susceptible, and dissipating in gaming and the most inane frivolities the immense sums of money secretly conveyed to him by the princess; and whenever he found his funds exhausted, consoling himself by saying to his friends, “The old woman will send us a fresh supply.”*

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

CHAPTER XI.

Death of the Duke de Beaufort in Candia—Birth of the Duke du Maine—Prosperity of the French Nation—Monsieur demands a Government and a Fauteuil—Insidious advice of the Chevalier de Lorraine—The vacant Abbey—Arrest of M. de Lorraine—Resentment of Monsieur—The Chevalier at If—Monsieur at Court—Louis XIV. resolves on the Conquest of Holland—Venality of Charles II.—A female Ambassador—Royal Progress—Mademoiselle de Keroualle—Successful Negotiation—The Court return to Paris—Court of Madame at St. Cloud—Discontent of Monsieur—Maria Theresa—Illness of Madame—The Succory Water—Death of Madame—The Poisoners—Indignation of the King—The Controller of the Household—Death of the Chevalier de Lorraine.

WE have, however, anticipated the stream of our narrative, in order not to interrupt the history of this extraordinary attachment; for great and melancholy events occurred at court before it reached the climax we have described.

The Duke de Beaufort, grand-admiral of France, who had been sent by Louis XIV. to succor Candia, which was besieged by the Turks, had found the whole island, with the exception of the capital, in possession of the enemy; and an attack was resolved upon at daybreak on the 25th of June, which surprised the Moslem troops in their sleep, and compelled them to a confused retreat, that appeared to secure the triumph of the Christian forces; but as they retired, they contrived to fire several barrels of powder, of which the explosion caused so great a panic among the French soldiery, that, despite all the efforts of their leaders, they, in their turn, abandoned themselves to flight; when M. de Beaufort, enraged at their cowardice, boldly placed himself at the head of a small party of gentlemen who still

remained beside him, and dashed furiously into the Turkish ranks, by which he was immediately inclosed, and not even his body was ever again seen.

Meanwhile Madame de la Vallière had become a constant guest in the circle of the queen, where the misunderstandings which constantly took place between herself and Madame de Montespan were as constantly reconciled by the intervention of the king, and were rendered less serious by the ignorance in which the former yet remained of the extent of the attachment that really subsisted between her royal lover and her former friend, the birth of the Duke du Maine* being still a profound secret from all the court.

The treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle had awakened the misgivings of the Dutch, who could not see without uneasiness the approach of so dangerous a neighbor as Louis XIV.; nor was their alarm causeless, for the French king had become weary of a peace which rendered nugatory all the preparations that he had made for carrying out a prosperous war. Both externally and internally his kingdom had acquired a strength and a brilliancy which had been hitherto unprecedented. The sea-ports, previously dilapidated and deserted, were surrounded by defenses, covered with well-manned vessels, and occupied by nearly sixty ships of large tonnage, capable of being appropriated as men-of-war. New colonies, protected by the French flag, were emigrating to America, the East Indies, and the coast of Africa; and notwithstanding this drain upon the population, immense edifices were in progress of erection under the eyes of the king, which occupied thousands of individuals; the interior of the court and the capital displayed the progress of the more refined arts; literature flourished; and taste and splendor were superseding the ruder and less sumptuous habits of former ages.

* Louis Augustus de Bourbon, the natural son of the king and Madame de Montespan, was born on the 31st of March, 1670.

At the period of *Monsieur's* marriage, the king had exerted all his generosity in order to establish his household, and to augment his income in a manner worthy of his exalted rank, and calculated to satisfy his utmost ambition; nor is it probable that the prince, whose greatest ambition was pleasure and costly apparel, would have advanced any further claim upon the royal munificence, had he not been instigated to do so by his two handsome, but ill-selected favorites, the Chevalier de Lorraine* and the Chevalier de Rémécourt, who, anxious to build up their own fortunes upon those of their too-indulgent master, suggested to him the necessity of self-assertion, and the weakness of remaining the passive recipient of his brother's favors.

Thus urged, *Monsieur* commenced by demanding the government of a province, which was refused by the king, who asserted that these governments could not be given to a brother of the reigning monarch without involving a risk of civil war, as in the case of Gaston d'Orleans, who had exerted his authority to levy both men and money in order to oppose the crown; and this reply was accompanied by an intimation that the prince would do well in future to silence the evil advisers who prompted him to such mistaken claims.

Monsieur, somewhat disconcerted, declared that he had received no such instigation, but that he had acted solely on his own judgment.

Louis, however, remained incredulous; and inquired whether it was also his own judgment that had led him to insist on a seat in the privy council, which he had since lost by having betrayed the proceedings at which he had assisted?

The prince, greatly annoyed by the rejoinder, but unwilling to fail in every point, then declared that he should be less mortified by the unexpected refusal to which he

* Of the branch of Armagna.

had been subjected, if the king would accord to his wife, who was the daughter of a crowned head, the privilege of occupying an arm-chair in the saloons of the queen; but here again he was fated to prove unsuccessful; for Louis XIV. was less likely to cede a point of etiquette than a measure of impolicy.

“That can not be permitted,” said the monarch, coldly; “and I beg of you not to persist in such a request. It was not I who established these distinctions; they existed long before you and myself. It is to your interest that the dignity of the crown should neither be weakened nor encroached upon; and if, from Duke of Orleans, you should one day become King of France, I know you well enough to believe that this is a point upon which you would be inexorable. Before God, you and I are two beings precisely similar to our fellow-men; but before men, we appear as something extraordinary, superior, greater, and more perfect; and the day on which the people cast off this respect, and this voluntary veneration, by which alone monarchy is upheld, they will see in us only their equals, suffering from the same evils, and subject to the same weaknesses as themselves; and this once accomplished, all illusion will be over. The laws, no longer sustained by a controlling power, will become black lines upon white paper; and your chair without arms, and my *fautueil*, will be simply two pieces of furniture of equal importance. However, in order to gratify your wishes, I will appoint you to the government of any province that you may select, if you will, on your side, immediately concede in writing your consent to be put upon your trial as a mere subject, whenever there may exist any disturbance, of whatever description, in the province under your command.”

Philip d'Orleans at once saw the incompatibility of such an arrangement, and withdrew his claim. But, lenient as the king had shown himself toward his brother, whose friv-

olous habits were ill-calculated to sustain his dignity in any position of authority, he was by no means inclined to exhibit equal forbearance toward the crafty and ambitious favorites by whom he had been urged to such unprecedented claims; and, accordingly, on an occasion in which an abbey in the appanage of *Monsieur* became vacant, to which he nominated the Chevalier de Lorraine, Louis refused to ratify the appointment; and commanded Le Tellier to inform the nominee that it was not his pleasure he should receive the abbey.

Monsieur, mortified to find his privileges thus invaded, and stung by the reproaches of the disappointed courtier, lost no time in appealing to the king, and inquiring the reason of his refusal to recognize his donation; but he received no other reply than that which had been given to the questions put by the favorite himself to the secretary of state—it was not his pleasure.

Monsieur began to evince considerable irritation at this display of fraternal authority; but he was soon silenced by the monarch, who once more calmly advised him to recollect himself, and to get rid of the dangerous counselors by whom he was surrounded; upon which the prince withdrew, but only to confide his annoyance to the already indignant chevalier, who persisted in assuring him that he had induced this mortification by his own weakness, and that it behooved him to assume a higher tone with the king, who now took advantage of his timidity and submission.

The effect of this taunt ere long became so apparent in the altered demeanor of *Monsieur*, that Louis resolved to banish the insidious favorite; and he was accordingly arrested at the Chateau-neuf, while closeted with the prince, and conveyed to Pierre-Encise*—a measure which so enraged *Monsieur*, that he immediately retired to Villers-

* A fortress situated on a rock above the right bank of the Saône at Lyons, which was appropriated to the purposes of a state prison. It was demolished in 1793.

Cotterets,* declaring that he would remain there until the chevalier was set free. This undignified proceeding only tended to increase the displeasure of the king, who, after having dispatched M. Colbert to expostulate with him upon his conduct, upon finding all remonstrance ineffectual, forwarded an order for the transfer of the Chevalier de Lorraine to the Chateau d'If,† with a prohibition against his either writing or receiving letters, or being permitted to converse with any one not on duty within the walls of the fortress. This last act of severity produced the desired effect: *Monsieur* returned, moody and dissatisfied, to court; and the favorite was instructed to take up his abode in Rome.

This amelioration, however, by no means restored the temper of the prince, who loudly accused *Madame* of having caused the exile of the chevalier; and their dissensions became at length so serious, that Louis was compelled to interfere, and to remind *Monsieur* that to his reproaches on the subject of the Duke of Buckingham and the Count de Guiche, the princess, should she see fit to do so, might retort by still graver accusations. The warning was not disregarded; but it was evident that a great coldness had sprung up between the royal couple, which neither attempted to conceal; nor did even the constant correspondence that he continued to entertain with his exiled favorite suffice to reconcile *Monsieur* to an absence which interfered with his amusements and embittered his temper.

It was at this period that Louis XIV., who had conceived the project of ultimately subjugating the whole of the Low

* Capital of the department of the Aisne, seven and a half leagues from Soissons. The town owed its origin to a royal fortress which was destroyed by the English, and subsequently reconstructed by Francis I. Villers-Cotterets is situated in the midst of the forest of Retz.

† A strong fortress, situated on the Marguerite Island, opposite Cannes, celebrated as having been the prison of the Iron Mask, and Mirabeau.

Countries, resolved to commence his work of conquest by appropriating Holland. The conjuncture was a favorable one. The Dutch were masters of the high seas, but no power could be weaker upon land. Allied with Spain and England, and at peace with France, they relied with too much security upon the faith of treaties, and on the benefits of a widely-extended commerce. While their navy was unparalleled in Europe, their army was ill-disciplined and despicable; and upon this weakness Louis founded his strongest hope. But before he could with prudence commence the war, it was necessary to detach England from Holland; for so long as their alliance continued his success remained uncertain, while a rupture between the two states insured the ruin of the Low Countries.

The French king was, however, quite aware of the facility with which he could obtain the coöperation of Charles II., who had betrayed little indignation at the destruction of his vessels burned by the Dutch at the very mouth of the Thames—who had evinced no desire to avenge the aggression—who lived only for pleasure, and sought only to reign in indolent indulgence: but even to accomplish this he needed friends; and Louis XIV., who at that period could raise money to any extent and for any purpose, well knew that he required only to proffer a large sum to the English monarch, who was crippled by his parliament, in order to induce him at once to embrace his own interests.*

To insure the neutrality of Spain, the Marquis de Villars was dispatched to Madrid, with instructions to impress upon the Spanish cabinet the advantage which must accrue to themselves from the depression of the Low Countries, their natural enemies; while a princess of six-and-twenty was chosen by Louis XIV. as his plenipotentiary at the English court.

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

His ambassadress was *Madame*, the sister of Charles II., who, having consented to undertake the mission, was escorted to the coast by the monarch and his whole court, under the pretext of a journey to his recent conquests; and the pomp which was exhibited on this occasion exceeded all that had yet been witnessed, even during the reign of the pomp-loving Louis XIV. Thirty thousand men marched in the van and rear of the royal party; some of them destined to reinforce the garrisons of the conquered country; others to work upon the fortifications; and others again to level the roads. The queen was attended by all the most beautiful women of the court. *Madame* shared her coach; and immediately behind them followed a second carriage, containing Madame de la Vallière and Madame de Montespan, who were even occasionally invited to take their places in the royal equipage; while among the ladies selected to accompany *Madame* to the English court, the most beautiful was Louise Rénée de Panankoët, known as Mademoiselle de Keroualle, who had also her secret instructions,* which she had accepted with as much alacrity as her royal mistress.

The journey was, however, more magnificent than pleasurable. The queen displayed a bitterness sufficiently excusable when it is remembered that she was compelled to submit to the constant companionship of the king's mistresses; while *Madame* suffered continually from the ill-humor of her husband, who could not forgive her for having left him in ignorance of the purpose of her visit to England; and who took that opportunity of reproaching her with all his real and imaginary injuries. The happiest of the party was MADemoisELLE, who could contemplate from her carriage-window the graceful person of M. de Lauzun; who, in right of his post as a captain of the guard, was constantly in attendance near the royal party.

Meanwhile all these arrangements had greatly excited

* Subsequently Duchess of Portsmouth.

the displeasure of *Monsieur*; but Louis affected not to perceive his annoyance, and the illustrious travelers had no sooner reached the coast than *Madame* and her magnificent suite embarked for England. The negotiation was perfectly successful. Charles was enchanted with the superb beauty of Mademoiselle de Keroualle; and the offer of several millions, coupled with a promise that the handsome lady of honor should remain in England, at once induced the weak monarch to accede to all that was asked of him, which he did the more readily from his hatred of the Dutch Calvinists.

A treaty of alliance was consequently drawn up between the two sovereigns, and the ratifications of this treaty were to be exchanged in the course of the following month.

The English king, attended by a large retinue, accompanied his royal sister to Dover; whence she crossed to Calais, where she was received with all the honors due to a triumphant negotiator. The court then returned to Paris, making a festival of every halt; and *Madame* established her court at St. Cloud; while *Monsieur*, enchanted by the movement about him, and who could never long support a displeasure which, utterly devoid of dignity, always eventually evaporated in noise, began to accept with more complaisance the favors by which the king sought to compensate to him for his past annoyance; but he was far from extending the same indulgence to *Madame*, who had once more excited his indignation by accomplishing, during her visit to England, a reconciliation between her royal brother and the Duke of Buckingham.

It was, consequently, matter of notoriety to the whole court that *Monsieur* and *Madame* were once more alienated from each other, when a catastrophe, as melancholy as it was unforeseen, struck terror into every heart in France.

The Duchess d'Orleans was at this period the most influential, and one of the most beautiful women at the French court. Grateful for the effort which she had made to serve

him, the king overwhelmed her with courtesy and consideration, and made her the object of every revel and the medium of every favor; while the queen, who divided her time between her children, her devotions, and her Spanish attendants, was little more than a cipher in her own court. Of timid and retiring habits, the constant gayety of the royal circle wearied and alarmed her; and had not the king interfered, she would have willingly passed her life in her dressing-gown and slippers. On days of state ceremony, when she was compelled to appear in public, her temper was always ruffled; and she was to the last ill at ease in the sumptuous apparel exacted by her rank. Governed by the Señora Molina, her foster-sister, who soon assumed a consequence which her royal mistress was far from emulating, she never acted save in accordance with her advice; and although incapable of injuring even those by whom she was herself injured, Maria Theresa was equally inert when she might have served those who were faithful to her interests; and thus it was rather duty than inclination which influenced all who formed her private circle.

Thus were things circumstanced when, on the 29th of June (1669), *Madame* rose at an early hour and visited *Monsieur* in his apartment; after which she conversed for a considerable time with Madame de la Fayette, to whom she declared herself to be in admirable health. On her return from the mass, the princess went to the room of Mademoiselle d'Orleans, her daughter, who was then sitting for her picture, when she talked of her late visit to England, and enlivened the whole circle by her joyous spirits; and, on entering her own apartments, she asked for a cup of succory-water, which she drank, and afterward dined as usual.

The party then adjourned to the saloon of *Monsieur*, whose portrait was also in progress; and during the sitting, *Madame*, as she was frequently in the habit of doing, laid down upon the cushions and fell asleep.

During her slumber her face became so livid and ghastly that Madame de la Fayette, who was standing beside her, was struck by so extreme a change, and was just in the act of asking herself if it were possible that the mere absence of expression could work so complete an alteration in a countenance which she had always considered handsome, when the princess suddenly awoke in such agony that even *Monsieur* became surprised and alarmed.

As she was retiring to her own room, *Madame* stopped for a moment, in the outer apartment, to converse with the treasurer of the duke, while *Monsieur* was preparing to start for Paris. On the stair-case he, however, encountered the Duchess de Mecklenburg, and returned with her to the saloon; upon which *Madame*, leaving M. de Boisfrance, hastened to receive her illustrious guest. At that moment Madame de Gamache approached with a salver, containing another draught of succory-water, in the enameled cup from which the princess was accustomed to drink, and a second glass for Madame de la Fayette, which were respectively presented to them by Mrs. Gordon, the waiting-woman of *Madame*; but, as the princess still held the cup in one hand, she pressed the other to her side, exclaiming that she had so violent a spasm that she could scarcely draw her breath. She flushed painfully for an instant, and then turned very pale, exclaiming, with a painful effort, "Take me away! Take me away! I can support myself no longer."

Terrified and bewildered, Madame de la Fayette and Madame de Gamache upheld the princess, who with considerable difficulty reached her chamber, where she threw herself upon the bed, writhing like a person in convulsions. Her physician was summoned; but he treated the attack lightly, declaring that, although painful, it was utterly without importance, while *Madame* continued to gasp out her conviction that she was dying, and to entreat that her confessor might be sent for.

As *Monsieur* knelt beside her bed, the suffering princess threw her arms about his neck, exclaiming, "Alas! sir, you have long ceased to love me; and you are unjust, for I have never wronged you."

While all around her were in tears, she suddenly raised herself upon her elbow, and declared her conviction that she had been poisoned by the succory-water which she had drank during the day—that probably some mistake had been made; but that she felt she had taken poison, and if they did not wish to see her die they must administer an antidote.

Monsieur, who was still beside her when she made this appalling assertion, betrayed neither agitation nor embarrassment, as he directed that some of the water should be given to a dog, in order that they might ascertain its effect; but Madame Desbordes, her first femme-de-chambre, immediately interposed, declaring that it was not upon a dog that the experiment should be made, but upon herself, as she had prepared the beverage, into which no noxious ingredient had been introduced, and that she considered it her duty to prove the truth of the assertion.

She accordingly poured out a glass of the succory-water, and drank it on the instant.

Oil and other antidotes were then administered to *Madame*, which served only to excite fearful sickness, without, in any degree, alleviating the original symptoms; and the princess became more and more anxious for the assistance of a priest, although her physician still maintained that her life was not in the slightest danger.

Before the arrival of the curate of St. Cloud, however, her pulse had become inaudible, and her extremities icy cold, and she was compelled to make her confession supported in the arms of one of her women. At the expiration of three hours, two additional physicians arrived, the one from Paris, and the other from Versailles; but after a consultation with their colleague, they assured *Monsieur*

that he need be under no apprehension, as they would answer for the recovery of the princess.

At length the king arrived in his turn, accompanied by the queen and the Countess of Soissons, and Louis was powerfully affected by the change which had taken place in the countenance of *Madame*; while, for the first time, the physicians themselves declared that the evil symptoms were rapidly increasing. La Valliere, who followed the king, describes the appearance of the dying princess as fearful. Her complexion was livid, her eyes burned with fever, her nose and lips had shrunk, and a cold dew covered her skin. Louis occupied a seat on one side of her bed, and *Monsieur* stood on the other, weeping bitterly; all the attendants were drowned in tears, but were so bewildered that although the agonized invalid continually entreated them to apply other remedies which might at least mitigate her sufferings, they remained terror-stricken and helpless. It was in vain that both the king and *Monsieur* appealed to the physicians; they remained equally supine; but at length declared, that the failure of the pulse and the coldness of the extremities announced the presence of gaugrene, and that it was time to summon the viaticum.

While things were in this state the English ambassador was announced, and he had scarcely entered the death-chamber when the princess beckoned him to her side, and by great exertion conversed with him for a considerable time in English. This done, she declared herself ready to receive the viaticum; after which she took leave of her illustrious relatives, and recalled *Monsieur* to give him a last embrace.

The extreme unction was then administered, and during the ceremony M. de Condom* arrived, to whose eloquent and holy discourse she listened eagerly for a time, and then inquired if she might sleep. He was about, in consequence, to retire, when she motioned him to return, mur-

* Bossuet, afterward Bishop of Meaux.

muring that she had deceived herself, for that the stupor under which she labored was not drowsiness, but death. M. de Condom once more knelt beside her in earnest prayer; the crucifix escaped from her relaxed fingers, her lips moved convulsively for an instant—and all was over.

Only nine hours previously Henrietta of England had been full of life, and loveliness, and hope—the idol of a court, and the center of the most brilliant circle in Europe; and now, as the tearful priest arose from his knees, the costly curtains of embroidered velvet were drawn round a cold, pale, motionless, and livid corpse.

This death was, however, not only terrible in itself, but rendered tenfold more awful by the rumors to which it gave birth. *Monsieur*, whose neglect of the princess had been notorious, was an object of the darkest suspicion. It was remembered that the Chevalier de Lorraine, his especial favorite, had openly accused *Madame* as the instigator of his banishment, and dark hints were soon abroad, involving both the one and the other in the dreadful catastrophe which had just occurred.

When these rumors reached the king he could not conceal his consternation, and declared to Madame de Montespan that if he should ascertain that his brother was implicated in so a black a crime, his head should fall upon the scaffold.

On a *post-mortem* examination of the body the presence of poison was discovered, and that of so corrosive a character, that the whole of the stomach was in a state of inflammation, and even partially destroyed;* a fact which was no sooner ascertained than the king summoned *Monsieur* to his presence, in order to compel him to acknowledge his share in the murder; and the extreme agitation which he evinced acted so painfully upon Louis, that, in the height of his horror and suspicion, he rushed upon his

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

sword, when the captain of the guard, who was in the ante-room, entered hastily ; and the king, lowering the point of his weapon, his breast still panting with the violence of his emotion, demanded of the prince a full and true confession of all that had occurred.

Monsieur, whose personal courage had never been contested, and whom the late scene had tended rather to restore to composure than to intimidate, clasped in his hand the insignia of the Holy Ghost, which he wore about his neck, and took a formal oath that he was innocent, both directly and indirectly, of the death of his wife ; upon which the king commanded him to withdraw, and retired to his cabinet to address a letter to the English court, in which he stated that *Madame* had fallen a victim to a bilious fever ; while the same account was officially promulgated by the public papers, and the fact was attested by the certificates of five or six paid physicians.

Still painful misgivings haunted the mind of the king. He was, unhappily, too well aware that the princess had died from poison ; and while he began to hope that *Monsieur* was innocent of any participation in the crime, he left no means untried to discover its actual authors. He soon ascertained that the succory-water, which was the constant beverage of *Madame*, was kept in the closet of one of the antechambers of her apartment, in a china jug, near which stood another vessel full of pure water, in the event of the decoction proving too bitter. Nor did his discoveries terminate in so inconsequent a result as this ; for it was further revealed to him, that on the very day when the princess died, a footman, suddenly entering the anteroom in question, found the Marquis d'Effiat, another favorite of *Monsieur*, busied at this closet, and hastily approaching him, demanded what he was doing there.

To this unceremonious question the marquis had replied, with the greatest tranquillity, that he was aware of his intrusion, but that, being very much heated and extremely thirsty,

and knowing that water was always kept there, he had been unable to resist his inclination to swallow a draught.

As the footman continued to grumble at the liberty which he had taken, M. d'Effiat, after repeating his apology, passed on to the saloon of the princess, where he remained for above an hour, conversing in his usual manner with the other courtiers.

The king was no sooner cognizant of this circumstance than he became convinced that Purnon, the controller of the princess's household, must have had some share in the catastrophe, and he accordingly determined to interrogate him. For this purpose he summoned M. de Brissac, who was then on guard, and ordered him to select half-a-dozen of his men upon whose courage and discretion he could place reliance, and, on the following morning, to seize Purnon before he left his room, and bring him to the royal cabinet by a back stair-case.

This order having been executed, Louis passed into the apartment, where the astonished and terror-stricken controller was awaiting his fate with much anxiety and considerable misgiving; and having dismissed M. de Brissac, and the valet by whom he was attended, in order to remain alone with the prisoner, the king advanced a few paces, and then, with his eyes sternly fixed upon the pale countenance of Purnon, he summoned him to reveal every circumstance relating to the death of *Madame*, promising him a full pardon should his details be proved true, and warning him that his life would be the forfeit of the slightest equivocation.

The controller, with mingled joy and apprehension, pledged himself to tell all he knew, and that all was fortunately well calculated to allay the worst apprehensions of the king.

He stated that *Madame* had, indeed, fallen a victim to poison, sent from Rome for that purpose by the Chevalier de Lorraine, through the medium of a country gentleman

named Morel,* who was, however, unconscious of the nature of his commission, and by whom it was delivered to the Marquis d'Effiat and the Count de Beuvron, who were induced to second the views of the chevalier, from the fact that his absence interfered greatly with their interests, and that they felt there was no hope of his return during the lifetime of *Madame*.

"But how," asked the king, doubtingly, "do you account for the circumstance that the other persons who drank of the same infusion with the princess experienced no inconvenience?"

"Simply, sire," was the reply, "because the Marquis d'Effiat had foreseen the possibility of such an occurrence, and had poisoned, not the liquid, but the cup in which it was contained, by rubbing it on the inside."

The king passed his hand across his eyes, and then, assuming a sterner look and a more threatening attitude, he demanded, in a voice which he in vain endeavored to render firm and cold,

"And *Monsieur*—was he aware of this foul plot?"

"No, sire," was the ready answer; "*Monsieur* can not keep a secret, and we did not venture to confide in him—he would have brought us to the scaffold."

The king drew a deep breath, as though he had heaved a heavy weight from his breast.

"Will you swear to this?" he asked, after a pause.

"On my soul, sire."†

Louis asked no more; and, almost consoled for the death of the unfortunate princess by the conviction of his brother's innocence, he recalled M. de Brissac, and desired him to conduct M. Purnon to the gate of the palace, and then to set him at liberty.

It would seem as though the king believed that he owed some heavy compensation to *Monsieur* for the frightful sus-

* Mémoires de la Princesse Palatine.

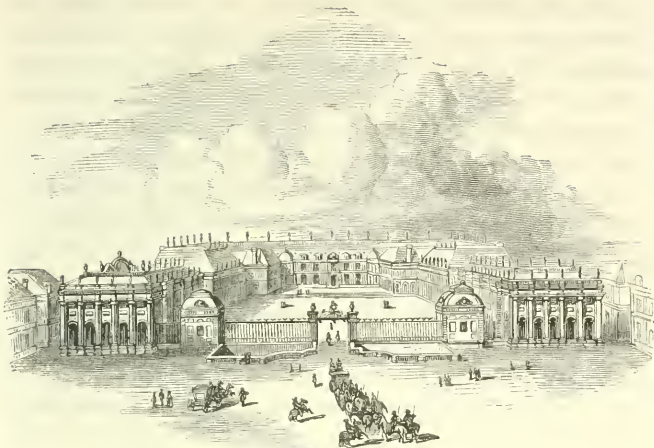
† Mémoires du Duc de St. Simon.

picion which he had entertained against him; for it is certain that, after a short interval, the Chevalier de Lorraine was recalled to court, and, moreover, as St. Simon asserts, laden with benefits, despite which fact he died so poor that, although his income had amounted to a hundred thousand crowns, his friends were compelled to bury him at their own expense.

His death, moreover, was worthy of his life. On the 7th of December, 1702, three years after that of *Madame*, as he was standing at the Palais-Royal, talking to Madame de Maré, the governess of the Duke d'Orleans's children, and relating to her the particulars of a debauch in which he had been engaged on the previous night, he was suddenly struck by apoplexy, became speechless, and shortly afterward expired.*

The court had forgotten the murder long before they were called upon to comment on the death of the murderer.

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.



CHAPTER XII.

Increasing Favor of Madame de Montespan—The Crown of Agrippina—Puerility of Monsieur—Madame Scarron—Generosity of Madame de Montespan—Madame Scarron Gouvernante—Disgust of Louis XIV. to St. Germain—Superstitious Terrors—Birth of the Duke du Maine—The Baby-Abbot—The new Marquise—Portrait of Madame de Maintenon by La Vallière—Wretchedness of La Vallière—Harshness of Louis XIV.—Second Flight of La Vallière to a Convent—A Night with the Carmelites—Mission of M. Colbert—Ostentation of Madame de Montespan—Indignation of the Clergy—M. de Bossuet and the Favorite—The African Embassy—The “second” Wife of the Sovereign—The Missionaries—The Black Dwarf—Accouchement of the Queen—The new Duchess d’Orleans; her Reception at the French Court; her Portrait by her own Hand; her personal Habits; her Self-Respect—Lauzun at Pignerol—Fouquet and Lauzun—The Duke de Longueville.

THE increasing passion of Louis XIV. for Madame de Montespan contributed in no slight degree to console him for the untimely death of the unfortunate Duchess d’Orleans; and, superadded to the horror which he enter-

tained of all ideas connected with such events as tended to remind him of his mortality, soon enabled him to throw aside every sign of mourning, whether external or mental. The favor of his new mistress became more assured from day to day; the fascinations of her wit, the gorgeousness of her beauty, and even the exactions of her capricious vanity, all rendered her triumph more complete; and meanwhile La Vallière could no longer conceal even from herself that her days of happiness were at an end.

Among her other expensive tastes, the new favorite had a most inordinate passion for jewels. While yet a girl she had delighted in diamonds and precious stones; and the generosity of the king upon this point was so unmeasured, that, after her disgrace, she herself declared that she possessed a collection worthy of an Asiatic prince, and that even were she to be deprived of the whole of her fortune, save her pearls and diamonds, she could still command opulence.

This taste was shared by Louis XIV., who in his private cabinet had two immense pedestals of rosewood, fitted in the interior with shifting shelves, in which he kept the most precious of the crown-jewels, in order that he might examine and admire them at his ease, an occupation in which he took great delight; nor did he ever hear of a gem of price, either in Asia or Europe without making strenuous efforts to secure the prize.

His most costly possession was, however, the famous crown of Agrippina, a work of consummate art, composed of eight tiers of immense brilliants in a transparent setting; and after having overwhelmed the insatiable marchioness with pearls, diamonds, sapphires, emeralds, and rubies, he one day permitted her to carry to her own apartment this priceless coronet; where it remained for so long a period unreclaimed that she at length began to feel convinced that it had been a gift; and fearful of accident, should she leave it in the slight casket which it then occupied, she ordered another to be made more suited to its value. This

done, and the imperial crown safely deposited in its new case, and secured by several minute locks, she deposited her treasure in the chest which contained her other jewels, where she visited it from time to time, and always with increased admiration.

When the Princess of Modena passed through France on her way to England, where she was about to become the wife of the Duke of York, Louis XIV. gave her a magnificent reception; and as she was young and handsome, nothing was left unattempted to gratify and amuse her during her brief sojourn at the court.

It chanced that upon one occasion the conversation of the king's circle turned upon regal decorations, and particularly upon the various forms and fashions of crowns; when the Marquis de Dangeau, who prided himself upon his antiquarian knowledge, observed that it was in the time of Nero the imperial crown was first arched; to which the monarch replied that he had not been aware of the fact, but that the crown of his mother was entirely open; adding, that he possessed one himself which was authentic, and which the Marchioness de Montespan would give them the opportunity of examining.

Thus summoned to drag her hidden treasure into light, the disconcerted favorite found herself compelled to go in search of the glittering circlet; and after an absence of a few minutes she placed it upon a small table, where it excited universal attention and enthusiasm. The Italian princess, the Duke de St. Aignan, M. de Dangeau, and the other courtiers who were present, lost themselves in hyperbole on the brilliant water, equal size, and rare perfection of the matchless diamonds; but when the king, raising it in his hand, obtained a closer and more perfect view of the jewels, he immediately fixed his eyes sternly upon the marchioness, exclaiming, "How is this, madam? This is no longer my crown of Agrippina; all the stones have been changed!" Madame de Montespan turned pale,

and trembled ; but having in her turn examined the coronet closely, she found herself compelled to admit that such was indeed the fact. The setting was still intact, but the antique brilliants had been replaced by paste.

On arriving at this conviction the appalled favorite had nearly fallen to the ground, and it required all the expositions of those by whom she was surrounded to enable her to preserve herself from fainting; while the king at once declared that, let the substitution have been made as it might, no one could for a moment attach any suspicion to herself; and she then felt compelled to explain the circumstance of the new casket, which she had caused to be made for the greater security of the coronet.

She had no sooner told her tale than Louis XIV. turned with a smile to the Princess of Modena, requesting her to relate the adventure at the English court, and to inform the king, in his name, that nothing was at the present moment so difficult to preserve as a crown, for that even guards and locks no longer sufficed; and then, addressing Madame de Montespan, he added, that she would have acted more wisely in committing it sooner to his own custody, as he should have acquitted himself tolerably well in such an office.

The honor of Madame de Montespan was, however, involved in this unhappy incident; and she had no sooner retired to her own apartments than she summoned the whole of her attendants, not even excepting her steward, and complained bitterly of the mortification to which she had been subjected in the presence of the king; but she detected only regret and consternation upon the faces by which she was surrounded, until the steward suddenly reminded her that she would do well to invoke the aid of the authorities; for that there could exist no doubt that the fraud had been committed by the maker of the casket.

He was immediately sought for; but, on arriving at his house, the officers were informed that he had left Paris

more than two years; and that, having been unsuccessful in some commercial speculations, he had disposed of his business, and with the slender remains of his property had emigrated to Pondichery. It was, however, ascertained that he had affected an attachment for one of the waiting-women of the marchioness, who had, during his visits, allowed him free access to the whole of her apartments; where the crown of Agrippina which he valued at as high a price as its temporary mistress, had proved too strong a temptation for his honesty.

He was ultimately taken and hanged; upon which occasion Louis XIV. endeavored to console Madame de Montespan with the remark, "He has at least left us the setting, but Cromwell would have seized it whole."*

We have, however, digressed.

Monsieur, as easily consoled as his brother, no sooner found himself freed from the foul suspicion which had for an instant weighed so heavily upon him, than he sought occupation for his thoughts and a veil for his indifference in the ostentatious arrangements of his mourning, and the etiquette necessary to be observed under the circumstances; but many sincere tears were nevertheless shed, not only by the court, but even by the people, for the martyred princess, so cruelly sacrificed to individual vengeance. She left no son, but two daughters, one of whom subsequently married the Duke of Savoy; and a second, who unhappily inherited both the attractions and the misfortunes of her mother.

Madame had been but a short time dead when Louis XIV. proposed to MADemoiselle to become her successor—a suggestion which only a few months previously would have too greatly flattered her ambition to have been rejected; but her love for Lauzun had now grown into an absorbing sentiment, by which all other feelings were subjugated, and she at once declined the alliance.

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

Meanwhile the poet Scarron had left his young widow almost penniless; and to add to her embarrassment, all the pensions granted by the Queen-Mother having been discontinued at her death, she found herself once more reduced to labor for her support. Vainly had she addressed petitions to the king, and memorials to the ministers; her applications had one and all remained without reply, when Madame de Montespan, who had made her acquaintance in the brilliant circles of the Hôtel de Richelieu and the hôtel d'Albret, chancing to hear of her necessities, desired a friend to direct Madame Scarron to wait upon her, in order that she might serve her interests with the king.

Little did the haughty beauty suspect that this exercise of her generosity would produce the same effect upon her own fortunes as the affection of the betrayed La Vallière for herself had wrought in those of the now neglected favorite.

The necessitous young widow lost no time in availing herself of the invitation of the powerful marchioness. She was no longer the brilliant woman who had shed a new luster over the circle of a poet, but dressed in deep, and even conventual mourning, crushed by poverty, and avowing that her position was one of pain and difficulty. When interrogated on the steps which she had taken to obtain the survivorship of her husband's pension, she said, sadly, that she feared some prejudice existed against her in high quarters, as all her applications had remained without reply; and that under these circumstances she had just formed a resolution which she trusted would be approved by the marquise.

M. Scarron, although apparently rich, possessed only a life income; and at his death his debts exceeded the value of his personal property; so that, after having done all in her power to satisfy his creditors, his widow had found herself utterly without the means of existence, and had

accordingly accepted a proposal made by the Princess de Nemours,* that she should accompany her to Lisbon on her marriage with Don Alphonso of Braganza, in the capacity of secretary and companion, with the assured prospect of a great alliance and an appointment as lady of honor.

From this project she was, however, easily dissuaded by Madame de Montespan, who reminded her of the sufferings of her former exile, and the possibility of a failure in the promises of the princess, which would once more leave her helpless in a foreign country; and desired her immediately to draw up a new petition, signed with her maiden name of d'Aubigny, which she would herself present to the king, and whose success she would guaranty. This done, the friends parted; the petition was placed in the hands of Louis XIV.; and the pension of two thousand francs which had been granted to her by the Queen-Mother three years before her death was restored. Madame Scarron had the honor of an interview with the king, and the voyage to Lisbon was abandoned, greatly to the displeasure of the affianced princess.

The generosity of Madame de Montespan had not, however, been altogether disinterested. The various accomplishments of the widow of Scarron had at once convinced her that she could select no more eligible governess for her children; while the obligation which Madame Scarron had contracted to the marquise, assured the latter alike of her zeal and her discretion. The favorite had, conse-

* Mademoiselle d'Annale, daughter of the Duke de Nemours, of the House of Savoy. She was fair, tolerably well-looking, but short in stature; and her head, which was too large for her body, was full of plots and stratagems. Married to the heir-apparent of the Portuguese throne, she bestowed her affections on his brother, Don Pedro; and eventually, by her machinations, she accomplished his imprisonment as a lunatic—a measure which his own intemperate passions rendered only too easy of accomplishment. She became the wife of his successor under the sanction of a papal bull.

quently, no sooner seen the Portuguese queen depart for her new country than she suggested to the king the expediency of securing the services of her *protégée*; but Louis XIV., who had been repelled by the extreme gravity and reserve of the young widow, for some time refused to sanction the arrangement, which he finally conceded with a reluctance equalled by that of Madame Scarron herself, who, having retired to the Marais, had turned her thoughts to devotion. The will of the king was, however, omnipotent; and a new residence was accordingly provided for her in the midst of the vast nursery-grounds which existed at that period between Vaugirard and the palace of the Luxembourg; a liberal establishment was formed; and the devout widow was installed in the onerous office of *gouvernante* of Madame de Montespan's children.

About this time Louis XIV. conceived an invincible repugnance to the palace of St. Germain, despite its internal luxury and the varied and noble views which it commanded on all sides. The river that wound its capricious waters through the immense plain; the multitude of chateaux scattered in every direction, amid which were cleared the hunting-paths necessary to the convenience of his sport; the lofty calvary; the bridges flung here and there across the stream to increase the beauty of the perspective; the grassy meadows, upon whose green expanse the eye loved to repose; and the moving basin of the Seine flowing beneath the windows of the edifice, had all lost their charm; and this fact existed in the secret of his firm belief that a short time previous to the death of Anne of Austria, as he was pacing the terrace alone, he had seen a red light play about the towers of St. Denis, which had no sooner settled above their summits, than in the midst of this unnatural vapor, a dark cloud collected, and, ere long, assumed the form of a hearse, surmounted by the arms of Austria; while immediately before the decease of the Duchess d'Orleans, the same towers had appeared to him

in a dream, and in the midst of the fire a skeleton holding in its hand the jewels of a woman. Thenceforward the sight of St. Denis, distant as the abbey was, rendered the view from St. Germain odious to him, and only rendered him the more determined to make of Versailles so glorious a residence that he should never be enabled to look back with regret to the other palaces he might abandon—a resolution which was strengthened by the death, during the same year, of both the female children of the queen, who were, in their turn, deposited in the same royal necropolis.*

On the 31st March, 1670, Madame de Montespan gave birth to a second son, who was baptized by the names of Louis Augustus de Bourbon, receiving, moreover, the worldly appellation of Duke du Maine; and the same affectation of secrecy was observed upon this occasion as on the birth of the Count de Vexin, his elder brother; Madame de Scarron, to whom the king was gradually becoming more reconciled, awaiting in an adjoining saloon the birth of the child, which was no sooner in the world than she concealed it beneath her mantle and conveyed it to her own residence.

In the course of the following year, the rich Abbey of St. Germain des Prés having become vacant, Louis XIV. appointed the Count de Vexin its abbot, to the extreme disgust of the Benedictine community, who could not restrain their indignation on thus finding themselves placed under the control of a child barely escaped from his cradle; and the king found it necessary to desire the grand almoner to visit the brotherhood, and to remind them that, under preceding reigns, they had abbots who were married princes, and even soldiers; a precedent, as the prelate remarked to them, worse than reprehensible, and which His Majesty was incapable of renewing; while, as regarded the extreme youth of the prince whom he had selected, it could not prejudice their interests in any way, since His

* Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

Highness would be efficiently represented by his vicar-general, until he had attained a fitting age to exercise his authority in person.

The community, silenced but not convinced, were fain to accept their new superior; and the pious heart of Madame Scarron leaped for joy as, a few days subsequently, she presented the princely abbot in full monastic costume to his admiring parents; caused the crosier, the mitre, and the cross, to be painted on the panels of his coach, and obtained the appointment of vicar-general for one of her own devout friends.

A short time subsequently, Madame de Montespan succeeded in removing from the mind of the king the prejudice which he had imbibed against the *gouvernante*; and this was no sooner accomplished than he inquired of the lady if she could, without regret, lay aside the name of Scarron, so ill suited to her grace and beauty; when, upon her assurance that her feelings toward her late husband had never exceeded those of esteem and gratitude, he presented to her the sum of one hundred thousand crowns with which to purchase the princely estate of Maintenon, with its dependent marquisate; and, this done, he publicly addressed her as Madame de Maintenon.

“I can scarcely describe Madame Scarron,” says La Vallière, usually so gentle and so indulgent, and whose evidence is consequently the more valuable, as it may be supposed to be the least prejudiced; “the word *prude* would be applicable to her, but that is a mere shade. She is at once a bigot and a *bel esprit*. She is naturally very formal and strait-laced, but nevertheless she has been seen enacting the very humble servant of Madame de Montespan, her reader, and her submissive friend. She is of a piety which appears all of a piece, alike stiff and inflexible; yet, notwithstanding, this piety has bent beneath the will of the king, and has found its joints. Madame Scarron is an admirable woman, for whom a specific term

should be invented. . . .When she first appeared at court her robe of serge, her plain linen, and her black lace exhaled such an odor of pedantry that her very appearance gave the king the vapors. Suppleness and patience are, however, admirable qualities, which operate wonderful conversions! She now has her horses, her hôtel, and a suite of servants; she is no longer the governess of the children of Madame de Montespan, but of those of the king, which her confessor declares to be quite a different thing. This is what she has been clever enough to accomplish.”*

The slight tinge of bitterness perceptible in this sketch may well be pardoned when it is remembered that at the period of Madame Scarron's advent at court the wretched La Vallière was no longer able to cling to the self-delusion by which she had hitherto been supported. She now saw her position in its true light; and, ceasing to be blinded by the excess of her own passion, or by the accessories which had so long veiled, at least a portion of its disgrace, she was compelled to gaze steadily upon the frightful truth. She had sacrificed her youth, her conscience, her fair fame, her peace; and what remained to her? She had trusted to the assertion of Louis, on the birth of her daughter, that thenceforth nothing could alienate his affection from her; and already it was not only to herself that he had given a rival, but also to her innocent children. She saw the hollowness and egotism of the idol to which she had clung so trustfully; and her grief was only the more bitter that neither wrong, nor contumely, nor desertion could diminish her love.

Such was her state of mind when, on one occasion, the king entered her apartment, and finding her drowned in tears, with considerable harshness inquired the cause of such weak and ungoverned grief; and then, crushed by the cold tone and the stern eye of the estranged monarch, her full heart poured itself out before him with that wild

* Mémoires de La Vallière.

eloquence which so often lends a grandeur even to the despair of error ; but the days had long passed by in which the hand of Louis had been prompt to wipe away her tears and to soothe her sorrows ! Both the one and the other had now become importunate, and the only reply which they elicited was even more cruel than his previous inquiry.

“ Let there be an end of this, madam,” he said, as he stopped haughtily beside her : “ I love you, and you know it ; but I will not be constrained.”

This interview was followed by a second, in which the king reproached Madame de la Vallière with her obstinacy in refusing the friendship of her rival, and reminded her that there had been a time in which she had herself required the countenance of her own sex.

This last and most bitter humiliation decided the fate of the abandoned favorite. She bent her head in submissive silence, for her heart was bursting ; and thenceforth her resolution was taken.

In a few days she completed all her arrangements, and addressed a letter to the king, in which she confessed her inability to remain an inhabitant of the court when she had lost both his affection and his respect ; and embracing her children, as she believed for the last time, she entered her carriage, and departed for the convent of Chaillot.

It was late in the evening when she drove under the somber portal, and requested an interview with the abbess, who was well known to her, and to whom she exclaimed, as she entered the apartment ; “ Madam, I have no longer a home in a palace, may I hope to find one in the cloister ?”

The abbess, to whom she told the whole tale of her bitter sorrow, received her like a Christian, and at once acceded to her request ; and after they had for a time mingled their tears together, La Vallière was conducted to the cell in which she was to pass the night. But for her there was no rest ; she could not pray, although she cast

herself upon her knees beside the narrow pallet, and strove to rejoice that she had at length escaped from the trials of a world which had wearied of her, and of which she herself was weary. There was no peace, no joy in her rebel heart; she thought of the first days of her happiness—of her children, who on the morrow would ask for her in vain; and then, as memory swept over her throbbing brain, she remembered her former flight to Chaillot, and that it was the king himself who had led her back again into the world. Her brow burned as the question forced itself upon her—Would he do so a second time? Would he once more hasten, as he had then done, to rescue her from the living death to which she had consigned herself as an atonement for her past errors? But hour after hour went by, and all was silent. Hope died within her, and yet she could not pray; daylight streamed dimly into the narrow casement of her cell; and soon the measured step of the abbess fell upon her ear, as she advanced up the long gallery, striking upon the door of each cell as she approached, and uttering, in a solemn voice, “Let us bless the Lord;” to which appeal each of the sisters replied in turn, “I give him thanks.”

Such was the commencement of the first conventual day of the unhappy penitent—she alone could not at that moment give thanks even to her God, among all who were collected beneath that holy roof: she alone was still encouraging a hope that she might be once more torn from the steps of his altar, and gifted with a mere earthly love. Nor was her hope deceived. Louis XIV. found it easy to abandon his favorites, but he could not brook their abandonment; and he consequently no sooner received the letter of his fugitive mistress than he dispatched M. Colbert to Chaillot with a letter entreating her immediate return. As the sound of carriage-wheels within the precincts of the convent reached her in her gloomy cell, the heart of La Vallière bounded—He was

there! Once more he had come to claim her! and all her mortifications, all her cares, and even all her remorse forgotten on the instant, she rushed to the parlor, where she found only the minister awaiting her. For an instant her head swam and her heart sunk; but in the next the letter of the king was in her hands, and her eyes eagerly devouring every line: nothing could be more tender, nothing more touching than its contents; but even as she read she remembered that on a former occasion he had been his own messenger, and she hesitated.

Colbert, perceiving her indecision, assured her that he dared not return alone, coupling the assurance with a lively picture of the distress exhibited by Louis when her flight had been made known to him. Colbert was eloquent, and La Vallière subjugated by her still unextinguished passion; and thus, even while blushing at her own weakness, she at length consented to emerge a second time from the retreat in which she was to have buried alike her sorrow and her fault: but a dark misgiving still weighed upon her spirit; and as she wrung the hand of the abbess at parting, she murmured amid her tears, "This is not a farewell. I shall assuredly return; and perchance speedily."

Her first welcome was, however, well calculated to allay all her fears. The king shed tears as he strained her to his heart, and thanked her for her generous compliance with his entreaties; Madame de Montespan wept over her, as over one whom she loved, and had believed to be lost to her forever; and the imitative courtiers crowded her saloons, and once more made her the idol of the hour.

La Vallière almost succeeded in persuading herself, for a time, that she had regained the lost affections of the fickle monarch; she had yet to learn that there is no resurrection for a dead passion, and that the marchioness was a rival little likely to permit her the opportunities

necessary for the trial. Even while affecting to disguise her power over the king, Madame de Montespan assumed a position at court ill suited alike to her real rank and to the respect which she owed to the queen her mistress; and in her chateau of Clagny,* where she was surrounded by luxury and state, she amused herself by entertaining foreign ambassadors, accepting at their hands costly presents, and introducing them to her children as though they had been princes of the blood-royal of France. Yet, despite all these demonstrations, and the fact that the court had long ceased to be hoodwinked by the shallow mystery with which she had seen fit to surround herself, the deluded and credulous Maria Theresa still refused to believe in her guilt; the inuendoes of those about her, and even the anonymous letters by which she was assailed, failed equally to make her suspicious of a friend who had so openly and so bitterly condemned the errors of La Vallière; and the Count de Vexin was born, and the Duke du Maine had already been confided to the care of Madame Scarron, ere the unhappy and indignant queen was ultimately condemned to recognize this new treachery.

The voice of the church was, however, raised against the haughty favorite, even while the outraged wife wept over her wrongs in silence. A short time subsequent to the birth of the Duke du Maine, a general jubilee took place in France, involving the free pardon of all past sins, in consideration of certain prayers to be said, certain visits to be paid to the several churches, and certain fasts to be observed. These great Papal absolutions, which were generally consequent upon the election of a new Pope, extended over all Roman Catholic countries, and excluded no sinner, however great might be his crimes, from

* The superb chateau of Clagny was situated in the magnificent stretch of country which skirts the forest of Villars d'Avrai, beyond the boundaries of Versailles. It no longer exists.

their operation; and it was, consequently, almost with a delirious joy that these great festivals of pardon were welcomed by every class of the population.

The jubilee in question was no sooner officially announced in Paris than the popular preachers commenced their labors by inveighing against the reprehensible excesses and illicit attachments by which the interests of religion were injured in the capital itself; and the very first sermon delivered before the court was emphatically directed against Madame de Montespan.

The second was still more uncompromising, and barely left her name unuttered; while in the third, the orator, directly addressing himself to the king, related the whole episode of David and the heifer which was stolen from him while he was yet a shepherd, and restored through the intervention of the patriarch of his tribe, who punished the thief; nor did he spare the subsequent passage in which David, become a monarch, carried off the wife of his servant, and excusing himself upon the plea of her beauty, was deaf to the voice of the injured husband, who besought him to yield rather to the dictates of justice than to those of passion, and to restore to him the wife of his bosom; but who was, nevertheless, compelled to suffer the penalty of his own disgrace, and perished miserably!

This plain speaking mortified Louis XIV., who dared not appear to appropriate the denunciation; and he accordingly desired the marchioness to withdraw during the period of the jubilee to her chateau at Clagny, which she lost no time in doing, being equally anxious to escape from the unmeasured indignation of which she felt herself to be the object; but, on the very day succeeding her arrival there, to her extreme annoyance, a servant announced the visit of M. de Bossuet,* the Bishop of Con-

* Jaques Bénigne de Bossuet, afterward Bishop of Meaux, was born at Dijon in 1627. The extraordinary genius of his eloquence

dom, who, after a somewhat stern salutation, laid before her the enormity of her position, and conjured her, not only for her own sake, but for that of the monarch and the public, scandalized by her example, to retire immediately to the convent of Fontevault, assuring her at the same time that the exhortations of the priesthood had effected the cure of the sinful passion which the king had hitherto indulged for her.

As, however, Madame de Montespan declined to profit by the pious advice of the bishop, he ultimately placed in her hands a letter from Louis himself, to the same purport; but even amid her agitation the marquise at once detected an ambiguity of expression which convinced her that the king by no means desired her obedience. Satisfied of this fact, she speedily recovered her self-possession; and when, after a tolerably long silence, the prelate requested to be informed of her definitive resolution, in order that he might be enabled to communicate it to His Majesty without delay, the insolent favorite, after having established herself more luxuriously among the cushions of her *fauteuil*, raised her eyes steadily to his, and replied, with a smile upon her lips, that she was convinced of the sincerity of the holy men who had waited upon the king, when they endeavored, as he had just expressed it, to induce His Majesty *to offer an example of self-abnegation to his people*; that, moreover, she was quite of their opinion, and that she thought as he did, as well as the Pope and the preachers of the jubilee; but, being imbued with the conviction that the shepherds owed it to their flock to point out the possession rendered him famous, especially his funeral orations, which were master-pieces of energy, sublimity, and Christian boldness. Elected a member of the French Academy, he subsequently became the preceptor of the Dauphin, son of Louis XIV., for whom he wrote his *Discourse on Universal History*, and his *History of Variations*, both of which eminently exhibited the grasp and versatility of his genius. His religious controversies with Fenelon are not worthy of the same praise.

bility of such a reformation, she, for one, would only consent to sacrifice the society of the monarch when he, the Bishop of Condom, should have separated himself from that of Mademoiselle de Mauléon des Vieux.

For once, however, the malice of Madame de Montespan missed its aim. She had anticipated the discomfiture of her unwelcome visitor, but the undisturbed serenity of the bishop at once convinced her that the court scandal had belied him, and only subjected her to a deeper humiliation; as the prelate, having contrasted her own licentiousness with the pure and pious life of the virtuous woman whom she had maligned, rose from his seat, and took his leave, observing that his errand was at an end, and that he had nothing more to do than to abandon her to her conscience, which, however, appeared so tranquil that he should reproach himself for any further attempt to awaken it.

A second letter, sent by a less holy messenger, reconciled Madame de Montespan to the mortification which she had entailed upon herself by her own insolence, and she remained quietly at Clagny until a week after the close of the jubilee, when she was recalled to Versailles, where the king received her with every mark of affection and regard; her saloons were inundated with enthusiastic friends; her enemies left their names at her door; and her fauteuil, her cushions, and her praying-chair were replaced in the tribune of the chapel.*

We have alluded to the formal reception of certain ambassadors at Clagny by the marchioness; but it is necessary that we should be more explicit, as one of the results of the embassy in question was of a most melancholy nature. The African king of Arda, informed of the conquest of Candia by the French monarch, and anxious to secure so powerful a friend, dispatched to his court several envoys to propose to him a political and commercial alliance, and to ask his support against the

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

English and Dutch settlers upon his coasts. They were charged to present to Louis himself a tiger, a panther, and two superb lions; and to the queen a golden pheasant which possessed the faculty of laughing like a human being, and a Moorish dwarf, of upward of ten years of age, whose height did not exceed twenty-seven inches. This duty performed, they next proceeded with the same state to wait upon Madame de Montespan, whom they addressed as *the second wife of the king*, and to whom they delivered, in the name of their own monarch, a string of large pearls, two bracelets of immense value, and an enormous sapphire.

The curiosity of the favorite being excited by their familiarity with her position at the court of France, she inquired from whom they had derived their information; when they replied, through their interpreter, that three traveling *missionaries* had resided for two months with the King of Arda, their master; and that these holy men had not only acquainted them with the fact that Madame de Montespan was the second wife of the great monarch, but had also themselves selected the presents which it was expedient to offer to her.

The queen, delighted at the new plaything with which the African envoys had provided her, caused the dwarf to be richly habited in the costume of his country, and covered him with jewels; after which she employed him to bear her train as she passed from one apartment to another, and derived great amusement from the liveliness of her pigmy attendant, who frequently diverted himself by suddenly stopping, and thus impeding her own progress, or in burying his head and face in the folds of the train to excite the mirth of the courtiers. All these antics, which differed so widely from the habitual monotony and ceremonial of her existence, were a source of continual delight to Maria Theresa, who retained the Moor constantly about her; and he was perpetually to be seen in

her apartment, either gamboling upon the rich carpet, or perched upon the bureau, or seated on the sofa, or even upon the very lap of his royal mistress.

Instantly it became the fashion among the great ladies of the court to have Moorish dwarfs to carry their trains; and from this caprice, short as was its vogue, arises the fact that Mignard, Le Bourdon, and other high-cast painters of the time, have introduced negro boys into their pictures.

Nevertheless, Louis XIV. could not reconcile himself to this extraordinary favorite, whose appearance and familiarity were alike distasteful to him; but the queen clung so pertinaciously to her new toy that he at length forbore all further remonstrance. Could he have foreseen the disastrous effects of his indulgence, much misery might have been spared alike to himself and to the ill-fated Maria Theresa.

Osman was still in the zenith of his favor when prayers were publicly put up for the safety of the queen and of the new prince whom she was about to give to France. On one occasion, as she was traversing her chamber, absorbed in thought, the dwarf, who was weary of inaction, suddenly bounded from an obscure corner of the apartment, and flung himself across her path. The queen fainted from the shock, and in a few hours gave birth to a daughter, perfectly black from head to foot. The secret was scrupulously kept by those in attendance; and after she had received a hurried baptism, the unfortunate child was privately conveyed to Gisors, whence she was afterward removed to the Benedictine convent at Moret, where she was compelled to take the veil;* while the *Gazette de France* officially announced that the royal infant had died a few minutes subsequently to its baptism.†

Monsieur, wearied of his widowhood, after having, as

* Her portrait is still to be seen in the winter saloon of the Library of St. Genevieve, College of Henry IV.

† Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

we have shown, been rejected by MADemoiselle, once more appealed to the king to provide him with a second wife; and Louis XIV., in compliance with his request, demanded for him the hand of the Princess Palatine, Charlotte Elizabeth of Bavaria, who, although fully aware of all the circumstances attending the death of her predecessor, at once accepted the alliance. Her advent at the French court created the greatest consternation. Only in the June of the previous year its inmates had seen in the Duchess d'Orleans one of the most graceful and accomplished princesses in Europe, delicate to fastidiousness in her habits, young, elegant, and fascinating; and no contrast could be more striking than that presented by the new duchess, who was received with repugnance by *Monsieur*, and with reluctance by the king; but the alliance was dictated by policy, Louis XIV. being anxious to secure by this measure the neutrality of the Elector Palatine, the father of the princess, during the war which he meditated against the Dutch.

She had, according to Madame de Sévigné, coarse features, a heavy figure, robust health, and an indifference which almost amounted to an aversion for dress, etiquette, and all such occupations as involved restraint. The portrait which she has drawn of herself in her memoirs is even less flattering. "I was born," she says, in Heidelberg, in 1652, and was a seven-months' child. I must necessarily be ugly, for I have no features, small eyes, a short, thick nose, and long, flat lips; and such a combination as this can not produce a physiognomy. I have heavy, hanging cheeks, and a large face, and nevertheless I am short and thick; to sum up all, I am an ugly little object. If I had not a good heart I should not be bearable anywhere. To ascertain if my eyes have any expression, it would be necessary to examine them with a microscope, for in any other manner it would be difficult to form a judgment. There could not probably be found on earth

hands more hideous than mine; the king has often remarked it to me, and made me laugh heartily; for not being able, with any conscience, to flatter myself that I possessed any thing good-looking, I have made up my mind to be the first to laugh at my own ugliness. I have found the plan very successful, and frequently discover plenty to laugh at.”

Even making every allowance for the exaggeration of this bitter pleasantry, it will readily be understood that the apparition of such a princess as Charlotte Elizabeth of Bavaria, in the midst of the most beautiful and refined women in France, must have produced an extraordinary effect. Nor were her personal habits less opposed to those of her new associates than her appearance: unlike the great ladies of the court, who received their guests in their *ruelles*,* she sprung from her bed the moment she awoke, whatever might be the hour, and seldom partook of breakfast. Despising alike tea, chocolate, and coffee, she luxuriated in soups composed of milk, beer, or wine—devoured saur-cROUT, and restored her system, after any temporary indisposition, by a diet of ham and sausages. She was exceedingly partial to dogs and horses, and assumed male attire whenever she rode out; but, despite these strange and startling peculiarities, she was a woman of strong mind and ready wit, sarcastic, shrewd, and clever; and she had no sooner presented herself at the French court than she became instantly aware of the impression she had produced. Even in her presence ridicule was not spared, and she required no prompting to feel convinced that in

* The space occupied by the bed, which was inclosed within a low balustrade. It was esteemed a high honor to be admitted to the *ruelle* of a royal personage; and Madame de Sévigné even speaks of being upon her knees in the *ruelle* of MADemoiselle when she went to condole with her on the rupture of her marriage with Lauzun. In a more general way the *ruelle* was the hotbed of coquetry, scandal, and intrigue.

her absence she was still more roughly treated ; but she supported the conviction with a philosophy which might well have disarmed her adversaries.

Resolved, nevertheless, to leave no doubt upon the minds of those about her of her perfect acquaintance with the fact, she seized an opportunity when she discovered that she was the victim of the malicious raillery of Madame de Fienne, and taking her by the hand, she led her apart, and said, firmly, "Madam, you are very amiable and extremely witty ; and, moreover, you possess a style of conversation which is endured by the king and *Monsieur*, because they are accustomed to it ; but I, who am only a recent arrival at the court, am less familiar with its spirit ; and I forewarn you that I become incensed when I am made a subject of ridicule. For this reason I was anxious to give you a slight warning : if you spare me, we shall get on very well together ; but if, on the contrary, you treat me as you do others, I shall say nothing to yourself, but I shall complain to your husband, and if he does not correct you I shall dismiss him."

From that moment Madame de Fienne, who had hitherto spared no one, never ventured to utter a witticism on the subject of the Duchess d'Orleans.

Meanwhile, Lauzun was passing his time drearily enough in the somber fortress of Pignerol, where he was confined in a grated chamber, and not permitted to hold intercourse with any one ; but ere long he became so seriously indisposed that it was considered necessary to allow the visit of a confessor, who had, however, no sooner approached his penitent than the latter seized him by the beard, in order to convince himself that he was not a fictitious monk sent to discover and betray his secrets. The Capuchin, unprepared for such a reception, called loudly for assistance, but was soon appeased by the explanation given by the sick man, to whom he afforded his assistance, and who was shortly afterward restored to health.

This was no sooner the case than Lauzun, like every other captive, began to entertain vague hopes of effecting his escape, and he accordingly commenced, cautiously but energetically, to remove the stones in a dark corner of his cell; but his labor availed him only in so much that it brought him into communication with some of his fellow-prisoners who had been similarly engaged, and enabled him to discover that his immediate neighbor was no other than the superintendent Fouquet, who had already been an inhabitant of the citadel for seven dreary years, without the slightest communication with any one beyond the walls. The recognition was, consequently, a joyous one for the controller; and the two prisoners labored so successfully that they were soon enabled, not only to converse, but even to visit each other in their respective cells.

Eager as Fouquet was, however, to learn all that had passed at court since his imprisonment, he soon ceased to yield perfect credence to the information afforded by his companion. Nor could it well be otherwise—for Lauzun naturally commenced by a narrative of his own fortunes; and when Fouquet heard this young adventurer, who, when he remembered him, had been only too grateful for a home under the roof of the Marshal de Grammont, assert that he had been a general of dragoons, captain of the royal guards, and in command of a portion of the army, he began to suspect that his mind was disordered; and as he proceeded to explain the unhappy accident by which he had failed to be appointed grand-master of the artillery, and his subsequent quarrel with the king, he became more and more convinced that he must be laboring under a delusion; but when, in the course of his tale, he arrived at his betrothal to MADemoiselle, and related all the circumstances by which the marriage had been prevented, Fouquet no longer hesitated to consider him as a confirmed lunatic, and from that time avoided his society from fear for his personal safety.

When the court finally saw fit to mitigate the rigor of his captivity, and to permit him to receive the visits of his wife and a few individuals of Pignerol, one of his first cares was to pity and explain the lamentable condition of the unhappy Marquis de Pégulian, whom he had left with a noble career before him, and who was then a lunatic in the fortress. Nor was it without extreme difficulty that he could be induced to believe that Lauzun had deluded him in no single circumstance, but that the romantic history to which he had listened was true from first to last.*

While these things were passing at Pignerol a new and successful candidate for the good graces of the king had appeared at court in the person of the young Duke de Longueville, who was, as we have stated elsewhere, born at the Town-Hall of Paris during the Fronde, and who had, upon the death of his father, in 1663, succeeded to his title and estates.

In addition to these advantages the young prince possessed a handsome person and captivating manners, which soon rendered him popular, not only with the king himself, but with the whole court; and in the height of his success, when he was beginning to weary of amusement, his happiness attained its climax by an order which he received to follow the sovereign in the approaching campaign in Holland, for which the necessary preparations were nearly completed.

* Mémoires du Duc de St. Simon.



CHAPTER XIII.

Alarm of the Dutch—The Army of Louis XIV.—The secret Treaty—Appeal of the States-General—Haughty Reply of Louis XIV.—Pretext for War—The royal Household—The Prince of Orange—Advance of the French Army—The Passage of the Rhine—Imprudence of the Duke de Longueville—The Skirmish—Death of the Duke de Longueville—Wound of Condé—Dispersion of the Dutch Forces—Will of the Duke de Longueville—Legitimation of his natural Son—A convenient Precedent—High-spirited Reply of the Prince of Orange—Death of Turenne—Gallantry of the Count de Guiche; his Death—Third Son of Madame de Montespan—Abandonment of the Duchess de la Vallière; her projected Retirement from the Court—Opposition of the King—The Carmelite Convent—Bitter Mortification—Bossuet and the Penitent—Offer of Louis XIV.—The Queen and La Vallière—The fatal Day—Parting of the King and La Vallière; her Reception by the Community—A conventual Interior—Death of the Duke de Vermandois—Humility of the ennobled Novice; her Death—European Consequences of the Dutch Invasion—Progress of Literature in France—The Three Dramatists—Louis XIV. and Britannicus—The Chevalier de Rohan—The Conspiracy—Madame de Villars—Execution of the Conspirators—The Poisoners.

THE Dutch had witnessed with alarm the manifestations which we have already described, and of which it was impossible to misunderstand the purpose. All the nobility had been convoked, and every castle had furnished a chief, followed by his vassals ready armed, after the fashion of the feudal times. One hundred and eighteen thousand men and a hundred pieces of ordnance formed the strength of the invading army, which was, moreover, augmented by a crowd of volunteers, partisans, and carbineers, who, already looking upon Holland as a rich and certain booty, joined themselves to the regular forces in order to better their fortunes. The generals of Louis XIV. were Condé, Turenne, Luxembourg, and Vauban.

The lamentable death of *Madame* had delayed, but by no means altered, the designs of the French and English sovereigns. The spoils of the republic which they were about to annihilate had been already amicably shared, in a secret treaty, between the two courts; just as, in 1635, Flanders had been shared with the Dutch themselves. The report of this intended invasion had already been noised throughout Europe; but Europe listened in silence, and remained passive. The Emperor of Germany was fully occupied with the seditions in Hungary, and Sweden laid to sleep by intricate negotiations; while Spain, always weak, tardy, and undecided, left a free path to the ambition of Louis XIV.

To complete the misfortune of Holland, the Dutch were divided into two violent factions. On one side were the rigid republicans, to whom every shadow of despotic authority was odious, and on the other a more moderate party, who were anxious to establish the young Prince of Orange in the possession of his ancestral rights. The grand-pensionary, John de With, and his brother Cornelius, were at the head of the opposition, but the party of the prince was beginning to predominate; and these domestic dissensions so occupied the public mind. that

its attention was dangerously diverted from external enemies.

As the peril became imminent, however, the States-General roused themselves sufficiently from their lethargy to address a letter to the French king, in which they inquired if the hostile demonstrations then on foot in his country were, indeed, directed against themselves, his old and faithful allies—in what they had offended him, and what reparation he required at their hands. But to this very pertinent appeal the haughty monarch vouchsafed no other answer than that “he should make such use of his troops as his dignity exacted, and was bound to give an account to no one.” The only pretext alledged, meanwhile, by his ministers being, that the Gazetteer of Holland had been guilty of insolence toward Louis XIV., and that it was asserted Van Benning had struck a medal injurious to his renown.*

On his side, Charles II. advanced an equally puerile reason for his hostility, by complaining that the Dutch fleet had not lowered their flag before an English vessel; and that a certain painting had been executed in which Cornelius de With was represented with all the attributes of a conqueror, the background of the picture being occupied by dismantled and captured ships. The English ministers, who delivered in a written statement of the “grievances” of their monarch, designated this an *abusive picture*; and the States, who invariably translated all ministerial documents into French, having rendered the word abusive by *trompeur*, replied that they could not comprehend what was meant by the *deceitful picture* of which complaint was

* “There had been bestowed on Louis XIV. the device of the sun, with the motto, ‘*Nec pluribus impar*,’ and it was asserted that Van Benning, whose Christian name was Joshua, had caused himself to be represented also with the sun, accompanied by the words, ‘*In conspectu meo stetit sol*;’ but such a medal never in reality existed.”—*Le Siècle de Louis XIV.*

made—never for an instant suspecting that allusion was made to the portrait of one of their own citizens, and thus they were unable to imagine the real nature of this strange pretext for war.

While Louis XIV. and his minister expended the enormous sum of fifty millions (equal in the present day to a hundred millions) in the bare preparations for invading the petty States of the United Provinces, Charles II., if necessarily less profuse, was at least equally active, and augmented the English fleet, under the command of the Duke of York, which already consisted of a hundred ships of war, by thirty fifty-gun vessels.

The most remarkable feature of the campaign was, however, the newly-formed household of Louis XIV. It consisted of four companies of body-guards, each composed of three hundred noblemen, among whom were a number of unpaid cadets, subject, like the rest, to the regulations of the service; two hundred gendarmes of the guard; two hundred light-horse; five hundred musketeers, all men of birth, selected for their youth and personal beauty; twelve companies of gendarmerie, subsequently augmented to sixteen. Even the "hundred Swiss"* accompanied the king, and his regiments of French and Swiss guards acted as sentries over the house or tent which he chanced at the time to occupy. These troops, who were nearly all covered with gold and silver embroidery, were at once the objects of terror and admiration to the Dutch, among whom every species of magnificence was unknown.

Moreover, Louis XIV., sure of success, carried also in his

* The hundred Swiss were a privileged company of infantry, armed with halberts. The sovereigns of France, from the year 1453, had in their service Swiss soldiers, who received high pay, and who formed, in some sort, their body-guard. Their costume was a blue Spanish coat (afterward changed to red) laced with gold. They were suppressed toward the close of the reign of Louis XVI. Re-established under Louis XVIII. in 1827, they took the name of the grenadier body-guards of the king; but they were again disembodied in 1830.

train the historian Pélisson, the faithful friend of Fouquet, who was intrusted with the record of the campaign.

Never was a greater contrast afforded, both in the accessories and the actors, than that exhibited between the adversaries in the forthcoming struggle. The Dutch collected with considerable difficulty an aggregate of twenty-five thousand men, ill appointed, and worse disciplined. Their general-in-chief was the Prince of Orange, then only twenty-two years of age, who had been elected by the nation, and who, although destined at a later period to ascend the English throne, and to cast his shadow also over that of France, gave, at the moment of which we treat, no symptom of his after-greatness.

Unlike his magnificent opponent, he was cold and grave; and the thirst of glory and ambition, of which his actions subsequently revealed the extent, had never been betrayed by his words. He saw himself trammelled, not only in his actual resources, but also by the jealousy of the States, who limited the extent of his authority. His available funds were scanty, his experience null, his natural tastes ascetic, and his temperament feeble; and at the very commencement of the campaign he found himself utterly unable to arrest the torrent which swept forward like an avalanche, and threatened to overwhelm his unhappy country. Four cities were simultaneously placed in a state of siege, and all four were taken. The Duke de Lorraine, who endeavored to raise troops, in order to unite his fortunes with those of the republic, had the mortification of seeing his principality seized by the French forces, and the whole of Holland was in danger of the same fate so soon as Louis should have passed the Rhine. The Prince of Orange had originally designed to defend the river; but he had no sooner completed his preparations than he became aware of the impracticability of the attempt, and fell back upon Holland in order to collect all his strength upon the opposite bank.

He was, however, deceived by the rapidity of his enemy's movements, for the French king reached the shores of the Rhine while he believed him to be still occupied with the besieged cities, and measures were already mooted in the hostile camp for passing the stream; while all the military posts upon its border, as well as upon the Issel, surrendered without a struggle. Several of the governors of the frontier fortresses forwarded to him the keys of their citadels; while many of the officers deserted from the towns in which they were garrisoned, even before the enemy had made any hostile demonstrations, and thus increased the general alarm.

Nothing could appear more propitious for the invaders, who at once decided on passing the river, in order to cut off all communication between the Hague and Amsterdam, and to make an end at once of the army of the Prince of Orange. Their first idea was to effect the passage by means of a bridge of boats; but a long drought having greatly diminished the volume of water, and even formed an apparent ford across a branch of the stream, near an old tower known as the tower of Tol-Huys, which was garrisoned only by a score of men, it was resolved that the ford should be attempted, in order to discover if it were practicable; and Condé immediately sought a volunteer among the superior officers for this dangerous duty. The Count de Guiche, who, since the death of *Madame*, had only sought for opportunities of self-sacrifice, offered himself on the instant; and having passed and repassed the river, under the fire of the enemy, returned with the announcement that, with the exception of about twenty paces in the center of the current, the horses would have footing from one bank to the other. It was, consequently, decided that on the morrow the army should avail themselves of this mode of transit.

The French camp was distant about six leagues from the river; but by commencing their march at eleven

o'clock at night, the whole body were enabled to reach the Rhine by three in the morning; and the Count de Guiche, acting as their guide, was the first to leave the bank, closely followed by the cuirassiers of Revel and the corps of volunteers. The king then moved forward, declaring that he would lead his household across; but Condé, who from a severe attack of gout could not venture the passage on horseback, detained him by the remark that, should His Majesty persist in swimming to the opposite shore, it would be impossible for him to follow in a boat.

Unfortunately for his fame, Louis XIV. yielded to this suggestion, and suffered the troops to pass without him, contenting himself by complaining of *his greatness which confined him to the bank*.

This pusillanimity (for those who were aware of the pertinacity of the monarch on all occasions where his personal inclination was concerned could view his present conduct in no other light) was the less excusable, as the landing was comparatively easy, being opposed only by four or five hundred mounted soldiers and two weak regiments of infantry, without ordnance; while the French artillery protected the advance. A few of the Dutch cavalry, indeed, entered the stream; but they were soon compelled to retreat, and having again reached the shore, they fled precipitately before their enemies; while the infantry, throwing down their arms, demanded quarter, and attempted no opposition. Fifteen thousand men thus passed the river, only the Count de Nogent, and a few of the more impetuous, who disregarded the limits of the ford, being swept down by the current and drowned; after which Condé made a safe passage in his boat.

It is probable that no other lives would have been lost had not the young Duke de Longueville, who was panting for an opportunity to distinguish himself under the eyes of the monarch, become incensed at the non-resistance of the enemy; and, as he spurred his horse up the steep bank

upon whose summit the Dutch troops were standing unarmed, falling upon their lines, shouting indignantly, "No, no! no quarter for this rabble," firing his pistol as he uttered the words, and killing one of their officers.

The effect of his rashness was electrical; the Dutch sprung instantly to their arms, and by their first volley brought down a score of the royal army, and among the rest the duke himself, who received a ball in his heart and fell dead from his horse; while, at the same instant, a captain of the Dutch cavalry, who had not fled like the rest, rushed toward the Prince de Condé, who having landed from the boat was about to mount his horse, and presented a pistol at his breast. Condé had only time to turn aside the barrel with his arm, when it was fired, and his wrist was shattered by the ball; upon which the French soldiery, irritated by the wound of the prince and the death of the duke, vigorously attacked the Dutch regiments, who made a rapid and disorderly retreat.

A short time afterward the body of the handsome, gallant, but imprudent Duke de Longueville was conveyed to the opposite bank of the river, flung across the back of the gallant steed which had borne him so bravely to his death; but he did not escape un mutilated; for some miscreant, attracted by the splendor of a diamond ring which he wore on his left hand, had profited by the confusion of the moment to cut off his finger.

The king passed the Rhine upon a bridge of boats at the head of the infantry.

We shall pursue the campaign no further, but proceed at once to mention the advantage taken by the king of a circumstance consequent on the death of the unhappy young duke. His untimely fate excited universal commiseration in the capital, and a great sensation was created by a bequest contained in his will, of five hundred thousand crowns to a natural son, whose mother was a married woman of high rank.

Louis had no sooner ascertained the circumstance than he took immediate steps to soothe the wounded honor of the husband; and being desirous to establish a precedent of which he might subsequently avail himself, he sent an order to the parliament of Paris to legitimize the son of the Duke de Longueville, without mentioning, in the act, the name of the mother—a proceeding which had never hitherto been attempted, which was illegal, but which, nevertheless, did not experience the slightest opposition.

Louis XIV. soon wearied of a campaign which he had commenced from pride rather than principle—a campaign in which Condé and Turenne sustained their already brilliant reputation, and the Prince of Orange acquired the fame due to his military genius. And he afforded a palpable proof that such was the case by conceiving the idea of a marriage between Mademoiselle de Blois, the daughter of La Vallière, and the prince his opponent, at a period when his own prosperity and success would have appeared to render such an alliance the greatest honor and advantage which could accrue to the gallant young soldier. But Louis deceived himself. William of Nassau, who was the grandson of Charles I. of England, haughtily replied that the Princes of Orange were accustomed to contract marriages with the legitimate daughters of kings, but not with their natural children—a reply which wounded Louis XIV. so deeply that he never either forgot or forgave the insult, and even occasionally acted against his better judgment in order to harass and injure the prince.*

The two great catastrophes produced by this struggle were the burning of the Palatinate and the death of Turenne, who was cut in two by a cannon-ball; while the Count de Guiche, who, throughout the whole period, exposed his life wherever there was danger, was not fated to meet so honorable a death; in vain did he throw himself into the thickest of the fight, and volunteer for every duty

* Mémoires du Duc de St. Simon.

which was considered as almost desperate; although his wounds were numerous no one of them proved mortal, and this gallant and gifted young man ultimately died at Creutznach, in his thirty-fifth year, of a broken heart.

At this period Madame de Montespan had lost her eldest son, the Count de Vexin, and had given birth to a third, upon whom the king bestowed the same name, and to whom he gave the royal abbey of St. Denis; while La Vallière, who had endeavored to cheat herself into a belief that Louis had recalled her from her retreat from affection and regard, saw his attentions diminish day by day, until she became once more abandoned and almost forgotten, save by her more happy rival, whose malice reached her even in her solitude. Her heart was broken by this new disappointment, for now she could no longer deceive herself; but for one whole dreary year she supported all the bitterness of her fate in silence; cold and impassive, not even the impertinence to which she was subjected, even from those who had once vowed to her an eternal friendship, could rouse her into resentment. Her one great sorrow had absorbed all minor suffering; but at length she found that she could no longer sustain the struggle.

Madame de Montespan, who alone had accompanied the king to Holland, was all-powerful at court, and spared neither sarcasm nor insult which could increase the bitterness of her position; and once more she resolved to retire from the unequal contest and leave the stage free to the triumphs of her rival.

The Marquise de Rémy, delighted by a resolution so consonant with her own wishes, at once advised her to withdraw to her duchy of Vaujours, where she offered to bear her company and to assist in the education of her children; but the spirit of the forsaken favorite was broken, and she no longer felt that she possessed sufficient energy to enter upon so responsible a life. Still, grateful for the anxiety of her mother, she consented to submit this project

to the king, and to abide by his decision, although her thoughts yet recurred to the night which she had passed at Chaillot, and she sighed for the more perfect seclusion of a conventual life.

When the proposition of her retirement to Vaujours was submitted to the selfish monarch it was negatived upon the instant, on the pretext that she was too young and too handsome to be left so entirely to her own guidance; nor would he listen to the idea of her retiring to Chaillot, alledging that Mademoiselle de la Motte having taken the vows in that community, whose favor had never equalled that of Madame de la Vallière, there ought necessarily to be an equal difference in the place of their retreat.

A short time subsequently, having accompanied the queen, whose continued friendship was her only consolation, to the Carmelite convent, where Her Majesty was accustomed to retire upon all solemn festivals, and where two of her personal friends had professed, the impression produced upon the mind of the penitent was so powerful that she consulted her confessor upon the subject, who strongly urged her not to resist a feeling which had evidently been divinely inspired. Her heart went with him; she was weary of her burden, and longed to be at rest; and when, a few weeks afterward, she ascertained that the queen, on speaking of the convent in the king's presence, had declared that she was deeply moved by the extraordinary devotion of Madame de la Vallière, who had accompanied her on her last visit, and that his answer had been that, if she was resolved to withdraw from the court, the Carmelites was the only retreat suitable to her, she embraced every opportunity of visiting the community, who received her with kindness, although utterly unaware of her identity.

Her first mortification under this holy roof was a bitter one. On one occasion she accompanied a friend who accidentally called her by her name, and the effect which it produced struck her to the heart. Every eye was averted

and every lip closed, and the courtly sinner, in her purple and fine linen, felt herself to be an object of avoidance to the pure and pious women among whom she stood.

Nevertheless, La Vallière, remorseful and spirit-worn as she was, could not look upon the cloister without a shudder. She was still young, still beautiful, still loving. Her life had been one of luxury, and even her sorrows had been pillowed upon velvet. She was, moreover, a devoted mother, and her affection for her children was like a chain of iron binding her to the world. Her *human nature* rebelled, and she hated herself for her weakness; but it was stronger than her will. The Marquise de Rémy, indignant at the objection of the king, still urged her to retire to Vanjours; her friends counseled her to remain at court; even Louis himself expressed his dissatisfaction at her resolution; and it is probable that she might have consented to prolong her martyrdom, had not Bossuet been beside her to lay bare the sin and danger of the position to which she clung. The victim of a passion which even neglect and contumely could not extinguish, she was subjected at every instant to the commission of some new error; surrounded by all the adventitious advantages of rank and wealth, the body was pampered even while the soul suffered; exposed to the malice of a powerful enemy, her worst passions were excited against others, when she should only have been weeping over her own sins: in short, in her present position, the world was in her and about her; she clung to possibilities instead of reading the stern lessons of the past, and forgot the promises of heaven in the deceits of earth.

As she listened to his exhortation, the heart-broken penitent resolved at once to escape from the yoke which had pressed upon her so heavily—the yoke of sin, whose ways had been bitterness; but Bossuet would not consent to permit a merely impulsive sacrifice, and condemned her to another year of trial. The period was not quite accomplish-

ed when the strength of the unhappy woman suddenly failed, and a long and dangerous illness supervened, during which her life was for many days in danger.

Even the supreme egotism of Louis XIV. gave way when he learned her peril, and he visited what was at the moment considered to be her death-bed, accompanied, not by Madame de Montespan, but by Madame de Maintenon, who exhibited the most sincere sympathy for the sufferer. But such a demonstration of interest came too late. La Vallière had found herself at the very gates of the grave and felt the enormity of her transgression. Some human shrinkings there were still—some clingings to the ties and temptations of a world by which she had once been worshiped; but they were weakened alike by bodily suffering and by mental remorse, and although she still struggled on for a few weeks, her resolution had become decided.

In vain did the king represent to her the extreme austerity of the order which she had selected, and bid her make choice of any of the richest abbeys of France, declaring that she should become the abbess of whichever she might prefer; La Vallière declined to avail herself of this last mark of consideration, alledging that she who had not been able to govern herself was ill calculated to undertake the control of others; and this painful interview once over, she hastened to take leave of her children, her worst and greatest trial, and to send them away from her, for she feared to expose herself to their presence and caresses, lest her heart should fail her at the last moment. This done, all that remained to be accomplished was comparatively easy; for she regulated her worldly affairs like one in a dream, without a tear or a regret.

On the day which preceded that of her retreat she went at an early hour to the apartment of the queen, where, throwing herself upon her knees, she implored her pardon for all the sorrow she had caused her; when Maria Theresa, moved to tears, raised her up and embraced her, de-

siring that she would, like herself, forget the past errors for which she was about so nobly to atone.

The fatal day at length dawned, and by a singular coincidence Louis XIV. was to depart immediately after the grand mass to join the army in Flanders, at the same moment that the forsaken favorite was to set out for the living grave to which she had herself consigned her youth. Throughout the whole of the service she remained in deep and earnest prayer, and never once raised her eyes; but, at its conclusion, as she advanced to the tribune to take leave of the king, her countenance was as pale as death, and she staggered, and must have fallen had she not been supported by her mother.

This weakness was, however, not contagious. The eye of Louis was dry, and his voice firm, as he bade her farewell and expressed a hope that she would be happy in her cloister; after which he stood composedly to see her enter her carriage with a tottering step and drive away. Not a sign of emotion escaped him, and the equipage had no sooner disappeared than he entered into conversation with those about his person as calmly as though he had never loved the unhappy woman whose life was to be thenceforward one of trial and privation.

On arriving at the grate where the superior of the Carmelites was awaiting her at the head of her community, the repentant sinner cast herself upon her knees, declaring that she had hitherto made so ill a use of her will that she came to resign it up into the hands of the abbess forever, and entreated that, even during the year of her novitiate, she might be permitted to wear the dress of the order.

Nothing could be more exemplary than her resignation—nothing more unaffected than her piety. The hard and narrow pallet, the vigorous fasting, and the hours of unbroken silence exacted by the order, awoke no murmur upon her lips. She complained only of the flat and unwieldy sandals by which her feet were wounded and her

thoughts occupied, when she would fain have detached them wholly from earth. The visits of the court were irksome to her; she longed to be more thoroughly severed from her memories of the past, and, in the extent of her humility, had requested permission from the abbess to profess as a lay-sister, which was, however, refused, her strength not being considered equal to the life of labor which such a vow would have entailed.

All the trials of the sister Louisa of Mercy, however—for such was the name of her adoption—were not destined to end at the dark portal which she was never again to cross.

The death of her brother, the Marquis de Vallière, was a heavy blow, for which she was wholly unprepared; and, seven years subsequently, that of her son, the Count de Vermandois, grand-admiral of France, was announced to her by Bossuet. For a moment she stood motionless, as if turned suddenly to stone, with her hands tightly clasped together, and her pale face bent down upon her bosom; but in the next instant she rallied, and raising her large blue eyes to heaven, she said, in a resigned and humble accent, "It would ill become me to weep over the death of a son whose birth I have not yet ceased to mourn."

For six-and-thirty dreary years did the hitherto delicate and pampered duchess exist amid the privations, hardships, and austerity of a convent, increasing, whenever she was permitted to do so, every humiliation and every fatigue; until at length the death for which she sighed finally released her from all further suffering, in her sixty-sixth year, in the arms of the daughter whom she had so fondly loved, bequeathing to her affection a memory which had been purified by piety and prayer.

Something so gentle and so touching is attached to the name of La Vallière, despite her error, and this second phase of her life awakens so deep and sincere an interest, that we have permitted ourselves to dwell on it at con-

siderable length, feeling that we shall be pardoned for our prolixity.

Return we now, however, to the current of our narrative.

The invasion of Holland, which had originated in vanity, and which Louis XIV. had fondly believed would be readily accomplished, changed the whole aspect of affairs in Europe. When he crossed the Rhine all the neighboring nations were his allies; but the uncompromising display of power which he had deemed it expedient to make on that occasion had convinced them of their individual danger, should they persist in a neutrality which must tend at once to increase his strength and to weaken their own means of resistance. Spain was the first to declare itself; after which Germany, which had already assumed a menacing attitude, took up arms, and marched upon the invading army; and ultimately England joined the league.

The war had thus become European; and France, instead of finding herself in a position to annihilate a petty republic, was suddenly opposed to three powerful nations, while Sweden alone had remained faithful to its engagements. It therefore became necessary for Louis to accomplish a peace; but as he saw that a general treaty would only involve endless negotiations from the conflicting interests of the coalesced powers, he instructed his plenipotentiaries to treat with each cabinet separately. Holland, exhausted by the previous struggle, and mistrustful of William of Orange, who was about to form an alliance with the eldest daughter of the Duke of York, was the first to accept a peace; Spain followed, and ultimately Germany; but Louis was compelled to make many concessions in order to effect his purpose. The treaties were, however, finally signed, that with the emperor being designated the peace of Nimègue.

The war had in no degree interrupted the progress

of art and literature in the capital; the drama flourished; Racine, Corneille, and Molière continued their glorious rivalry; the first was firmly maintaining the supremacy which his youth had for a time tended to cloud; the second, despite his seventy-five years, still retained a portion of the force of his earlier age; while Molière was on the very pinnacle of his greatness. The author of *Britannicus* had, moreover, blent wisdom with his wit, and taught even Louis XIV. a lesson by which he did not fail to profit. On the first representation of this drama, which took place in the presence of the king, he was startled by the following lines, which he at once appropriated:—

“ His great ambition and his highest aim
To guide his car triumphal through the ring;
To strive for gauds unworthy of his hands,
And be himself a spectacle to Rome.”

From the moment in which these words fell upon his ear, Louis XIV. determined never again to dance in a ballet, and he maintained his resolution.*

An actual tragedy, meanwhile, took place in Paris, which produced a powerful effect all over the kingdom. The Chevalier de Rohan,† exasperated by his exile from the court, full of ambition, and eager for notoriety, had entered into a conspiracy with Spain, which was intended to overthrow the monarchy and to render France a republic.

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

† Louis, Prince de Rohan, better known as *The Chevalier*, was born in 1635, and was the son of Louis de Rohan, Duke de Montbazou, Prince de Guemenée. Appointed grand-master of the hunt in 1656, on the death of his father, and subsequently colonel of the guards, he rendered himself conspicuous at the court of Louis XIV., by his adventurous intrigues and his ruinous expenditure. Exiled by Louis XIV., who suspected him of encouraging the vicious tastes of his brother, Philip d'Orleans, he entered into a conspiracy which had for its object to place the Spaniards in possession of several of the fortresses in Normandy.

Overwhelmed with debt, sacrificing every thing to the gratification of the moment, and without any settled principle, he was open to every temptation which promised to reinstate his shattered fortunes. The Prince and Princess de Soubise,* hopeless of reclaiming him by remonstrance or example, had utterly estranged themselves from his interest, and never mentioned his name; and thus he became a traitor to his king without even the apology of a mistaken patriotism.

The citizens of Messina, exasperated against Don Diego de Soria, their governor, had cast off the Spanish yoke, and offered their allegiance to the crown of France, which had received and welcomed its new ally—a circumstance so disloyal in the eyes of the King of Spain, that he resolved at the first opportunity to avenge it. The disposition of Rohan was well known, nor were his embarrassments matter of less notoriety; and the Marchioness de Villars was commissioned by the Count de Monterey to offer to the chevalier alike a guaranty for his personal safety, and a promise of abundant remuneration, should he consent to head the conspiracy. Madame de Villars was a desperate gambler, and a woman devoid alike of principle and modesty, who, as an earnest of the goodwill of Spain toward its agents, received twenty thousand crowns on undertaking the commission, with the promise of a million, should the conspiracy prove a successful one; and she exerted her influence so skillfully, that she not only induced M. de Rohan to accept the offer which she was authorized to make, but also to be guided in every respect by her counsels.

She it was who conducted the ciphered correspondence between the chevalier and the court of Spain, and was the soul of the intrigue; but as it was above all essential to secure an intelligent and trustworthy courier, she introduced to De Rohan a *ci-devant* schoolmaster who was at

* Heads of the Rohan family.

that period residing at Picpus; and accompanied by this individual the chevalier privately met the Count de Monterey in Flanders, where it was agreed between them that on a certain day, at the hour when the tide would serve, Admiral Tromp with his fleet should arrive in the harbor of Honfleur or Quillebœuf in Normandy; and that, at a given signal, La Truaumont,* the Chevalier de Préaux, and De Rohan himself, should deliver up both the port and the town to the King of Spain.

The plot was, however, discovered before it had ripened; and the conspirators were arrested, conveyed to Paris, and put upon their trial as traitors at the Tournelle.† The previous popularity, the ancient name, and, above all, the fearful memories called up by this impeachment, of the sufferings of the nobility under Richelieu, created universal consternation; and every exertion was made to induce the clemency of the king, but he remained inflexible. The marchioness and the two chevaliers lost their heads, and the schoolmaster was hanged; while La Truaumont, who was in the very pride of his youth and strength, avoided the scaffold by resisting his jailers so desperately as to lose his life in the struggle.‡

New, and even more alarming circumstances were, however, taking place at this period, which soon withdrew the attention of the court from the fate of M. de Rohan and his colleagues, and turned their thoughts upon their own safety.

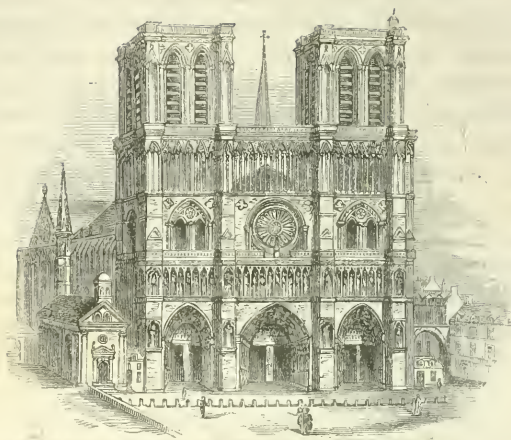
To the tragical death of the Princess Henrietta had succeeded many others, all sudden, mysterious, and inexplicable; in many cases they had occurred at the precise moment in which individual vengeance would seem to

* Son of a councilor in the Chamber of Accounts.

† The Tournelle was a parliamentary tribunal, composed of a given number of judges, taken in rotation from the Upper Chamber and the Chambers of Inquiry, for the purpose of trying criminal causes.

‡ Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

have called them down, and yet no trace of foul play could be detected. The dead lay calm, and apparently untouched by human hands; but it was, nevertheless, impossible to doubt the agency of poison, and the public were the more confirmed in their suspicion by the fact that this fearful crime had latterly made considerable progress in the kingdom. Even during the period of civil war so treacherous a weapon had been unknown, and by a singular fatality its use had been withheld until a time when France was reveling in pleasure and renown, even as it had previously reserved its mysterious horrors for the palmy days of the Roman republic.



CHAPTER XIV.

Discovery of the Criminals—The Marchioness de Brinvilliers—La Voisin and La Vigoreaux—Fiendish Association—Public Excitement—Arrest of suspected Persons—Wit of the Duchess de Bouillon—Flight of Madame de Soissons; her Arrival in Spain; Distrust of the Spanish Monarch; her Favor with the Queen—The Marriage of Maria Louisa d'Orleans and Charles II. of Spain; her Repugnance to the Alliance—Intimacy of Madame de Soissons and the German Ambassador—Death of the Queen by Poison—Evasion of Madame de Soissons; her Death at Brussels; her utter Destitution—Trial of the Duke de Luxembourg; his noble Defense, and partial Acquittal—Execution of La Vigoreaux—Diabolical End of La Voisin—Family of Louis XIV.—The Dauphin; his Betrothal—Court Appointment of Madame de Maintenon—Inveteracy of Madame de Montespan—Indignation of the King—The old Favorite and the new one; their Interview—Household of the Dauphiness—Arrival of the Princess—The military Confessor—Portrait of the Dauphiness by Madame de Sévigné—The royal Marriage—Children of the Duchess de la Vallière—Mademoiselle de Blois; she marries the Prince de Conti—The Marriage—The Count de Vermandois; his Profligacy; his Imprisonment—Children of Madame de Montespan—The Count de Vexin—The Duke du Maine—Mademoiselle de Nantes—Mortifications of Madame de Montespan; her scandalous Revenge; her

Protégé—Mademoiselle de Fontanges; her Portrait—Infatuation of the King—Gayety of the Court—Mademoiselle de Fontanges created a Duchess; her Levity and Exactions—Contempt of the Queen—Frisolous Ostentation of the new Mistress—Vindictiveness of Madame de Montespan—Père la Chaise—A royal Dilemma—The Mediatrix—Insolence of Madame de Fontanges; her Egotism—A King's Refuge—Accouchement of Madame de Fontanges; her Sickness; her Retreat; her Death—Indecent Joy of Madame de Montespan—Accusation against her—The Dead forgotten.

THE public mind might have remained upon the rack for an indefinite period on the subject of these frightful visitations, which spared neither sex nor rank, had not the confessional enabled the Grand Penitentiary of Paris to ascertain the use of poison in several different instances; and the increase of the crime became so rapid and so alarming, that he considered it his duty to apprise the authorities of the fact. Immediate investigations were set on foot in consequence, by which it was elicited that two Italians, named Exili and Destinelli, after having labored for a considerable time in pursuit of the philosopher's stone, in connection with a German apothecary, and sacrificed in this useless speculation the little money they possessed, had endeavored to recruit their finances by the fabrication of subtil and fatal poisons, which they vended secretly, and of which the most frightful feature existed in the circumstance that they left no outward trace of their agency.

These men were at once committed to the Bastille, where Destinelli shortly afterward died; while Exili remained a prisoner, although he was never convicted of the crime of which he was accused, and employed himself, even in his cell, in imparting to some of his former associates the fatal secret by which he had convulsed the capital. The celebrated Marchioness de Brinvilliers was one of the first to profit by this fearful knowledge to the destruction of half her family; but her history is matter of such notoriety that we shall simply glance at the fact,

while it will be expedient to be more explicit as regards some individuals of inferior rank, who, not content with employing their secret for the purposes of personal vengeance, made a traffic of their iniquitous knowledge to an extent which infested the whole capital.

La Voisin, a popular fortune-teller, who was consulted by all the high nobility of Paris, was the first to venture upon this diabolical trade; she saw at a glance how much her reputation must profit by so sure an opportunity of realizing her own predictions; and, ere long, she not only foretold to expectant heirs the speedy removal of their wealthy kindred, but she even undertook to insure to them the exact period when they should enter upon their inheritance; and as her pledge was almost universally redeemed, she found the number of her clients increase so rapidly that she was compelled to take into her confidence another fortune-teller, named La Vigoreaux, and two priests, Lesage and d'Avaux.

This fiendish association was no sooner formed than Paris was inundated with murder. No precaution sufficed for safety. Death lurked in every object of daily use—a glove, a perfume, a glass of water, or a missal, each in its turn did the work of the conspirators. Friends shrunk from receiving the gifts of friends; fathers looked with suspicion upon the hospitality of their sons, and sons in their turn forbore to grasp the hand of their fathers; the young beauty shuddered at the cosmetics upon her toilet, and the grave matron at the relics upon her rosary; the soldier could not handle his weapon without suspicion, and magistrates bent with dread over their parchments.

It is scarcely necessary to remark that the morals of these wretched women were of the most depraved description; and that, as they had no scruples of conscience to contend against, the evil continued to increase from day to day. They sold different liquids, essences, pomatums, and perfumed toys; and under cover of this commerce they

attracted to their residence persons of every rank, from the prince to the artisan, and from the duchess to the courtesan.

It was impossible that such a state of things as this could be suffered to exist; even the king trembled in his gilded chambers; and it was accordingly decided that a *Chambre Ardente** should be immediately established, with full power to enter upon the trial of all suspected persons. The parliament complained of this exceptional assembly as an encroachment upon its privileges; but, in reply, it was informed that, as in all probability many of the highest personages of the realm might prove to be more or less implicated, it was necessary that the tribunal should hold its sittings with as much secrecy as those of Venice and Madrid; and it was accordingly established at the Arsenal near the Bastille.†

La Voisin, La Vigoreaux, and the two priests were first arrested, the extreme popularity of their establishment having at length excited the suspicion of the police, who soon discovered that it was the center of intrigue and seduction, and that their commerce, apparently so trivial and innoxious, was, in fact, a barter of death for gold. Along with them were also arrested a number of the very dregs of the people, who, having been convicted of the same unholy traffic, were summarily put to death; while, although the examination of the original criminals did not transpire, it soon became apparent that they had also implicated many persons of high rank.

Monsieur, it was asserted, had twice visited the wizards, and had repaid their revelations by sums nearly amounting

* The *Chambre Ardente* was a meeting established in each parliament by Francis II. for the extirpation of heresy, whose sentences were beyond appeal, and in most cases immediately put in force. The tribunal of poison, under Louis XIV., assumed the same name from the fact of its awarding punishment by fire.

† Siècle de Louis XIV.

to five thousand pistoles; but he had simply sought to obtain information as to the fidelity of his first wife. The queen had also, in her turn, on one occasion consulted La Voisin, although merely from curiosity to see a person who occupied so much of the public attention; and upon the witch proposing to supply her with a philter which would compel the affection of the king, fearing to endanger the health of His Majesty, she had refused to receive it, and had never seen her again. The Countess de Soissons had been less scrupulous—it was known that she had visited the house of La Voisin more than thirty times, and had also admitted her to her own apartments. Her principal aim, it was said, had, however, been to possess herself of the immense inheritance of her uncle, the cardinal, to the exclusion of his other relatives, and to regain her influence over the monarch; for which purpose she had delivered to the sorceress many articles of apparel which he had worn, and even, as it was asserted, a lock of his hair, and some drops of his blood in a small phial.

Fouquet, it was also ascertained, had, previously to his arrest, been in frequent communication with La Voisin, upon whom he ultimately settled an annuity which was, even at that period, continued by his family.

The Count de Bussy Rabutin, the Duke de Lauzun, the Duchess de Bouillon, the Duke de Luxembourg, and the Cardinal de Bouillon, had each in their turn been guilty of the same imprudence, but, like *Monsieur*, for the most puerile purposes; and only three persons of the court were cited before the judges—the Duchess de Bouillon, the Countess de Soissons, and the Marshal de Luxembourg. The accusation brought against the duchess was a mere absurdity, quite beyond the jurisdiction of any law court, but she nevertheless obeyed the summons without opposition; and, upon being asked by M. de la Reynie, the lieutenant of police who presided, if she had ever seen the devil, whose apparition La Voisin was accused of calling

up, she answered calmly, "No, sir; I had not previously seen him, but I do so at this moment; he is very ugly, and disguised as a councilor of state."

The examination was not pursued.

Madame de Soissons was not even subjected to this ordeal; for the king, from respect to the memory of her uncle, directed her to be informed that if she felt herself guilty of the charges which were about to be brought against her, he advised her to leave the country without delay: to which she replied that, although innocent, she had such a horror of a court of justice that she preferred banishment to subjecting herself to its power; and she accordingly retired to Brussels, after having been compelled to dispose of her charge as controller of the queen's household, which was purchased by Madame de Montespan; while at the same period the king appointed Madame de Maintenon mistress of the wardrobe to the Dauphiness Mary Anne Christina Victoria of Bavaria, whose hand he had already demanded for his son, from her father, the Elector Ferdinand

M. de Soissons had died in a sudden and mysterious manner while serving with the army in Germany, in 1673, and suspicion had been excited that in his case poison had also been employed, while it was murmured that the countess was not guiltless of the crime; but as her favor at court appeared at that time to be firmly reëstablished, no one ventured to accuse her openly. She remained but a short time in Brussels, and then proceeded to Spain, to the great astonishment of her friends, who, aware that foreign princes were not acknowledged in that kingdom, were at a loss to imagine her motive; feeling that to a woman of her haughty disposition, who had been preëminently pertinacious on the subject of her rank, it must be a sensible mortification to find herself treated as a mere private individual.

Maria Louisa d'Orleans, the daughter of the unfortunate Princess Henrietta, who had, in 1679, reluctantly given her hand to Charles II., was at that period Queen of Spain

Originally intended by Louis XIV. to become the wife of the dauphin, she had been reared in that expectation, and had exerted herself to attain all the accomplishments necessary to adorn so exalted a station. Young, beautiful, and graceful as her mother, whom she strikingly resembled, she had already secured the admiration of the whole court and the affection of the king; when, remembering that this alliance would necessarily greatly tend to increase the influence of his brother, not only over the dauphin himself, but also over the ministers, Louis determined otherwise, and at once acceded to the demand of her hand made by the Spanish monarch.

This intelligence was a heavy blow to the princess; and when she was compelled by etiquette to appear at Versailles to make her acknowledgments to the king, her uncle, her agitation was so great that she could scarcely articulate, while large tears chased each other down her pale cheeks. It was nevertheless certain that it was her country and the court which she regretted rather than the dauphin himself, who was ill calculated to gain the affections of a refined and sensitive woman. As he approached in his turn to congratulate her, and a slight flush had already risen to her brow, the blood was forced back to her heart by the first words he uttered.

“My dear cousin,” said the witless prince, “I am quite anxious for you to arrive in Spain, that you may send me some *toura*. I am so fond of it.” The king bit his lip; and, taking the hand of the trembling princess, said how much he grieved to see her tears, and that he begged her to remember that he had made her Queen of Spain, and could have done no more for his own daughter.

“That is true, sire,” sobbed out the victim of his policy, “but you might have done more for your niece!”

Maria Louisa was married in state in the great chapel at St. Germain, where the Cardinal de Bouillon, as grand-almoner of France, performed the service; after which,

with painful and undisguised reluctance, she departed for Madrid. Her youth and beauty at once secured the affections of her husband, who, although bigoted and constitutionally melancholy, soon loved her with a sincere and absorbing passion which rendered him suspicious of all who approached her; indeed, her empire over the heart of Charles became ultimately so great that the cabinet of Vienna were alarmed lest she should, from her affection for her native country, exert her influence to induce her husband to declare in favor of France against themselves.

The Count de Mansfeld was German ambassador at Madrid at the period when the Countess de Soissons arrived at that court, and an intimacy was immediately established between them; while the unfortunate young queen, who clung to every thing which could remind her of her home, expressed the greatest desire to see and converse with her. In vain did the king, who had heard the history of her past career, and who had already been warned that the queen had numerous and dangerous enemies, endeavor to combat this inclination; the entreaties of Maria Louisa were so earnest that he at length consented to the reception of the countess, but still only on condition that she should be privately introduced into the palace by a back stair-case, and in his own presence; but as the society of the courtly exile became more and more agreeable to the queen, and that he could not on all occasions be at her side, he at length conceded that she should continue to see the countess, provided that she would promise not to partake of any food from her hands which he had not previously tasted in his own person—a pledge which was given more carelessly than it was demanded.

On one occasion, overcome by the heat of the weather, the queen, who chanced to be alone with her new friend, remarked how much she regretted the scarcity of milk at Madrid, and how greatly she should enjoy a long draught

at such a moment, when she was almost fainting from the exhaustion produced by the sultriness of the atmosphere ; upon which the Countess de Soissons assured her that she knew where to procure some which was excellent, and that, with Her Majesty's permission, she would in a few minutes have it iced and bring it to her with her own hands. The queen eagerly consented, and Madame de Soissons immediately leaving the palace, drove, as it was asserted, to the residence of the Count de Mansfeld. She was not long absent ; and Maria Louisa, receiving with a smile of acknowledgment the coveted beverage, swallowed it at a draught.

In half an hour she was dangerously indisposed.

Amid the confusion consequent on this event the countess contrived to leave the palace and return home, where her baggage being already prepared, she forthwith escaped from the capital. The king, apprised of all the circumstances, sent in pursuit of her without loss of time, but unavailingly. Her arrangements had been so long and so skillfully made that it was found impossible to overtake her. The queen died in a few hours in the same agony as her mother had previously done, and was mourned by the whole kingdom ; while the countess made the best of her way to Germany, where for a short time she lived in retirement, although the Count de Mansfeld was recalled and appointed to one of the first posts at the court of Vienna. Ultimately, however, when the Spanish monarch contracted a new alliance with a German princess, Madame de Soissons obtained permission to return to Flanders, and in the year 1708 died at Brussels, poor, despised, and forsaken, not only by all who had formerly been her friends, but even by her son, the Prince Eugène ; and so great were her necessities during the latter period of her life, that on one occasion she was driven to apply for assistance to the Duke de Mazarin, who sent her two thousand francs for her support.

The Duke de Luxembourg,* who, when first accused, instantly delivered himself up, had been sent to the Bastille by his enemy, Louvois, to await his trial; where, not content with depriving him of his liberty, he caused him to be confined in a cell only six feet in length, and it was from this narrow dungeon that he passed to the tribunal. The first interrogatory addressed to him was still more unfortunate than that which had been put to the Duchess de Bouillon; for he was asked if he had not entered into a compact with the devil, in order to effect the marriage of his son with the daughter of the Marquis de Louvois.

“Sir,” replied the marshal, with a gesture of supreme disdain, “when Matthew de Montmorency married the widow of Louis le Gros, he did not address himself to the devil, but to the States-General; who declared that in order to secure to the infant king the support of the Montmorencies during his minority the marriage was a matter of necessity.”†

His acquittal followed on the instant; but he nevertheless remained a prisoner for many months.

La Vigoreaux was hanged, after having been subjected to the most rigorous torture, which failed to extort a confession of her crimes or a revelation of her secret, and died with a courage worthy of a better cause. The death of La Voisin was still more frightful. After having undergone the question, both ordinary and extraordinary, by which every bone in her body was broken, and all trace of her humanity almost destroyed, she continued to utter oaths and blasphemies, at which even the soldiers by whom she was guarded were appalled, and as the flames reached her, poured forth her last breath in a hideous oath.

At this period a death took place which must not be left unnoticed. It was that of the Cardinal de Retz, who, during his sojourn at Rome, had contested the popedom with

* Francis Henry de Montmorency Bouteville, duke, peer, and marshal of France.

† Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

Innocent XI., and even obtained eight votes, but who had returned to Paris three years previously, only to die amid the scenes in which he had once acted so prominent a part, and to take his final leave of a world by which for the last twenty years he had been almost forgotten.

Turn we now to the immediate family of Louis XIV. The unfortunate queen, after becoming the mother of six children, had at this period only one surviving son, the dauphin, whose governor was the Duke de Montausier, and his preceptor Bossuet. His character was one of those singular anomalies which almost defy analysis. Incapable of either affection or hostility, he was the slave of every impulse. The example of his guardians had inspired him with a few amiable qualities, but his natural vices defied eradication, and were only subdued by discipline, but never corrected. His constitutional tendencies were all evil; his greatest pleasure consisted in annoying those about him; but occasionally, as the precepts of his instructors flashed upon his memory, he did not hesitate to compensate the person he had offended. Those who were the most conversant with his humor could never guess the temper of his mind; he laughed the loudest, and affected the greatest amiability when he was the most exasperated; and scowled defiance when he was perfectly unruffled. He could not be esteemed intellectual, although he occasionally exhibited a quickness of perception which astonished those about him. His only talent, if it deserve so to be designated, was a keen sense of the ridiculous, not only as regarded others, but even himself. Nothing escaped him that could be tortured into sarcasm, although no one could have guessed, from his abstracted and careless demeanor, that he was conscious of any thing that was taking place in his presence.

His greatest terror existed in the idea he must one day become the sovereign of France; not because such a circumstance would necessarily involve the death of his father,

but simply that he shrunk from the exertion which the responsibility must entail upon him. His indolence was so extreme that he constantly neglected the most important duties; and his favorite amusement was lying stretched upon a sofa, tapping the points of his shoes with a cane. Never, to the very day of his death, had even his most intimate associates heard him express an opinion upon any subject relating either to art, literature, or politics. Nevertheless, when he did exert himself to speak, and that he was in the humor to do so, his expressions were well chosen, and even elegant; while, on other occasions, he talked like an idiot. One day he uttered sentiments which gave earnest of the most tolerant and liberal ideas, and the next he declaimed like a tyrant who had no sympathies with his fellow-men. He made no favorites, but was not the less jealous of the attachment of every one by whom he was approached. His greatest ambition was to conceal his real feelings, and nothing annoyed him so much as to discover that they had been understood. Humble and timid before his father, he never ventured to assert his privileges as dauphin of France; the only person toward whom he ever betrayed a dislike being Madame de Maintenon, while even this aversion was accompanied by the most perfect submission to her will.*

In person he was somewhat above the middle height, stout, without being heavy; with a lofty carriage, and without any thing repulsive in his manner. His face would have been pleasing, had not the Prince de Conti, when wrestling with him in their boyhood, given him a fall which broke his nose. His hair was a fine shade of auburn, his face full and healthy, but totally without expression, his limbs finely formed, and his feet small and slender.

At the close of the year 1679, Louis XIV. demanded for him, as we have elsewhere stated, the hand of the Princess Mary Anne of Bavaria; and as the monarch had always

* Louis XIV., sa Cour, et le Regent.

asserted that personal beauty was essential to the wife of every prince likely to be called to a throne, great curiosity was excited by the announcement of the negotiation. It was fated, however, to signal disappointment by the declaration of Louis, that his selection of the Bavarian princess had been entirely dictated by policy—that she was not handsome, but that he trusted *MONSEIGNEUR* would be able to live happily with her. The miniature which had been forwarded to France, although evidently flattered, presented a plain, and even a repelling countenance, with deeply sunk eyes, alike cold and stern in their expression; but the dauphin was altogether careless upon the subject; and, after having inquired if his intended bride were free from any deformity, and receiving an assurance to that effect, he asked no further questions.

The appointment of Madame de Maintenon to the distinguished post of mistress of the robes to the dauphiness greatly excited the wrath of Madame de Montespan, who witnessed with ill-concealed uneasiness the rapid progress which “the widow Scarron” was making in the favor of the king; and she even ventured, as Louis recapitulated to her the members of the new household, to indulge in an impatient gesture, which did not escape his notice. He immediately demanded to whom, among those he had named, she had taken exception, remarking that they were all persons for whom he cherished a sincere esteem, and that he could only pity her if she did not entertain the same feeling toward each and all of them. Carried away by her jealousy, she nevertheless replied, with considerable asperity, that she could not approve the selection of Madame de Maintenon, as it was impossible for the courts, either of France or Bavaria, to have forgotten the ridiculous name of the poet Scarron.

The time was, however, past when Louis could be turned from his purpose by a sarcasm from her lips; and he consequently observed, with considerable coldness, that it

belooved every one to forget what he had himself forgotten, and that he was astonished she should take pleasure in overlooking circumstances which his gratitude had fixed unalterably in his own memory. Undaunted even by this reproof, the haughty marquise retorted by declaring that she was aware, and ready to acknowledge, that Madame de Maintenon had nursed her children with care and fidelity; but that as she had received a marquise as her recompense, and moreover a superb hôtel at Versailles, she had no right either to complain, or to expect further benefits.

More and more irritated by the tone of dictation assumed by his mistress, the king remarked severely that the estate of Maintenon barely compensated her care of the sickly childhood of the two Counts de Vexin, and that Madame de Montespan would do well to remember that she had also educated four others, for which she still remained unrecompensed.

At this rejoinder the patience of his interlocutor fairly gave way. "Give her, then," she exclaimed angrily, "another estate and a sum of money; for it is by money that services like hers should be requited; but why should you invest her with an important office, and retain her at court? She dotes, as she declares, upon her old castle of Maintenon; do not deprive her of such an enjoyment. If you make her mistress of the robes, you will thwart her inclinations."

"In that case," said the king, with an ambiguous smile as he rose to leave the apartment; "she will accept the appointment *to oblige me*."

Baffled, but not discouraged, Madame de Montespan next endeavored to persuade the stately gouvernante to decline the honor which had been proposed to her, and by which the independence for which she had so long sighed would once more be utterly sacrificed; but the wily favorite was destined to be as unsuccessful in the one attempt

as in the other ; in vain did she represent the incompatibility of sincere religion with the etiquette, the ceremonials, and the restraint of a court ; Madame de Maintenon meekly replied that true piety depended upon the heart alone, and was independent of external circumstances ; that her first duty was obedience to the king her master ; and that should it be indeed the pleasure of His Majesty to elevate her to so responsible an office as that named by the marquise, she did not consider that she possessed any right to combat his will.

In short, it was evident that the offer had been already made and accepted ; and Madame de Montespan, fearful of still further irritating the monarch, was compelled to conceal her annoyance as she best could, and to terminate the visit without having accomplished her object.*

This was the period of struggle between the two former friends ; but Madame de Montespan, although she resolved not to yield, could no longer conceal from herself that she was rapidly losing ground in the affections of her royal admirer ; for not only had she to contend against the sound judgment and high reputation of Madame de Maintenon herself, but also against a preference less worthy than that which this lady had secured by the propriety of her conduct and the value of her services. The haughty favorite had already reached her thirty-ninth year, and although still handsome and fascinating, she had lost the charm of youth, and it was evident that Louis still clung to her rather as the mother of his children than from any more tender feeling ; while the court was radiant with grace and beauty, and all eyes, as he was well aware, were turned toward himself.

One of the most earnest candidates for his favor was the Princess de Rohan-Soubise, who was, indeed, so certain of her power that she even ventured, in her turn, to assert her claim in defiance of that of Madame de Maintenon, and to apply to the king for the appointment which he had re-

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

solved to bestow upon the latter ; but her letter remained unanswered, and, in the height of her indignation, she made so indecent a display of her claims upon the monarch that she received an order to leave the court.

Louis XIV. had now attained his forty-second year, and found himself even less disposed than he had previously been to remain subject to the caprices of a tyrannical and exacting woman. More than once he made an effort to separate himself entirely from Madame de Montespan, and to induce her to retire to one of her estates ; but the force of habit was still too strong upon him, and her reproaches and remonstrances only tended to lead him into new errors, even while the violence of her temper added to his actual estrangement.

The births of her last two children had, greatly to her annoyance, been as sedulously concealed from the knowledge of the public as those of the Count de Vexin and the Duke du Maine, and the king had to support all the effects of her irritation. Their quarrels became frequent ; and, in the height of passion, the marchioness spared neither sarcasm nor insult. On these occasions Louis found a refuge and a consolation in the friendship of Madame de Maintenon, who, even while she soothed his wounded vanity, never failed to remind him that these mortifications had been the result of his own excesses ; and thus he became gradually accustomed to hear his conduct canvassed and condemned without resentment. The esteem which he had learned to feel for his new monitor gave additional weight to her respectful but firm admonitions ; while the playfulness of her conversation, at other moments, rendered her society a constant resource.

The contrast between the former friends was, consequently, striking, and its effect dangerously inimical to Madame de Montespan, who became conscious that each day increased the influence of her adversary, while her own star paled in the same proportion. The king began to ob-

serve with less attention the courtesies of society when he compelled himself to visit her; he exaggerated his politeness and diminished his respect. As he always remained a given time in her apartments, the last ten minutes were invariably spent in watching the progress of the time-piece upon her mantel; and he took occasion, at no very rare intervals, to dilate upon her defects, and to criticise her temper.*

Thus were things situated when the appointments to the household of the dauphiness having been publicly announced, the most magnificent preparations were put in progress for her reception, and among these none were more splendid than the costumes of Madame de Maintenon, which were covered with jewels and embroidery in gold and silver. There can be no doubt that this profusion was the will of the king rather than that of the *Dame d'Atours* herself, who had retained until that period the primitive attire in which she first appeared at court—a pertinacity which was, however, doubtlessly to be attributed as much to a refined coquetry as to a natural preference for so lugubrious an attire; for Madame de Maintenon, although in her forty-fifth year, had lost no charm save that of youth, which had been replaced by a stately grace and a dignified self-possession that rendered it almost impossible to regret the lighter and less finished attractions of buoyancy and display. Her hands and arms were singularly beautiful, her eyes had lost nothing of their fire, her voice was harmoniously modulated, and there was, in the whole of her demeanor, an unstudied ease which was as far removed from presumption as from servility.

Such was Madame de Maintenon at the period of the dauphin's marriage, and even her jealous rival was betrayed into the declaration that she "pitied the young foreigner, who could not fail to be eclipsed, in every way, by her mistress of the robes."

* Louis XIV., sa Cour, et le Regent.

At the commencement of the year 1680 Madame de Maintenon and M. Bossuet proceeded to Schelestadt to receive the future dauphiness, whose advent in France was rendered more than usually embarrassing by a circumstance which had been utterly overlooked. She had scarcely welcomed her new courtiers, and taken an hour's repose, when it became necessary for her to confess herself, before she could proceed to the ceremony of marriage by proxy; and as she was not accompanied by a domestic chaplain, and that she would not use any language but her own, the difficulty appeared for a time to be insurmountable.

Madame de Maintenon was in despair, and appealed to Bossuet, to learn whether he, who had educated the dauphin, and had written a *Discourse on Universal History*, did not understand sufficient German to relieve the princess from her dilemma; but the Bishop of Meaux excused himself from the trial, alledging that although he was familiar with Greek, Syriac, and Hebrew, he was utterly ignorant of German. A strict inquiry was then made throughout the neighborhood, and at length it was ascertained that a priest speaking the required language had been found. The punctilious mistress of the robes raised her eyes in thankfulness, and desired that he should be immediately introduced; but she almost started from her chair with horror as he entered the apartment. He was gayly attired in a colored vest, lined with silk, a flowing wig, and wore spurs upon his boots. The indignation of Madame de Maintenon was extreme, and she reproached him with considerable vehemence; but Bossuet, who was fortunately a greater casuist than herself, reminded her that, in cases of urgency, form must be disregarded; and having compelled the amphibious personage to remove his spurs, he thrust him into the confessional, and drew the curtain close; after which the Bavarian princess was apprised of his arrival, and, ignorant of the masquerade by

which her *Dame d'Atours* had just been so deeply moved, confessed the sins of her past life to the species of military-priest who had obeyed the summons of the bishop.*

The king and MONSEIGNEUR advanced as far as Vitry-le-Français to receive the dauphiness in their turn, whence they conducted her to Châlons, where the queen was awaiting her arrival. She was not, as the monarch had already declared, a beautiful woman; but she possessed a style of face which made a more favorable impression after the first interview. "She had something," as Madame de Sévigné informs us, "about her nose and forehead which was too long, and which at first produced an unpleasant effect; but she was so graceful, her hands and arms so beautiful, so fine a figure, so admirable a carriage, such handsome teeth, such magnificent hair, and so much amiability of manner, that she was courteous without being insipid, familiar without losing her dignity, and had so charming a deportment that she might be pardoned for not pleasing at first sight;" while her ready wit and perfect self-possession may be estimated by her reply to the king, when during their conversation he remarked to her that she had not mentioned the fact that her sister, the Princess of Tuscany, was extremely beautiful. "How can I remember, sire, that my sister monopolized all the beauty of the family, when I, on my part, have monopolized all its happiness."

The Cardinal de Bouillon performed the marriage ceremony in the cathedral of Châlons, and the festivals and rejoicings were continued for eight days. In order to reconcile Madame de Montespan to the new honors of her rival, Louis XIV., who was well acquainted with her judgment in all matters connected with the toilet, and especially with her knowledge of jewels, intrusted her with the preparation of the nuptial casket, which was so magnificent that it excited the jealousy of the queen, who complained

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

loudly that the same outlay had not been made in her case, although her family was far superior to that of the dauphiness.

Agreeably surprised by the appearance and deportment of the Bavarian princess, the king devoted himself almost entirely during the first few months to render the court of France agreeable to her; but although she received these attentions with complaisance and gratitude, and appeared totally unembarrassed by the etiquet and magnificence of her new condition, it soon became evident that the perpetual whirl in which she was involved was repugnant to her tastes; and whenever she could escape for a few hours, she invariably spent them alone in her chamber, where she was surrounded by musical instruments and books in the several languages with which she was familiar;* and she did this with the less reluctance, as it was soon whispered to her that all these unwonted attentions on the part of the monarch were due to his desire of thus procuring an available method of enjoying the society of her mistress of the robes.

This intimation, in which she felt her own dignity to be involved, rendered her still less scrupulous than she might otherwise have been; and she accordingly withdrew herself gradually from the dissipations of the court, and passed the principal portion of her time in retirement. In vain did the king endeavor to render her immediate circle more cheerful, by increasing the number of her maids of honor; nothing could induce her to forego her studious and solitary habits, and the rather that Madame de Montespan had imbued her with a perfect dislike and suspicion of her rival, whose remonstrances were, consequently, treated with indifference. Ultimately, hopeless of inducing any change, either by indulgence or expostulation, Louis abandoned her to her primitive tastes, carefully observing the rules of the most punctilious politeness, but avoiding all interference with her domestic arrangements.

* Lettres de Madame de Sévigné.

There can exist no doubt, however, that the resolute retirement of the dauphiness might be attributed, in no slight degree, to the mortification which she experienced on discovering that her husband, although heir to the throne, was a mere cipher, without influence or authority, shrinking, whenever it was possible, from all contact with the monarch, utterly devoid of moral courage, and wasting his life in mindless and undignified frivolities. Her pride was hurt, and her affections wounded; she felt her position to be a false one, and had too much self-respect to accept the mere externals of her rank without their relative privileges; and thus her sole endeavor was to make the present suffice to her happiness, without any recurrence to the hopes of the past, or any anticipations on the events of the future.

Next to the dauphin followed the two legitimated children of Madame de la Vallière—Mademoiselle de Blois and the Count de Vermandois. Mademoiselle de Blois was one of the most beautiful and the most interesting women imaginable. Her figure was tall, slight, and graceful; she was highly accomplished, and the watchful care of her mother had secured to her not only an admirable education, but also a sense of self-respect and strict propriety which enhanced all her other attractions. The expression of her countenance was serious, like that of the king, to whom she bore a striking likeness: she had the same large brown eyes and Austrian lip—the same elegantly-modeled hand and slender foot, and even the same quality of voice. Several foreign princes had asked her hand; but, on every occasion, Louis XIV. had declined the proposition, declaring that the presence of his daughter was as necessary to him as light and life, and that he could not consent to her leaving France.* In 1680 the king accordingly married Mademoiselle de Blois to the Prince de Conti, the nephew of the great Condé; and we can not do better than tran-

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

scribe the brief but lively description given by Madame de Sévigné of some circumstances incident on the event.

“I as yet know nothing,” she writes to her daughter, Madame de Grignan, “of what passed at the wedding; I am ignorant whether it were by sunlight or by moonlight that it took place; but I will tell you the greatest and the most extraordinary piece of news which you can learn, and that is, that the prince was shaved yesterday—actually shaved: this is not an illusion—not a thing said at random—it is a truth; all the court were witnesses to it, and Madame de Langeron, seizing her opportunity when he had his paws across like a lion, made him put on a vest with diamond button-holes; while a valet-de-chambre, also presuming upon his patience, curled his hair, powdered him, and at length compelled him to be the handsomest man at court, with a head which threw all the wigs into the shade. That was the prodigy of the marriage. The costume of the Prince de Conti was inestimable; it was an embroidery, in large diamonds, which defined all the pattern of a black velvet plush raised upon a ground of straw-color. The duke, the duchess, and Mademoiselle de Bourbon had each three dresses, trimmed with different jewels, for the three days. But I was forgetting the principal point: the sword of the prince was incrustated with diamonds.

La famosa spada

All' cui valore ogni vittoria è certa.

The lining of the mantel of the Prince de Conti was of black satin, studded with brilliants like minever. The princess was romantically beautiful, superbly dressed, and happy.”

The motive which induced the House of Condé to desire this alliance was, according to Madame de Caylus, sufficiently expressed in the playful congratulation of the Count de Grammont to the bridegroom. “Sir,” he said, with a smile, “I am delighted at your marriage; take my

advice: humor your father-in-law, do not cavil with him, nor take offense at small matters. Live on good terms with your new family, and take my word for it that you will find the connection a very good one."

The king caused the same ceremonies to be observed at the marriage of Mademoiselle de Blois as though he had been giving a daughter of the queen to the King of Spain. Her dower was the usual one with crowned heads, that is to say, it amounted to the sum of five hundred thousand golden crowns; which were, moreover, paid, and not a mere ornament to the contract.*

The Count de Vermandois, to whose death we have already alluded, abandoned, after the retreat of his mother, to a governor who was inadequate to the duties of his office, became haughty, presumptuous, and dissipated to so fearful a degree that the king banished him from his presence. His repentance had, however, partially restored him to favor, when sober history affirms that a sudden illness carried him off while he was serving with the army at the siege of Courtrai, in 1683. Other rumors were, nevertheless, afloat at the time; and it was asserted that having on one occasion had a dispute with the dauphin, which terminated in his striking that prince, the council assembled on the subject unanimously condemned him to death, when Louis XIV., whose paternal affection could not countenance so extreme a measure, commuted the sentence to imprisonment for life, and that, in consequence, an opportunity was taken at Courtrai of spreading the report that he was suffering under a contagious disease, which enabled those intrusted with his arrest to forbid all ingress to his tent, and, after having announced his death, to convey him privately to the island of St. Marguerite, whence he was afterward transferred to the Bastille, where he remained until 1703, under the name of the Iron Mask.†

* Lettres de Madame de Sévigné.

† Louis XIV., sa Cour, et le Regent.

Madame de Montespan had become the mother of eight children. The elder, who was the first Count de Vexin, died in his eleventh year, from over application to his studies. Madame de Maintenon had never loved him, and he amply repaid her dislike, although he never ventured, until he was on his death-bed to express his aversion; but, when conscious that he was beyond her power, he reproached her bitterly with her harshness and her ingratitude to his mother. Two hours afterward he was a corpse.

The Duke du Maine, the especial favorite not only of the king, but, what was far more fortunate for him, of Madame de Maintenon also, was, even at the early age of thirteen, an accomplished courtier. He was slightly lame, from a fall during his infancy—a circumstance which was to him an endless source of mortification. Nothing could exceed the inherent subtilty of M. du Maine; but his intellect, no less than the graces of his person, enabled him to win the confidence of all around him. Affecting the most artless, frank, and natural demeanor, he possessed, to an extreme degree, the art of insinuating himself into the favor of those from whom he considered himself likely to obtain the greatest services, and while assuming an appearance of piety and indifference to worldly advantages, he nursed the most ambitious hopes and the most extravagant designs, which his well-acted timidity enabled him effectually to conceal. Innately malignant, envious, and false, he was profoundly deceitful, haughty, and unforgiving; while he possessed a ready wit and a fascination of manner which disarmed caution and captivated the affections of all whom he was anxious to conciliate. Of a cowardice which exceeded belief, he never hesitated to sacrifice, when he could do so without danger of detection, every thing and every body, in order to ward off from himself the effects of his own pusillanimity. His one affection was for Madame de Maintenon, to whom he was devoted; but he had little regard for his mother, looking

upon himself as wronged by the stain that rested on his birth, and which the legal legitimization bestowed upon her children by the king, could never, as he was conscious, effectually efface.

Mademoiselle de Nantes, the next in succession, although not precisely a pretty woman, was full of grace and buoyancy, and inherited much of her mother's wit and sarcasm, although she never condescended to wield those formidable weapons with the same coarseness. Slightly lame, like her brother, she nevertheless danced admirably, and managed each of her movements with so much skill, that in her case it almost appeared to be a new charm. Winning in her manners, always ready to sympathize in the amusements of her circle, and to banish all constraint wherever she appeared; totally regardless of the interests of others—a fact which was well known; but so fascinating that even those who had the greatest cause for mistrust and dislike were compelled constantly to bear their wrongs in mind lest they should be betrayed into placing themselves again in her power: she was at once a false friend and a dangerous enemy. Lively and prepossessing; gifted with a presence of mind which no circumstance could weaken; fond of frivolous amusements; proud, and implacable in her resentments; cruel in her reprisals, and regardless of the feelings of those for whom she professed the greatest regard; idolized by the king, and worshiped by the court, Mademoiselle de Nantes was alike feared and courted.

Of the remaining children of Madame de Montespan little need be said at this period. Mademoiselle de Tours died in 1681, and the Count de Toulouse and the second Mademoiselle de Blois were both still in their infancy.

Their mother continued, despite the perpetual mortifications to which she was subjected by the increasing favor of her rival, to make herself conspicuous at court by the

splendor of her appearance and the exuberance of a wit more brilliant than refined; but she was compelled to acknowledge to herself that both the one and the other had ceased to produce any effect upon the affections of the king, while she was, moreover, becoming every day more conscious that Madame de Maintenon, although five years her senior, had, from her different style of life, retained a purity of complexion and an elasticity of form which were rapidly failing in herself. The crisis was critical, but the marchioness was a person of expedients; and after having maturely reflected upon her position, and the slight probability which there existed that she should ever again be enabled to monopolize in her own person the affections of the monarch, she resolved, mortifying as was the expedient, to weaken his growing regard for Madame de Maintenon, by contrasting her matronly attractions with those of some young beauty whose charms the susceptible monarch should be unable to withstand. The personage of her drama was soon found, and this point accomplished, she lost no time in expatiating in the presence of the king and Madame de Maintenon upon the beauty of her young *protégée*. The curiosity of Louis was piqued, and he inquired the name and family of this unknown marvel.

“Her name is Fontanges,” said the marchioness, “and she comes from Provence, sire, like other beautiful objects, such as silk, gold, and silver. Her parents are anxious to place her among the maids of honor of the queen; and if loveliness be a claim to the office, I will be her pledge that in that respect she is unrivaled.”

Madame de Maintenon listened with calm and unmoved politeness, but without the slightest demonstration of either interest or annoyance; while the king remarked, with some bitterness, that the young person in question must indeed be something extraordinary, since even Madame de Montespan could praise her with so much

vivacity, and they should no doubt be ere long enabled to form their own judgment of her taste.

The wily marchioness had chosen her time admirably. The king was becoming weary of the familiar faces by which he was surrounded, and annoyed by the disappointment to which he had been subjected by the dauphiness. Incapable of self-amusement, and not yet sufficiently imbued with the sober tastes with which Madame de Maintenon was endeavoring to inspire him, he found his time hang heavily on his hands, and was glad of any opportunity to escape from himself. The words of Madame de Montespan, therefore, were not forgotten; and two days subsequently the destined victim accompanied her protectress to court, where her extraordinary beauty even surpassed the expectations of the monarch. It was, however, a beauty merely physical, and without one ray of intellect. Her features were as regular as those of a statue; her complexion had all the glow of her eighteen summers; her figure was at once full and flexible; and her only defect was the color of her hair, which was of too warm an auburn.

Mary Angelica d'Escorailles de Roussille, who in a month or two after her appearance at court was created Duchess de Fontanges, was so beautiful in her infancy, that it is gravely asserted as a fact, that her depraved and shameless family destined her from her very cradle to the career of unblushing profligacy, which death alone rendered less disgraceful in its duration than they had sought to make it. Her education had consequently all tended to that one point, and she was utterly devoid alike of principle and modesty. Until her eighteenth year no opportunity had occurred for bringing her under the notice of the king; when, as we have already stated, the unlooked-for agency of Madame de Montespan at once accomplished the desired object.

The modest charms of La Vallière had captured the

affections of the monarch when his passion was still the timid and self-abnegating principle of youth ; the haughty beauty of Madame de Montespan had flattered the foible of his riper years, when his taste for magnificence and display had become more powerful than the mere indulgence of personal attachment. But he had now attained his forty-second year, a period at which the sentiment of the lover was absorbed in the selfishness of the voluptuary ; and this was the only point of view in which the peculiar beauty of Mademoiselle de Fontanges was calculated to attract. Frivolous, fantastical, and vain, she was incapable of deep or earnest affection ; but none understood better than herself the value of a glance or a gesture.

The king was instantly struck by her extraordinary loveliness, nor did he restrain his admiration even in the presence of the queen. Seizing his opportunity of approaching Madame de Montespan, who lost no time in presenting her young friend to His Majesty, he honored her with a most gracious welcome, and conversed with her for several minutes ; during which time, although she had not uttered one word which was worthy to be remembered, she had smiled so sweetly, her large and languishing blue eyes had been so eloquent, the golden veil cast by her redundant hair over her brow and shoulders had so marvelously enhanced their dazzling fairness and their faultless outline, that the triumph of the marchioness was complete.

During the last six or seven years, the king, as if feeling that his age no longer authorized the frivolities in which at an earlier period he indulged so lavishly, had modified his dress ; the Spanish and chivalric costume so well suited to his lofty demeanor had been gradually abandoned ; the floating plumes no longer waved above his forehead ; the scarf which he formerly wore diagonally across his breast was laid aside ; and the gold and silver embroidery had disappeared from his boots.

Suddenly, however, all these luxuries were resumed.

The richest materials were employed upon his dress; the feathers once more decorated his beaver, and the most costly jewels blazed upon his person.

Nor was this all; for the monotony which had been for some time gradually enveloping the court was swept away like a morning mist before the sunrise of Mademoiselle de Fontanges. All the amusements of the royal circle in its most palmy days were once more in full action. Allegorical representations, concerts on the water, ballets danced to the melodies of Lully, and comedies sparkling with the humor of Molière, succeeded each other with dazzling rapidity. The saloons of the new favorite were hung with tapestry representing the victories of her royal adorer; money and jewels rained upon her footsteps, which she squandered as recklessly as they were bestowed; and Madame de Montespan, although bewildered by the result of her own intrigue, bore all with patience until the petted beauty insisted upon having her charms enhanced by the blazon of a duchess, a concession which was made within the week.

For twelve long years the marchioness had been reclaiming the same honor, pleading at one time the example of La Vallière, and at another the respect due to her children, declared princes of the blood; but although the king had humored her by affecting an assent, and even taking sundry steps toward such an object, which he was well aware would be thwarted by the marquis, he had never seriously entertained an intention of gratifying her wish. Whatever were his motives, it is certain that his will must have sufficed, and that it was never exerted.

The mortification of Madame de Montespan was accordingly severe; but she resolved to confine it to her own bosom, and not to increase the triumph of the new duchess by the spectacle of her annoyance, or to suffer it to be supposed that she could condescend to feel any jealousy of the new plaything with which she had herself provided the monarch.

Mademoiselle de Fontanges was no sooner authorized to place a ducal coronet above the lozenge of her shield, and to drape it with a peer's mantle, than her presumption exceeded all bounds. On one occasion she passed before the queen, not only without a courtesy, but even without affecting to see her. The brow of the Infanta flushed for an instant, but she silenced the murmurs of those about her by the remark that it was evident the young lady was losing her senses, or had never possessed them; and, meanwhile, Louis XIV., with whom the strict observances of etiquette had previously been as a principle of his existence, looked upon all the heartless levity of the unhappy girl without making one effort to restrain it; and, save the mere routine of public business, every thing was neglected in order that he might conduce to her amusement.

The splendid equipage of the *parvenue* duchess, with its eight white horses, was constantly to be seen in the *cours*, or the principal streets of the city, with the fair face of its beautiful owner inundated by the bright profusion of her golden hair and her floating feathers, radiant with pride and happiness, at the window, watching with delight the effect produced by her splendor.

Still, for a time, Madame de Montespan indulged a hope that the king would weary of the exacting inanity of his new idol; but it was in vain that she watched for any symptom of a change; Louis was thralled; and after wasting her sarcasms for a time, both upon the infatuated monarch and his childish mistress, she at length poured them forth, not only unsparingly, but even indecently, upon the Père la Chaise, his confessor; for whom, while he had tolerated her own excesses, she had affected both veneration and attachment.

Père la Chaise was a nephew of the famous Père Cotton, who had been confessor to Henry IV., and like him was a Jesuit. He had originally been rector of Grenoble and Lyons, and subsequently provincial of his

province.* He was of noble birth, and his family was tolerably ancient and well connected; while his father would have been wealthy, had he not been called upon to provide for twelve children. One of his brothers, who was deeply learned in the lore of dogs, horses, and field sports, was for a considerable time the equery of the Archbishop of Lyons, the brother and uncle of the Marshals de Villeroy, and afterward Captain of the Gate, a post in which he was succeeded by his son.

The two brothers were residing at Lyons, the one as provincial, and the other as equery, when Père la Chaise was summoned to Paris, in 1675, to undertake the charge of the king's conscience, as the successor of Père Ferriez. He was, according to the testimony of St. Simon, a man of confined intellect, but of excellent disposition—upright, honest, well-judging, and gentle, and a determined enemy to all violent measures—alike honorable, just, and humane, and always affable, modest, and respectful to his superiors, as well as grateful for the services which he received from others.

With these qualities, which were, moreover, considerably counterbalanced, as regarded the duties of his vocation, by a want of firmness and moral courage, the peace-loving confessor had won distinguished favor in the eyes of Madame de Montespan while he tolerated her own intimacy with the monarch; but she no sooner perceived that he was equally pliable in the case of Mademoiselle de Fontanges than she gave free vent to her malice in a variety of witticisms too gross for repetition, and so outraged the new-made duchess, by indulging in them in her presence, that a disgraceful quarrel ensued between the two

* "Provincial" signified the superior of any religious order throughout a province, to whom the heads of the different monasteries within his jurisdiction were subject. The authority of the provincial was differently modified by the particular clauses contained in the rules and statutes of each individual order.

rivals, and Louis found himself compelled to entreat the intervention of Madame de Maintenon, who had remained perfectly passive throughout the whole intrigue.

To accomplish this end, the latter did not venture to address herself to the marchioness, for she felt the utter futility of any attempt at conciliation in that quarter; but trusting to the youth of Mademoiselle Fontanges, and her comparatively short career of crime, she endeavored to make her sensible of the indecency of compromising the monarch by undignified and unwomanly brawls, in which his name was introduced in a manner unsuited alike to his exalted station and to the respect which was due to his feelings. She could, however, make no impression upon the childish and petted favorite, who affected the utmost contempt for the discarded mistress, and overwhelmed her with ridicule; and who, after having vented her passion in the most puerile invectives, nevertheless saw fit to consider herself insulted, and to appeal to the king for justice in so demonstrative a manner that Madame de Maintenon resolved, despite the ill success of her first attempt, to make one more effort to restore harmony. She had already seen enough of the virulence and egotism of Mademoiselle de Fontanges to comprehend that she must forbear all allusion to the marchioness, and, accordingly, she took higher ground, and endeavored to set before her in its true light the enormity of the life which she was leading. More and more incensed, the vain and heartless beauty received her counsels with bitter derision and passionate insult, and attributed every annoyance to which she was, as she declared, perpetually subjected, to the jealous envy of those with whose ambitious views she had interfered; more than hinting that Madame de Maintenon herself was among the number. She was, however, answered only by a placid smile; and instructed to remember that those who sought to share her triumphs and her splendor, must be content at the same time to partake her sin, which was a

price too heavy even for the smiles of a monarch—a fact which she appeared herself to have forgotten.

In vain did the flushed and furious beauty plead the example of others higher born and more noble than herself; the calm and unmoved mistress instantly availed herself of this hollow argument to bid her, in her turn, set an example which the noblest and the best born might be proud to follow.

“And how can I do this?” was the sullen inquiry.

“By renouncing the society of the king,” firmly replied her visitor. “Either you love him, or you love him not. If you love him, you should make an effort to save both his honor and your own. If you do not love him, it will cost you no effort to withdraw from the court; while in either case you will act wisely and nobly.”

“Would not any one believe who heard you,” exclaimed Mademoiselle de Fontanges passionately, “that it was as easy to leave a king as to throw off a glove?” and this was the only rejoinder that she vouchsafed. It is consequently needless to do more than remark that the mission of Madame de Maintenon signally failed; for the expression which had escaped the lips of the young duchess sufficed to convince her that all further interference would be useless. It was the monarch whom the weak beauty loved in Louis de Bourbon, not the man. The monarch—whom her vanity translated into gauds and glitter, luxury and ostentation, brocades and jewels. But, as we have before remarked, Louis was thrall'd, and the reign of Mademoiselle de Fontanges was an endless succession of caprices, exactions, demands, and pretensions—some so exorbitant, and others so puerile, that the unfortunate sovereign had continually cause to repent the weakness which had placed him in the power of a child.*

* Mémoires de Madame de Maintenon, par M. de la Beaumelle. Laurence Angleviel de la Beaumelle was born in the diocese of Alais

“You must imagine her,” writes Madame de Sévigné, full of regretful memories of La Vallière, “precisely the reverse of the little violet which hid itself among the herbage, and which blushed alike to be a mistress, a mother, and a duchess.”

And in these few words she painted to perfection alike the one and the other. Gifted with an effrontery which was proof against every mortification, and affecting an ingenuousness which might have misled those who were unacquainted with her real character into a belief that she was unconscious of her fault, Mademoiselle de Fontanges was never happy save when the eyes of the whole court were upon her; and she no sooner discovered that, when wearied by her caprices, the king took refuge in the society and conversation of Madame de Maintenon, than her jealousy exceeded all bounds, and many a vow of vengeance did she utter, whose accomplishment she only deferred until the birth of the child which she was about to bring into the world.

But this child was not fated to exist. It survived only a few months, and even thus it was destined to outlive its young and lovely mother; for, in a few short weeks, the beauty which had been alike her glory and her bane, had faded, and, with his usual egotism, the passion of the king died with it. Nor did he make an effort to conceal the fact from his dying victim. His desertion, for ere long it became such, was more than she could support; and extreme in all things, she demanded permission to retire to the convent of Port Royal, which was at once conceded; but the exertion might have been spared, for her hours were already numbered, and ere long she became so

in the year 1727, and died in 1773. A learned scholar and an accomplished critic, he is nevertheless now principally known by his *Mémoires de Madame de Maintenon*, a work entitled *Mes Pensées*, and his diatribes against Voltaire, who, on his side, overwhelmed him with personalities and insult.

conscious of the fact, that she entreated, as a last favor, to see the king once more before she died. Louis XIV. refused. He had an antipathy to death-beds, and he was anxious to forget all subjects of self-reproach; but on this occasion his confessor ventured to expostulate, and at length the worldly monarch was induced to grant the request of the erring girl. He found her faded, withered, and ghastly—all unlike the radiant beauty whom for a few brief months he had worshiped, and, egotist as he was, he could not restrain his tears. Her glassy eyes never left his countenance; her clammy hand was fastened upon his own; her livid lips quivered in their last effort, as she besought him to pay her debts, and sometimes to remember her. Louis promised all she asked; and as she sunk back upon her pillow, she gasped out the declaration that she should die happy, as she saw that the king could weep for her.

In a few moments she was unconscious even of his tears.

The indecent exultation manifested by Madame de Montespan on this occasion severed the last link between herself and the monarch, and thenceforward her very name became odious to him. Such a death-bed—a death-bed without repentance, and almost without hope—made an impression even upon his stolid nature, which for a time nearly amounted to remorse; and he found his best feelings outraged by the heartless self-gratulation of the very woman by whose means he had been involved in so tragic a catastrophe. Nor was his aversion lessened by a report which reached his ears, and which is distinctly mentioned by the princess-palatine in her memoirs, that the unhappy young duchess died from poison, which she herself asserted to have been administered to her through the agency of Madame de Montespan. Madame de Caylus, however, denies this assertion; but be the fact as it may, it is at all events certain that she was soon

forgotten amid the new pleasures and new interests by which she was succeeded. The populace only regretted the brilliant spectacle of her gorgeous coach, with its eight cream-colored horses, for she had neither sympathized in their sorrows, nor relieved their necessities; while the courtiers merely remembered the profusion of her entertainments, and the splendor of her saloons, and looked forward with confidence to the reign of a new favorite, who might once more supply them with the same luxuries.



CHAPTER XV.

Influence of Madame de Maintenon—Père la Chaise—Birth of the Duke de Bourgoyne—A delicate Mission—Court Cabal—Madame de Montespan—Madame de Richelieu—Indignation of the King—Generosity of Madame de Maintenon—Effects of the Conspiracy—Forebodings of Madame de Montespan—A Provisional Retreat—The Convent of St. Joseph—The Projected Palace—Birth of the Duke d'Anjou—The Journey to Flanders—Mortification of Madame de Montespan—Progress of the Court—Journey to Alsace—Illness of the Queen—Death of the Queen—The Ring—Character of the Queen—Emotion of Louis XIV.—The Lying in State—The Funeral—Heartlessness of the Dauphin—Accident of the King—Mademoiselle at Choisy—The royal Visit—The Liveries—Mademoiselle and the Duke du Maine—The Mission of Madame de Maintenon—Donation of Mademoiselle to the Duke du Maine—Partial Liberation of Lauzun; his Return to Pignerol; his Concession and Liberation; his Discontent; his Pretensions—Coldness of the King toward his old Favorite—Ingratitude of Lauzun—Lauzun a Duke—Separation of Lauzun and Mademoiselle—Departure of Lauzun to England.

THESE expectations were, however, fated to disappointment, for the power of Madame de Maintenon over the king was that of a strong mind over a weak one; Louis XIV. was ill constituted to grapple with the difficulties constantly entailed upon him by his own vices and selfishness; and as he found not only comfort, but also support in the inflexible judgment and sober good sense of the mistress of the robes, he became daily more attached to her society; while she, on her part, found a powerful ally in Père la Chaise, who zealously aided her endeavors to rescue the monarch from a career of profligacy which sullied the glory of his reign, and set a dangerous and baneful example to his subjects. To effect this purpose they adopted at once the wisest and the most effective means, by reminding him that, although still in the full vigor of manhood, his youth was already spent, and that he had as yet attempted little toward his eternal salvation. Let the momentary grievance be what it might, their arguments and their consolations all tended to that one point; and the king listened the more readily as he was constitutionally devout, and had not altogether forgotten the entreaties and example of his mother.

While this revolution was taking place in the spirit of Louis XIV. the dauphiness gave birth to the Duke de Bourgoyne, an event which caused universal joy. "You will hear," says Madame de Sévigné, "of the lively demonstrations of the whole court, and with what eagerness this delight was exhibited to the king, the dauphin, and the queen; what shouts, what firing, what a pouring forth of wine, what a dance of two hundred Swiss guards around their barrels, what cries of *Vive le Roi*, what a ringing of all the bells in Paris, what an explosion of cannon, and what a succession of compliments and harangues, and then all will be told." Bussy-Rabutin, however, enlarges upon this description of the events of the day, by informing us in his memoirs that the king, in gratitude

to God, made a donation of a hundred thousand crowns for the liberation of imprisoned debtors, a hundred thousand francs to those of Paris, and the remaining two hundred thousand to those of the provinces; and that, even grave and majestic as he was in his deportment, he could scarcely contain his joy; but desiring his guard to disperse, permitted himself to be approached indiscriminately by all comers, to whom he gave his hand to kiss without distinction of ranks; while the Swiss guards, in their enthusiasm, fed their bonfire with every description of timber which fell under their hands, even to a pile of planks which had been prepared to floor the apartments, and the poles of the sedan-chair of the Duke d'Aumont; and, finally, having consumed all the wood within reach, gave a last glory to the flaming pile by the sacrifice of their straw palliasses.

Meanwhile, all the bells in Paris and Versailles rung out their endless peal of joy, and labor and sleep appeared alike to be forgotten. In every street and square groups were to be seen drinking, dancing, feasting, and singing; the king himself being their Amphitryon; while Lully, resolved to contribute his portion to the general festival, caused his *Perseus* to be played gratuitously; and on the day of its representation the audience entered the theater under a triumphal arch, which at night was brilliantly illuminated, and whence a rising sun, composed of a thousand jets of flame, slowly detached itself, and mounted into the horizon, while the two fountains at the base of the fiery crescent ran wine until midnight.

Bontems, the king's favorite attendant, contemplating the destruction which ensued at Versailles, from the encroachments of the populace, who had invaded every avenue to the palace, could at length no longer control his murmurs, and even ventured to point the attention of his royal master to the ruinous effects of the popular enthusiasm; but Louis XIV. was in no mood to speculate

upon its results, and answered buoyantly, "Let them enjoy themselves; we can easily renew the walls and floors, while the general joy of a people is of rare occurrence."

The one great drawback to the happiness, not only of the king himself, but also of the dauphin and dauphiness, was, however, the necessity under which they found themselves of listening to the harangues and addresses that poured in upon them on all sides, and by which they were overwhelmed for an entire week. "Heavens and earth!" was at last the exclamation of *Monseigneur* at the close of an oration delivered by the representative spokesman of one of the learned societies, which had been unusually lengthy and abstruse, "how low-spirited I should become if I were long compelled to amuse myself in this way."*

The dauphin had flattered himself that when this auspicious event took place, the princess, his wife, whose personal importance would be so greatly increased by the fact of her having given an heir to the crown, would consent to appear more frequently in public, and to render her individual court more attractive; but as she resolutely refused to emerge from her retirement, he at length became wearied by the monotony of his own palace, and sought elsewhere for the amusements which he had previously hoped to find at home.

The circle of the Princess de Conti was the only one which at that period retained a portion of the elegant license and sportive wit which had formerly characterized the society of Anne of Austria, and still later that of Louis XIV.; and it was, consequently, in her brilliant saloons that the prince took refuge from the monotony of his own deserted apartments.

At the period of Madame de Conti's marriage, the king had appointed as a sort of governess, rendered necessary by her extreme youth, a certain Madame de Bury, a

* Chroniques de l'Œil Bœuf.

woman of estimable character, fine temper, and perfect high breeding; and this lady no sooner found herself established in the household of the princess, than she summoned from Dauphiny her niece, Mademoiselle de Choin,* whom she placed about the person of her mistress, with the title of maid of honor.

“She was,” says Madame de Caylus, in one of her sprightly letters, “of an ugliness that was remarkable;” but she was also quick-witted and clever; and ere long the dauphin became so much impressed by her singular turn of mind and powers of amusement, that his preference was observed by the whole circle. Madame de Lillebonne and her two daughters, who, although of the powerful family of Lorraine, were so poor as to find it expedient to make friends by whom they could be maintained in a position suited to their birth, and who had long enjoyed the intimacy of the dauphin, were the first to perceive the influence of Mademoiselle de Choin, and to cultivate her friendship; while many of the nobility, who were aware of the facility with which the prince suffered himself to be governed by those toward whom he felt a predilection, followed their example; and thus a strong party was formed, which, however, failed to attract the attention of the court, in consequence of the discovery of a cabal, in which both the king himself and Madame de Maintenon were more immediately involved.

The united efforts of Madame de Maintenon and Père la Chaise to effect the great moral change in the habits and feelings of the monarch to which we have elsewhere alluded, had meanwhile been earnestly pursued; and their remonstrances were powerfully assisted by the fact that at this very period, while in a state of robust health, he was suddenly afflicted by a fistula, of so dangerous a character

* Maria Emily Joly de Choin was the descendant of a noble family of Bresse, but originally from Savoy.

that serious apprehensions were entertained by the faculty of its result.

We have already shown that the monarch had a morbid terror of death; and in this extremity, far from endeavoring to allay his fears, both his confessor and Madame de Maintenon rather strove to increase them, and to excite in his breast a horror of his past excesses. In this attempt they naturally turned his attention to the equivocal nature of his position with the Marquise de Montespan, representing the absolute necessity of its immediate and final termination; and as the period was past when the sacrifice would have been difficult, the king at once admitted the validity of their arguments, and entreated Madame de Maintenon to inform the former favorite of his firm determination never again to regard her in any other light than that of a friend and the mother of his children.

The commission was one of both delicacy and difficulty, and for a considerable time the prudent mistress of the robes respectfully declined to become the bearer of so serious and responsible a message; but as her reluctance only increased the pertinacity of the suffering monarch, she frankly declared that she could not undertake to make an announcement, which she feared that, once restored to health, the king would not have strength to ratify. This doubt aroused all the pride and self-dependence of the monarch, and assuring her that she did not appreciate his character, he converted his request into a command, when opposition was no longer possible.

The position of Madame de Maintenon in this conjuncture was rendered tenfold more invidious by the fact that a cabal had recently been formed against herself, headed by the Marquise de Montespan, who had secured the coöperation of M. de Louvois and Madame de Richelieu, and of which the aim was the disgrace and dismissal of the mistress of the robes from the court. Each was

prompted to the attempt by personal jealousy: the marquise was jealous of the king's preference; the minister, of her influence over the royal mind; and Madame de Richelieu of her obligation to one whom she had formerly befriended, when, as the poor and helpless widow Scarron, she had received her into her house, and afforded her both assistance and protection; forgetting at the same time, that to the gratitude of Madame de Maintenon she was at that moment indebted for her appointment of lady of honor to the dauphiness.

The part which the marchioness reserved to herself in this dishonorable drama was that of rendering Madame de Maintenon ridiculous in the eyes of the princess: an office in which she was admirably calculated to excel, and to which the antecedents of her rival's history unfortunately lent themselves. The vices of her father, the squalid poverty of her youth, her expulsion by the Ursuline nuns, her numerous lovers—who had, as her enemy asserted, been any thing but unsuccessful—and her marriage with a deformed cripple, were all detailed with a bitter but sprightly malice, which enlivened the solitude of the dauphiness; while her assumed ingratitude to Madame de Richelieu afforded an opportunity for high-spirited indignation and virtuous disdain. The province of Madame de Richelieu was less laborious; she had merely to confirm the accusations, and to vouch for the authenticity of the whole narrative, seasoning her comments by malicious insinuations of the delight exhibited by the king in the society of the victim, and his evident annoyance when he was deprived of it, Louvois, meanwhile, contenting himself by directing their machinations, and seizing every available opportunity of strengthening the impression produced upon the mind of the princess by the combined efforts of his associates. The natural result followed; and it ere long became perfectly evident to the conspirators that they had succeeded in inspiring

the dauphiness with a marked aversion to her mistress of the robes.

This result was, however, far from sufficient to satisfy their malice, and the same methods were consequently adopted to estrange the queen, in her turn, from Madame de Maintenon, but without effect. From the period at which Louis XIV. had attached himself to her society, and been swayed by her counsels, the single-hearted and devoted Maria Theresa had become conscious of a marked change in the manner of the king toward herself. She had no longer to encounter the cold and careless indifference which seemed to rebuke her affection; he no longer avoided her society; and even, at times, displayed toward her tenderness of manner, for which she thanked him with her tears. Thus the attempt to shake her confidence in, and respect for, the stately friend of the monarch proved a signal failure. "Why," she inquired with the frank honesty which formed so marked a feature of her character—"why should I suffer myself to be prejudiced against Madame de Maintenon? So far from having a right or a desire to injure her, I firmly believe that God has raised her up to restore to me the heart of which I had been robbed by the Marquise de Montespan; for never did the king display so much affection toward me as since she has been his friend." And then, as if apprehensive that this declaration would not suffice to convince the enemies of the persecuted mistress of the robes of the extent of her confidence and gratitude toward one to whom she felt herself to be so deeply indebted, she took an early opportunity of presenting to the gratified court-lady her portrait, enriched with diamonds: a present which excited the envy of Madame de Montespan, who, as a member of the queen's particular household, considered herself affronted by so invidious a preference.*

Meanwhile, carefully as the plot had been carried out,

* Mémoires de Madame de Caylus.

it nevertheless reached the ears of the king; and, at once indignant and weary of these perpetual intrigues, he insisted upon a full and complete explanation, by which Madame de Maintenon was thoroughly justified in the eyes of her royal mistress, but, nevertheless, without securing her confidence or favor, the impression produced upon her mind having been so strong as to render the prejudice which she had conceived against her too powerful to be overcome.

The first impulse of the king, when all the circumstances of the cabal became known to him, was to dismiss Madame de Richelieu; but she was spared this humiliation at the entreaty of Madame de Maintenon herself, who, when she was preparing to obey the royal command already quoted with regard to the Marquise de Montespan, was once more startled to hear Louis XIV. add to his former order his pleasure that she should, moreover, instruct the marchioness, in his name, to leave the court altogether.

Again did the persecuted mistress of the robes venture to expostulate and to entreat, but for a time the king was inflexible. He was anxious to free himself from these vexatious annoyances, and he saw no shorter and more effectual method of so doing than by enforcing the absence of the principal conspirator; nor was it until the perplexed and weeping Madame de Maintenon compelled him to understand the injury which must accrue to herself from such a measure, and the impropriety of her becoming in her own person the bearer of such a sentence, that he consented to limit his severity, and to satisfy himself by the enforcement of his original command.

Not venturing to hope for any further concession, Madame de Maintenon accordingly prepared to fulfill her ungracious mission; and whatever may have been her other faults, it is at least certain that on this occasion she acted with singular generosity; for, after having announced to

the discarded favorite the pleasure of the king, in order to spare her the bitterness of a public revelation of the total cessation of her influence over the mind of the estranged monarch, she entreated her, whenever she had a favor to request, to make herself the medium: an offer of which the mortified marchioness did not hesitate largely to avail herself, in order to preserve her apparent power over the king. Nor did Louvois escape the effects of his imprudence; for, although no immediate proofs of the royal displeasure were visited upon him, there can be little doubt that the antipathy of Madame de Maintenon toward this minister owed its commencement to the circumstances just detailed, as well as the coldness of Louis XIV., who thenceforth tolerated him only from a conviction that his services were necessary to the well-being of the kingdom.*

Bitterly as the mortification of Madame de Montespan could not fail to be felt, it was, nevertheless, not altogether unexpected. She had long been painfully conscious of the decrease of her influence; and with that spirit of self-preservation habitual to her, she had, even before the death of the Duchess de Fontanges, resolved to secure to herself a retreat in which she should continue to rule supreme, although in a more limited sphere. In order to effect this purpose in its fullest extent, she determined to construct and endow a convent—not indeed of the gigantic proportions and regal magnificence of those of Val-de-Grace or Fontevrault,† but suited to a small community, where the

* Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

† The Abbess of Fontevrault, whose community owed its origin to the Abbey of St. Benoit, founded by Robert d'Arbrissel in 1100, at Fontevrault on the Maine and Loire, and which had become the principal establishment of the order, held jurisdiction over all the convents of the nuns of St. Benoit. In her house all the princesses of the blood-royal of France were educated, and her position was one of great honor and importance. In 1817 a royal ordonnance appropriated this fine abbey as a place of confinement for culprits of both sexes, condemned to solitary imprisonment for more than twelve months, and for

sisterhood, depending entirely upon her own liberality for their support, would necessarily embrace all her interests, prejudices, and opinions.

The idea flattered her self-love; and she accordingly lost no time in authorizing her steward to select a spot favorable for her design, which he did in the faubourg St. Germain;* when, having satisfied herself of its perfect eligibility, the works were immediately commenced; and, by a singular coincidence, the first stone was laid at the very moment in which the Duchess de Fontanges ceased to exist.

The nature of the intended edifice was no sooner publicly ascertained than a rumor became current, that, in imitation of La Vallière, Madame de Montespan was about to take the veil: a report which she did not attempt to contradict, although she smiled at its absurdity. She contemplated a retreat, not a prison—a miniature kingdom, not a place of penance: and even while urging her architect to his greatest speed, and herself overlooking his progress, she resolved to convince the triflers who believed her capable of so inane an act of self-abnegation that she had far other views.

On the birth of the Duke du Maine, the king had presented her with a small but luxurious house in the rue St. André-des-Arcs;† but her ambition had long outgrown so circumscribed a dwelling, and she caused the famous Blondel‡ to design for her the plan of a superb hôtel in imitation of the Louvre, of which the probable cost was

females sentenced to hard labor. It is capable of accommodating 1200 men, and 500 women.

* What still remains of this building is now appropriated to the uses of the war office. † Still in existence, and known as No. 61.

‡ Francis Blondel, member of the Academy of Sciences, professor of mathematics at the College of France, adjutant-general, and counselor of state, was born at Ribemont, in Picardy, in 1617. He was the architect of the triumphal arch of the Porte St. Denis; and, in addition to many other works of miscellaneous literature, he wrote a *Course of Architecture*, the *Art of Throwing Bomb-shells*, and a *System of Fortification*. He died in 1696.

estimated by the architect at eighteen hundred thousand livres,* exclusive of its internal decorations.

This enormous outlay by no means alarmed the marchioness, who once more gave orders for the selection of an appropriate site; and then, anxious to terminate one undertaking before she commenced a second, she so vehemently urged forward her workmen, that the convent was soon completed and in a condition to receive its inmates, when the haughty foundress bestowed upon it the name of St. Joseph, and busied herself in all the details of its interior economy. Her own portion of the building was superbly although simply fitted up, and opened into the chapel, where her closet, inclosed by glass doors, faced the high altar. Her first decision was declared at the moment in which the community was formed; and was to the effect that she should alone possess the privilege of naming the abbess throughout her life; but that this authority should not devolve upon her heirs; that the great bell was to ring for twenty minutes whenever she visited the sisterhood; and that she was to receive the honors of the incense at high mass and vespers, as foundress of the community.

The great bell, and the humility of the recluse sisters of St. Joseph were unceasing attractions to the imperious marchioness, and her visits to the community were consequently frequent; while the whole affair created so much curiosity at court that Bossuet offered to consecrate the building; when, with her usual insolence, the lady, with a light laugh, bade him reserve his oration for her funeral.

“Be it so,” said the bishop, with a profound bow; “to you, madam, I can refuse nothing.”†

About this period the dauphiness became the mother of a second son, who received the title of Duke d’Anjou; and the king, on the receipt of the welcome intelligence,

* A sum exceeding seven millions of livres of the present day.

† Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

accompanied his congratulations to the princess by an oriental casket, containing a superb suit of pearls, and four thousand louis-d'ors in gold.

Ever since the birth of the Duke de Bourgoyne the court had entertained a hope that the dauphiness would abandon her secluded habits; but they were fated to disappointment, for she still appeared only on state occasions, and even then with evident repugnance.

The last blow was given to the ambition of Madame de Montespan just as her asylum was completed; for on the July succeeding the death of the Duchess de Fontanges, the king, whose health had gradually become re-established, resolved on a journey to Flanders, destined to serve the twofold purpose of affording amusement to himself and his court, and of awing his neighbors into additional respect, by an exhibition of his magnificence and strength. In this journey he was accompanied by the queen, the dauphin and dauphiness, and their separate suites, in every case selected by himself; and as these journeys were the touchstone of royal favor, great was the consternation of Madame de Montespan when she ascertained that the name of her dreaded rival headed the list of the princess's attendants, while her own, although superintendent of the queen's household, had not found a place. In the excess of her mortification, she hastened to shut herself up at St. Joseph, and even meditated a final retreat to Fontevrault; but when the first paroxysm of her anger had passed by, she contented herself with retiring to her chateau of Petit-Bourg, accompanied by Mademoiselle de Blois; the king having strictly forbidden the removal of the Count de Toulouse from Paris.

The first halt of the court was at Boulogne in Picardy, where the fortifications were in progress of preparation; and on the following day the king proceeded on horseback to inspect the port of Ambleteuse, whence he pur-

sued his way along the coast to Calais, while the ladies of the court journeyed thither by a more direct route. There the monarch visited the harbor, and amused himself by making excursions upon the water.

The next point of pause was Dunkirk, where the Marquis de Seignelay (the son of Colbert) had stationed a fine ship of war for the use of Their Majesties, which, under the command of an able officer, went through all the various manœuvres consequent upon a maritime combat and defense—a spectacle entirely novel to the illustrious party, and rendered still more attractive by a sumptuous banquet which terminated the day.

This was succeeded on the morrow by a sham fight between two frigates, separate barks having been prepared for the king and queen, whence to witness the combat, of which the pleasure was enhanced by the extreme calmness and splendor of the weather. At the close of this amusement, the monarch, after having expressed his entire satisfaction to the officers and crews of the several vessels, proceeded on board the man-of-war, in order to receive the congratulations of the Earl of Oxford, the Duke of Marlborough, and the Duke of Villa-Hermosa (the Spanish governor of the Low Countries), who had been dispatched by their several sovereigns to express their sympathy on his recovery. A lofty throne, covered by a costly awning, was erected on the quarter-deck of the ship, and the audience had all the pomp and ceremonial which could possibly be required by the ostentatious monarch.

On quitting Dunkirk the court made a regular progress to Ypres, and reached Lille on the first of August; whence, after a halt of several days, they proceeded to Valenciennes and Condé, everywhere greeted with the most enthusiastic welcome; and after returning to Sedan by Quénoy, Bouchain, and Cambrai, finally reëntered Versailles at the end of the month.*

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

During this brief absence, Louis XIV. had not, however, suffered himself to be absorbed by pleasure; but, faithful to the spirit of self-aggrandizement, which was his leading passion, had invested the important city of Luxembourg with an army of thirty thousand men, under the command of the Marshal de Créqui, and taken it after a resistance of eight days. Thence he marched upon the Electorate of Trèves, and possessed himself without difficulty of the town, which was nevertheless condemned to see its fine fortifications leveled to the ground, while fire, pillage, and ruin extended throughout the whole electorate; the destructive genius of Louvois having suggested that these unnecessary spoliations would tend to increase the authority of his royal master, by inspiring a greater terror of his power.

In 1683, while the Turks and Germans were contending upon the plains of Hungary, the king, followed by his whole court (whence Madame de Montespan was once more excluded), proceeded to the frontiers of Alsace, where he reviewed his army, and gave a succession of brilliant fêtes. The season chanced to be one of excessive sultriness; and the queen, although a native of Spain, suffered so severely from the heat, that as soon as it could be accomplished the royal party returned in all haste to Versailles, where the unfortunate Maria Theresa had no sooner arrived than she complained of indisposition, which, although at first slight, rapidly increased in severity, and an abscess formed under the arm.

At this crisis, Fagon,* her physician, in opposition to

* Guy Crescent Fagon was born in Paris in 1638, and devoting himself to the study of medicine, obtained his diploma as a physician in 1664. He was the first member of the faculty who upheld the theory of the circulation of the blood. In consequence of his botanical knowledge he was intrusted with the plantations of the Royal Gardens, by which he obtained the title of professor of botany and chemistry. In 1668 he was appointed physician to the Dauphiness, and subsequently to the Queen and Princes of France; and in 1694

the opinions of all her other medical attendants, resolved on letting blood. At eleven in the morning the queen had declared herself in a state of intense suffering; at mid-day a vein was opened and an emetic was administered, and at three in the afternoon she was a corpse.

Thus perished, to all appearance, through the profound ignorance or willful mismanagement of her medical attendant, the unfortunate Maria Theresa, just as she had begun to hope for a return of the affection which from the first day of their marriage she had lavished upon her royal husband, the consequence of whose undisguised indifference had been a timidity in his presence which she had never been able to overcome. To the last, she trembled whenever he approached her; and whether it were by the directions of the king, or simply from a desire to conciliate him, she bore with the presence and society of his mistresses without comment or expostulation, and even carried her indulgence so far as to caress their children; but she never degraded herself by any demonstration of regard toward themselves so long as they persisted in their irregularities.

Her partiality for Madame de Maintenon, whose commerce with the monarch was always irreproachable, we have already cited; but its most convincing proof was given in the fact that on her death-bed she withdrew a superb ring from her finger, and presented it to that lady, to whom the last words which she uttered were addressed: "Adieu, my very dear marchioness," she said, in a feeble accent; "to you I confide the happiness of the king."*

Blameless in her conduct, and naturally amiable, Maria became head physician to Louis XIV. In 1699 he was admitted a member of the French Academy, and in 1718 he died. He left behind him, among other works, *Treatises on Bark, Coffee, and Tobacco*, and a *Latin Poem on Botany*.

* Mémoires de la Beaumelle, and Madame de Montespan.

Theresa no sooner became the wife of Louis XIV. than she made it the one great business of her existence to study his pleasure in all things, however it might militate against her own comfort and happiness; and although deficient both in education and intellect, she possessed a dignity of deportment well suited to her exalted station. Short in stature, and inclined to corpulency, she appeared taller when seated than either walking or dancing, having acquired an ungainly habit of bending her knees, by which she lost much of her height. She was passionately fond of play, and seldom passed an evening without cards; although she constantly lost largely, from her inability to master the difficulties of any game that she attempted. Her passionate attachment to the king was never shaken, even by his constant infidelities; and whenever he chanced to smile as he addressed her, she could scarcely control her delight.

Louis XIV. had never loved her, but she had compelled his esteem, and he wept bitterly at her death; as, however, he had previously wept at his separation from Mary de Mancini, La Vallière, Henrietta of Orleans, and Mademoiselle de Fontanges, although with a less remorseful feeling; and she had no sooner expired than he retired to St. Cloud, where he was followed by the dauphiness and Madame de Maintenon, who both appeared before him, attired in deep mourning, and with so much grief imprinted on their countenances, that the king, whose mood chanced to be infinitely less lugubrious than their own, jested with them on their excessive sorrow.*

On the third day after the queen's decease, the monarch, accompanied by the dauphin, and all the members of the royal family, with the exception of MADMOISELLE, who pleaded indisposition, assembled in the Hall of Peace at Versailles, which was hung with black, and furnished with

* Mémoires de Madame de Caylus.

four temporary altars, to sprinkle the body with holy water ; and the aspect of the funereal chamber with the small coffin in the midst, in which reposed all that was mortal of his late gentle and forgiving wife, produced a visible effect upon the king, who exclaimed as he entered, "Kind and forbearing friend! This is the first sorrow that you have caused me throughout twenty years."

The ceremony of aspersion was no sooner terminated than the monarch and his court again retired to St. Cloud, there to await the removal of the royal corpse to St. Denis, which, previously to its interment, lay in state for ten days, perpetual masses being performed at each of the altars from seven in the morning until dusk ; and finally the body of Maria Theresa left forever the gorgeous palace which had been her home, for the somber vaults of the antique abbey. A long train of carriages followed the funeral car, filled with the great officers of the crown, and the ladies who had composed her household ; and the procession was escorted by a numerous body of guards, gendarmes, and musketeers. Nothing, however, could exceed the indecency with which the journey was performed. From all the carriages issued the sounds of heartless jest, and still more heartless laughter ; while the troops had no sooner reached the plain of St. Denis, than they dispersed in every direction, some galloping right and left, and others firing at the birds that were flying over their heads.*

But even yet more revolting was the conduct of several members of the royal family. The dauphin, instead of confining himself to his apartment on the day of the funeral, in order at least to assume the semblance of regret, and to avoid giving offense to public feeling, proceeded to the Palais-Royal, where he passed the evening gayly, in the society of the dauphiness, the princess-palatine, and a score of his favorite associates ; after

* Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

having amused himself for an hour or two in the forenoon by the feats of a learned pony, which had been brought to the fair of St. Laurent for exhibition, and which was ordered to the Tuileries by the prince, in consequence of a command issued by the king, that the court should abstain from visiting the fair from respect to Her Majesty's memory, although he declined the proposition of the city authorities to defer it until a more fitting season.

Nor did Louis XIV. himself display more propriety of conduct, having passed the day in hunting; an amusement which was, however, abruptly terminated by the circumstance of his horse plunging headlong into a ditch so overgrown with vegetation as to deceive its instinct, and by throwing the king over its head, causing the dislocation of his arm.*

Sometime before the death of the queen, MADemoiselle, who had regained a portion of the good opinion of her royal cousin by the rigid observance of her court duties, despite her grief at the protracted captivity of the Marquis de Lauzun, purchased the estate of Choisy, near Vitry, where she amused herself by building a palace, of which the fame soon reached the ears of Louis XIV., and so excited his curiosity that he proposed to Madame de Montespan that they should pay the princess a visit unannounced, and thus surprise her in the midst of her operations.

The exterior of the building somewhat disappointed the monarch, who considered the elegant simplicity of its architecture not sufficiently elaborate or regal; but the situation he declared to be faultless. The palace stood on the higher bank of the Seine, surrounded by magnificent gardens, and boasted stately woods perforated by spacious avenues, and washed by the waters of the river.

MADemoiselle did the honors of her new abode with unconcealed delight; and, with all the petty pride of a

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

parvenue, led the king into a handsome gallery hung with the portraits of her ancestors, relatives, and allies, each duly furnished with the name and rank of the original, where she drew his attention to the fact, that no less than three full-length likenesses of himself decorated the principal apartments.

On reaching the state bedchamber the princess preceded her royal guest; but her precaution was not sufficiently well taken to prevent the malicious marchioness from discovering that she had hastily caused the removal of a portrait of Lauzun which hung above the fireplace; while the king expressed his surprise that throughout the whole suit of rooms he had perceived no likeness of the duke, her father. MADemoiselle accounted for the circumstance by declaring that she had purposely delayed its admission to her saloons, as its appearance there would have entailed the necessity of its accompaniment by that of her step-mother, Marguerite of Lorraine, and that she intended to open her house only to her friends.

Little did the princess imagine the result to which this remark would tend, as Louis XIV. replied with a smile that he was the more happy under those circumstances, to see that she had already afforded space to those of the Duke du Maine, and the Count de Toulouse, especially as he had a favor to request of her. Every one was aware of her attachment to the former, who was now no longer a child, and for whom he was about to form a household; and the request which he had to advance, was her permission that the duke might assume her liveries.

Delighted by so eminent a mark of favor, MADemoiselle replied by expressing her sense of the honor designed toward her by the monarch; and with a sigh of sentiment somewhat discordant with her mature age—for she was at that period in her fifty-second year—she added, that she only wished the opportunity were afforded

to her of offering a more signal evidence of her desire to oblige the son of His Majesty.

The king made no reply, but these words did not fall unheeded; and he had scarcely passed the boundary of Choisy on his return to Versailles, when he recalled them to the recollection of his companion, remarking that had her manner been more conciliating, he would have engaged her to request an interview with the princess, and to have urged her to explain their actual meaning. To this suggestion Madame de Montespan haughtily replied that she could not consent to subject herself to any contact with the imperious and overbearing humor of MADemoiselle, for the furtherance of a merely equivocal speculation; but that doubtlessly Madame de Maintenon, who was sincerely attached to the Duke du Maine, and who was more pliant than herself, would readily undertake the mission, if such were the desire of His Majesty, and prove a much more welcome ambassadress than herself.

Satisfied of the truth of this observation, the king accordingly explained to the mistress of the robes the disposition of MADemoiselle as regarded her pupil; and she at once cheerfully undertook to conduct him to Choisy to pay his respects to the princess, and to offer his acknowledgments for her condescension on the subject of her liveries, pledging herself not to suffer any opportunity of serving his interests to escape her.

Her success was perfect. The little duke unconsciously played his part to admiration; and when MADemoiselle had wept out all her sorrows upon the bosom of the gentle and sympathizing visitor, who listened with moistened eyes and condoling words, she at length threw herself on the generosity of Madame de Maintenon, declaring that, satisfied of her influence over the mind of the king, she would place all her hopes of happiness in her hands; and that, should she succeed in obtaining the liberation

of Lauzun, she would present to her one of her finest estates.

“Rather,” said her companion, “if indeed Your Highness be willing to make so great a sacrifice, bestow that estate at once and unconditionally upon our dear Duke du Maine; and trust to my assurance that the king, touched by so great a benefit conferred upon his favorite son, will, in the excess of his paternal affection, willingly concede a point which by any other means he can only reluctantly suffer to be wrung from him, without leaving one hope that it will ever be followed by any important return of favor.”

MADemoiselle did not hesitate. She at once appreciated the force of this reasoning; and when Madame de Maintenon at length quitted Choisy, she was authorized to announce to the king that the princess had made a donation to the Duke du Maine of the countship of Eu and the sovereignty of Dombes; following up her tidings by soliciting the liberty of the Marquis de Lauzun; which was in so far conceded at the instant, that an order was issued, authorizing the prisoner to proceed to Bourbon l'Archambault for the benefit of the waters, under the guard of M. Maupertuis, and a detachment of musketeers.

As MADemoiselle had previously bestowed the very estates which, in order to effect the liberation of Lauzun, she now presented to the Duke du Maine, upon the marquis himself, it became necessary, in order to render the donation strictly legal, that it should be ratified by him; and, in the hope of inducing him to consent to this spoliation, Madame de Montespan followed him to Bourbon, to arrange the terms upon which it was to be conceded. Rejoiced, however, as Lauzun had been to find himself once more comparatively free, and to have escaped the gloomy prison latterly rendered still more melancholy by the death of Fouquet, he resisted all the

blandishments and braved all the violence of the baffled marchioness, declaring that he would rather return to Pignerol, and end his days between the four walls of a dungeon, than submit to such an alternative as the cession of the required estates.

Once more, therefore, he became a prisoner; but the following year he again received permission to visit Bourbon, and it would appear that the intervening twelve months of captivity, after the glimpse of liberty which had been afforded him, overcame his philosophy; for it is certain that, after sundry interviews with Madame de Montespan, whom he found domesticated there with her invalid daughter on his arrival, and for whom he evinced a regard and attention which extorted the acknowledgements of the king, he consented to ratify the donation to the Duke du Maine, on receiving, in lieu of the contested lordships, the duchy of St. Fargeau, then let on lease at twenty-two thousand livres annually; and the town and barony of Thiers, in Auvergne, one of the finest estates in the province; together with an income of eight thousand livres on the duties of Languedoc; although, regardless of this additional sacrifice on the part of MADemoiselle, he made an extreme merit of his concession, and complained that the equivalent was so disproportioned that he felt considerable difficulty in accepting it.*

The necessary papers were, however, eventually signed, and M. de Lauzun was set at liberty, upon the understanding that he was not to quit the provinces of Anjou and Touraine. He endured this exile for four years, after having suffered an imprisonment of the previous eleven; but such an arrangement by no means met the views of the princess, who complained that she had been deceived, and who was unsparing in her reproaches of the conduct of Madame de Montespan, by whose

* Mémoires de Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

representations she had been misled into a measure by which she found herself impoverished in means and almost equally unhappy in position; and as she expressed herself publicly and in strong terms, Louis XIV. at length considered it expedient to withdraw the onerous condition attached to the liberation of Lauzun, and to permit his return to the capital—limiting even this concession, however, by an absolute command that he should not fix his residence within two leagues of any of the royal palaces.*

Nevertheless, he was free; and MADemoiselle, convinced that she was at length about to realize her dreams of happiness, was preparing to set forth to meet him in a superb equipage drawn by six horses, when the king caused it to be privately intimated to her that she would do well to be less demonstrative, until she had ascertained in how far M. de Lauzun might prove worthy of her excessive regard; for the ungrateful aversion of the marquis toward his benefactress had long been known to the monarch, and he dreaded lest the superannuated passion of his royal cousin should excite a ridicule in the world, from which even her exalted rank would be inadequate to preserve her. Time alone, as he well knew, could suffice to open her eyes to so ungracious a truth; and, meanwhile, all representation and expostulation were useless; and he, consequently, contented himself by controlling, to the extent of his power, the excess of her imprudence.

Lauzun, although a brave man, was full of the most extravagant caprices, and appropriated all the good fortune which fell into his way as a natural tribute to his deserts, while he was utterly incapable of steadily pursuing such a line of conduct as might have justified the belief. The king had pardoned him out of consideration for the feelings and gratitude for the generosity of

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

MADemoiselle to the Duke du Maine; but he could no longer be deceived by the outward seeming of the hollow-hearted courtier; and, resolved never again to suffer him near his person, he authorized the sale of his company in the body-guards and his command in the *Becs-des-Corbins*,* directing M. Colbert to pay over to him the amount, with all the arrears that had accumulated during his captivity—a sum which collectively produced a capital of nine hundred and eighty thousand livres.†

This was immediately transmitted to the duke in bills upon the treasury, which were as available as ready money; but, instead of receiving the kindness of the king with gratitude, the infatuated Lauzun burst into a frenzy of rage, and threatened to consign the treasury bills to the flames, declaring that he desired to retain his position at court, and not to receive money for which he had no use.

Nevertheless, Louis XIV. consented to permit him to appear once more in his presence, and received him with a marked although chilling courtesy, which even his repeated genuflexions and elaborate professions were unable to animate into a more hopeful welcome. Nor did his appearance tend to ingratiate him with the punctilious monarch; for by an impertinent affectation, and as if with a view of recalling the extent of his imprisonment, the marquis presented himself in the same court-suit which he had worn before his incarceration, and a wig of similar date—a circumstance rendered the more glaring by the fact that the costume, being modified yearly, carried its date without a possibility of error. No remark was, however, vouchsafed upon the subject by

* The *Bec-de-Corbin* was a sort of short halbert, or partisan, of which the blade was fashioned like the beak of a raven, and which was carried by the companies of noblemen who formed the immediate body-guard of the sovereign.

† Nearly 4,000,000 of the present day.

the king; while curiosity, amusement at his eccentricities, and, in many cases, a wish to mortify the imperious princess by withdrawing him from her society, opened to the marquis all the hôtels of the nobility. *Monsieur* invited him to St. Cloud and the Palais-Royal; the dauphin received him with marked favor; and he found himself once more the spoiled child of the court circle.

From the moment of his liberation he displayed the most heartless ingratitude to MADemoiselle, whose absurdities, engendered by a weak and unworthy preference, however they might have excited the smiles and comments of the idle, should have been sacred in his eyes; nor did he even seek to see her until after his presentation to the king, alledging that his long captivity had so seriously impaired his health, that he was unequal to any great exertion; while, on the following day, when he visited her at Choisy, he assumed all the authority of a husband, and was audacious enough to accuse her of wanton extravagance in purchasing such an estate, and constructing such a palace, when she had parks and chateaux enough already, and must be aware how greatly he should be in need of money; adding, that as she had seen fit to do so, the only reparation which she could make was by dislodging her pages and officers of the household from their wing of the building, and fitting up a suite of apartments for himself, where he could occasionally pass his time and entertain his friends, and providing an equipage with six horses for his especial use during his residence.

Nothing, in short, could exceed his arrogance and presumption; and even while he put forward these extraordinary and unbecoming claims, the unfortunate self-victim of his egotism became painfully aware that she was at once the object of his repugnance and of his ridicule; and that the hours which she had fondly hoped would have been devoted to herself were spent with the

different ladies of the court and at the gaming-table, where his excesses were the theme of universal comment.

Nor was neglect the only indignity with which he visited her weakness even in her presence, for while princes of the blood who had become the husbands of the princesses of the royal family, continued to treat their wives with all the respect exacted by their propinquity to the throne, the upstart courtier upon whom MADEMOISELLE had lavished an affection as exaggerated as it was ill placed, not satisfied by bowing her pride to his own level, ventured, in the excess of his unmanly insolence, to degrade her to the rank of an inferior; and on one occasion, when he returned from hunting, reeking with wet and covered with mud, was even seen to throw himself upon a velvet sofa in the apartment of the princess, exclaiming, authoritatively, "Louise de Bourbon, draw off my boots."

Further forbearance was of course impossible; and as, not satisfied with this first insult, the infatuated man made a gesture with his foot which called all the blood of her royal ancestors to her cheek and brow, the granddaughter of Henry IV. drew herself up to her full height, and, waving her hand haughtily, retorted, "Leave the room, sir; and remember that I henceforth forbid you to appear in my presence."

After such an occurrence, it can scarcely, therefore, be a subject of surprise, that wearied at last of so invidious a position, in which, coupled with the annoyances of a wife, she was subjected also to the indignities of a mistress, MADEMOISELLE should, as a parting present, obtain for him the brevet of a duke, and then declare that she left him at full liberty to pursue his career as he might see fit, provided he attempted no further interference with herself.

The new duke at once accepted these conditions; and dissatisfied with the persevering coldness of the king,

solicited the royal permission to reside for a time in England. The request was immediately granted, and in a few weeks Lauzun departed, little suspecting the prominent part which he would there be called upon to play, and to which we shall hereafter have occasion to allude.

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CHAPTER XVI.

Death of Colbert; his Unpopularity; his noble Works; his Death-bed; his Funeral; his Successors; his Children—Policy of Louvois—The Bombardment of Genoa—Treaty of Peace—Submission of the Doge—Palace of Versailles—Reception of the Genoese Representatives—Mot of the Doge—Increased Gravity of the King—Change of Costume—Daily Etiquet—The Female Devotees—Influence of Madame de Maintenon; her Mental Attributes; her Court—The Office of Charity—Foundation of St. Cyr—The Monks of St. Denis—The Canonesses—The Abbé de Fénelon—A forced Vocation—Position of Madame de Maintenon—The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes—The Abbé du Chayla; his Sufferings; his Cruelties—Signing of the Revocation.

THE year 1683 was destined to be one of bereavement to Louis XIV. Colbert, whose health had long been giving way under the weight of his perpetual labors, was not destined long to survive his royal mistress; and despite all the magnificent services which he had rendered to his country, he was regretted neither by the sovereign nor the people. Louis XIV. disliked him, because he was obnoxious to Madame de Maintenon and Louvois; the nobility, because, although a man of ob-

scure birth, he had succeeded in raising himself to eminence, both social and political; the citizens, because he had effected the suppression of the revenues of the Hôtel de Ville; and the populace, because he had become powerful and wealthy; and that thus he was, in their eyes, a legitimate object of hatred.* Naturally simple and unassuming in his deportment, Colbert was, nevertheless, quite conscious of his just value. He desired, above all things, the prosperity of France, and the glory of her monarch: and to secure these immense advantages, he sacrificed alike his time, his health, and his prejudices.

His works are his best eulogy. He found the resources of the kingdom crippled by a long civil war, and he restored them by an extended commerce: he dug canals, formed harbors, created a formidable navy, and erected arsenals, barracks, hospitals, and manufactories. He organized colonies, and built innumerable fortresses, aqueducts, fountains, and bridges. To him Paris is indebted for its Observatory, and the royal edifice of the Invalides; and France, for the stately palaces of the Tuileries, Vincennes, Marly, with its stupendous hydraulic machine, and the means of completing the vast and regal pile of Versailles, with its marble Trianon. He it was who founded the Gobelins, and raised the Royal Library above the gardens and galleries of the Mazarin palace, with its vast and costly collection of books, manuscripts, and medals; and when overtaken by death in his sixty-fourth year, he was occupied in the erection of the spacious pile of the Salpêtrière, and the colonnade of the Louvre—two undertakings which would have sufficed of themselves to immortalize his memory.

Nevertheless, the popular feeling against him was so strong, that it was not considered expedient to pay him the respect of a public funeral; nor would Louis XIV. permit his son, the Marquis de Seignelay, either to leave

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

the palace to attend his death-bed, or to visit him in his own person. Almost in his dying moments, a gentleman of the royal chamber was dispatched by the monarch to ask tidings of his condition; and this was the only courtesy which was vouchsafed to the upright and zealous minister, to whom France was indebted for the prosperity which had, at that period, placed her at the head of all the nations of Europe. Even this, however, might have been spared; for as the messenger approached his bed, the dying sufferer turned away, exclaiming, "I will not hear that man spoken of again. If I had done for God what I have done for him, I should have been saved ten times over; and now I know not what may be my fate."

On the morrow of his death, at one o'clock in the morning, the body of Colbert was deposited in a shabby hearse, and conveyed to the church of St. Eustache, escorted only by a few of the officers of the city watch. The Marquis de Louvois succeeded to his most important offices, Seignelay, his elder son, merely retaining his appointment as secretary of state to the navy; while Louvois obtained, among others, that of superintendent of public works, which had been promised to the younger (M. de Blainville Colbert), by the king himself.*

The other children of the deceased minister were Louis, abbot of Nôtre-Dame de Bon Port, and prior of Rueil; Charles Edward, knight of Malta; and the three duchesses of Beauvilliers, Saint Agnan, Mortemart, and Chevreuse, to each of whom the king had presented the dower of a million of livres.

The policy of Colbert had been peace; and, until his death, Louvois, at once his rival and his enemy, had constantly been an advocate for war, well knowing the thirst of Louis XIV. for military fame; but his adversary was no sooner in the grave than Louvois, in his turn, began to deprecate all idea of foreign aggression, believing that, in

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

his new capacity of controller of the public works, he might, by encouraging the monarch in his taste for building, secure to himself an undivided influence which would render him all-powerful. He had, however, an unsuspected enemy to contend against, in the person of the Marquis de Seignelay, who, as minister of marine, resolved to dispute in his turn the popularity of his father's enemy, and thus to acquire to himself some portion of the royal favor. With this view he merely changed the theater of war; and, instead of threatening Flanders and Germany, turned his attention to the Mediterranean.

He had not long to seek either for the scene of his meditated exploits, or the pretext upon which they were to be founded. Genoa had excited the indignation of Louis XIV. on several occasions, any one of which would have sufficed to a monarch so tenacious of his prerogative, and so prompt in taking offense. Algiers had been already reduced to submission; and Seignelay had contributed to its surrender. It is therefore not surprising that the king turned a willing ear to the representations of the zealous and ardent minister of marine, and dispatched without hesitation two *lettres de cachet*, one of which directed the exempt of the provost-marshal immediately to secure the person of the Sieur Marini, the Genoese envoy; while the other authorized M. de Besemaux, the governor of the Bastille, to receive him into that fortress, permitting him, however, the privilege of exercise.

Finally, the French fleet, destined to avenge the wounded honor of Louis XIV., sailed from Toulon on the 6th May, 1684, and arrived before Genoa on the 17th of the same month. It consisted of fourteen large ships, twenty galleys, ten bomb-ketches, and several frigates; the larger vessels were under the command of the veteran Admiral Duquesne, and the galleys under that of the Duke de Mortemar, the brother-in-law of Seignelay, who accompanied the expedition in person, and who, full of

ambition, courage, intellect, and activity, would not consent to forego, in his character of minister, the honors of the enterprise.

On anchoring before Genoa, several thousand bombshells were directed against the city, which reduced a great portion of its marble edifices to powder; and four thousand troops were then landed, who, advancing to the very gates, burnt the faubourg of San Pietro d'Arena, and compelled the authorities to make submission in order to save their city, and avert its total ruin.* The damage caused by this bombardment was estimated at nearly a hundred millions of livres; and Seignelay, omnipotent amid the havoc to which he had been mainly instrumental, caused the doge to be informed, that if he did not, without loss of time, offer to the king his master the satisfaction which was required from him for the insults that he had offered to the French nation, he should return in the ensuing year and recommence hostilities. This done, the fleet weighed anchor and returned home, without vouchsafing further parley.

A treaty of peace was, however, concluded on the 2d of February, 1685, and the Genoese envoy was liberated. The first article of this treaty set forth that "The doge then in office, and four of the senators, should proceed in the course of the following month, or, at the latest, before the 10th of April, to the city of Marseilles, whence they should journey to whatsoever place His Majesty might at the moment honor by his presence; and that, being then and there admitted to an audience, attired in their state robes, the said doge, acting as spokesman, should express, in the name of the republic of Genoa, their extreme regret at having incurred the displeasure of His Majesty; and should make use, throughout the course of his address, of the most submissive and respectful expressions, and such as should tend to demonstrate their

* Le Siècle de Louis XIV.

sincere desire to merit for the future, and carefully to maintain, the good will of His Majesty.”

By virtue of this article of the treaty the Imperial Doge Lescaro left Genoa on the 29th of March, accompanied by the senators Lomelino, Garebardo, Durazzo, and Salvago; and on the 18th of April took up his abode in a spacious hôtel of the faubourg St. Germain, which had been prepared for him, in order to await the promised audience, which was not conceded until the 15th of May, when the Marshal d’Humières was sent to conduct him to Versailles; but on his refusing to allow the marshal to walk at his right hand, M. d’Humières was recalled, and replaced by M. de Bonneuil, an individual of inferior rank; and the doge was at the same time informed that he must have the arms withdrawn from his carriage, this distinction being reserved to sovereigns, and persons of the blood royal.

The palace of Versailles was at that period, although still unfinished, sufficiently magnificent to impress the minds of the Genoese representatives with a high idea of the splendor of the monarch to whom they were about to tender their submission, and already surpassed the fading glories of Fontainebleau and St. Germain. Every obstacle had been overcome, but at a fearful sacrifice of human life. For the space of three months cart-loads of dead laborers had been borne away from amid the waste of hewn stone, destroyed by the impurity of the atmosphere, and exhausted with toil. Now, however, the regal pile bore no evidence of the blood by which its walls had been cemented, no vestige of the suffering through which it had grown into majesty and beauty. Amid stately trees, transported at enormous cost from the forests of Fontainebleau, Marly, and St. Germain, already rose on the soft turf of spacious lawns, and amid groups of flowering shrubs, the marble creations of Coysevox,*

* Antoine Coysevox, a celebrated sculptor, was born at Lyons, in 1640. At the age of twenty-seven years he proceeded to Alsace, in

Girandon,* Desjardins,† and Puget.‡ On the ceilings already began to breathe, beneath the pencils of Le

order to decorate the superb palace of Saverna for the Cardinal de Furstemberg. On his return to France he became a member of the Academy of Art, and produced several busts of Louis XIV. and other members of the royal family, and adorned by his genius several of the royal residences. The animation and delicacy of his figures won for him the appellation of the Vandyke of sculpture. His principal works are the equestrian statue of Louis XIV.; the monument of Colbert; the figures of the Dordogne, the Garonne, and the Masne; the groups of *Abundance*, *Castor*, and *Pollux*; the *Stooping Venus*, the *Shell Nymph*, the *Hamadryad*, and the *Piping Fawn*. Coysevox died in Paris, in 1720.

* François Girandon was born at Troyes in 1630. This famous statuary and architect was the pupil of Laurent Mazière, and succeeded Le Brun as inspector-general of the national sculpture. In the year 1657 he became a member of the Academy of Painting, a professor in 1659, a rector in 1674, and chancellor in 1695. His most striking productions were the tomb of Cardinal Richelieu, the equestrian statue of Louis XIV. (which was destroyed in 1792), the *Rape of Proserpine*, and the groups which embellished the baths of Apollo at Versailles. He died in 1715.

† Martin Bogaert Desjardins, a celebrated sculptor, born at Bréda, in Holland, in 1632, only commenced the study of his art at an advanced age. He principally distinguished himself by his skill in casting statues and monuments in bronze. He executed a statue of Louis XIV. for the city of Lyons; and also produced a virgin in marble, a group representing the cardinal virtues, and the tomb of his friend, Mignard, the painter. He died at Paris, in 1694.

‡ Pierre Puget, surnamed the Michel Angelo of France, was born at Marseilles, in 1623; and was sent at the age of fifteen to Rome by his father, who was himself a sculptor. He commenced his studies as a painter, but soon concentrated all his genius upon the sister art; in which he progressed so rapidly, that after his return home he was once more sent to Italy by Fouquet, on a mission connected with his profession; where he was detained until 1653, in consequence of the dismissal of his patron from office. When he again reached France, Colbert conferred upon him a pension of 1,200 crowns; and after a residence of six or seven months in Paris, he ultimately returned to his native city, where he died in 1694, and where his memory is still held in such honor, that a lofty cliff overhanging the sea, whose outline bears a considerable resemblance to a human head, is called to

Brun and Mignard,* a mythological world, in which Louis XIV. and the members of his family were represented in the garb and with the attributes of the heathen deities; but as if even this luxury of splendor did not suffice for the occasion, additional objects of taste and show were lavished on every side, and the throne prepared for the monarch excited the astonishment even of his own court.

Louis XIV. had caused this throne to be erected at the termination of the great gallery, near the Hall of Peace; and beside him stood the Dauphin, the Duke de Chartres,† the Duke de Bourbon-Condé, the Duke du Maine, and the Count de Toulouse. On either side of the gallery an amphitheater had been raised, and covered with crimson velvet for the accommodation of the ladies of the court; while the nobles, arranged in two lines at their feet, formed a double avenue through which the doge and his attendants passed to the foot of the throne. When the king entered and took his seat, the blaze of the jewels with which he was covered dazzled the eyes of the spectators; and as the doge approached, he placed his hat upon his head, and commanded him to resume the cap of embroidered crimson velvet which he had withdrawn; but the senators remained bareheaded, while the princes of the blood stood covered like the monarch.

The act of submission which had been dictated by

this day, *La Tête de Puget*. His principal works are the *Milon of Crotona*, and the *Andromeda*, which won for him from Louis XIV. the title of "The Inimitable."

* Pierre Mignard was the most celebrated portrait painter of his day; but his best works were considered to be the ceilings of the gallery at St. Cloud, the paintings in the lesser gallery at Versailles, the dome of the convent of Val-de-Grâce, and the superb painting of *St. Charles Borromeo administering the sacrament to the plague stricken at Milan*. He also excelled as a copyist of the old masters. He died in 1695.

† The son of the Duke d'Orleans.

Seignelay was then read by the doge, after he had been, as a mark of indulgence on the part of Louis, accommodated with a folding-stood opposite to his own seat. The voice in which it was delivered was firm and haughty, although occasionally, as it proceeded, the velvet cap was raised for an instant and then replaced. At its conclusion, however, the doge withdrew it altogether, and by a simultaneous impulse of courtesy all the princes followed his example.

The king listened throughout with grave politeness; and at the termination of the ceremony treated both the doge and the senators with dignified politeness and magnificent liberality. All the rising wonders of Versailles were exhibited to them; a ball was given in their honor; they were received by the dauphin and the princesses; and on their departure the king presented to his new ally a magnificent box adorned with his portrait, and a suite of tapestry from the Gobelins.

As the Genoese envoys were about to leave the palace, the Marquis de Seignelay, anxious to flatter the self-love of the monarch, inquired of the stately Lescaro, who, despite the difficulties of his mission, had never, even for a moment, forgotten his dignity, what, amid all the wonders of Versailles, had caused him the most surprise? "The fact of my finding myself there," was the calm reply.

The death of the queen produced no change whatever in the habits of the court. Louis XIV. had always been grave in his deportment, and this gravity merely increased. Always attentive to his religious observances, his devotion had become more strongly marked since his intimacy with Madame de Maintenon; and, as we have already observed elsewhere, he had, from the age of thirty-five years, greatly altered his style of dress. The momentary readoption of excessive magnificence in his personal adjustment during his passion for the Duchess de

Fontanges did not survive her decease, and he thenceforward selected some dark shade of brown, occasionally relieved by a slight embroidery of gold, and sometimes only fastened by a single gold button, or a coat of black velvet. His inner vest was, however, always elaborately embroidered, and composed of green, blue, and even crimson stuff; but he displayed no rings, nor any jewels, save in his shoe and knee-buckles, and hat-band. Contrary to all precedent, he also wore his blue ribbon beneath his vest, save on state occasions, when he suffered it to depend at its full length, incrustated with precious stones estimated at eight or ten millions. The hat with its double row of plumes was also discarded, and in its place he substituted a less capacious beaver, ornamented only by a single feather.

The etiquet of his daily existence was rigorously laid down, nor did he ever deviate from its stringent and oppressive formality, but made a species of religion of its strict and minute observance—an example which engendered a large amount of hypocrisy among the inhabitants of the court; and Madame de Caylus relates, on this subject an amusing anecdote which merits mention.

M. de Brisac, a major of the guards, high in the favor of the monarch, and who, sincere and single-hearted, felt an utter abhorrence of every species of deceit, had for a considerable time been indignant to perceive that, whenever the king was about to attend divine service, all the tribunes were crowded with ladies, who never made their appearance there when it had been previously ascertained that His Majesty would not assist at the mass or vespers. On the latter occasions, under the pretext of being enabled to read their prayers, they each carried a small taper, in order that they might be remarked and recognized; and, one evening, when the king was expected, and that the ladies and the body-guards were alike at their posts, the major appeared in front of the

royal tribune, and flourishing his truncheon exclaimed, in an official tone, "Guards, retire. Return to your quarters. The king will not attend the service."

The guards marched slowly from the chapel; a low murmur rose from the tribunes occupied by the court dames; the tapers were extinguished; and, with the exception of two or three, all the fair bevy disappeared. Brisac had posted sergeants at the different doors of the chapel, with orders to cause the guards to return to their posts so soon as the ladies should have withdrawn to a sufficient distance; and they had no sooner done so than the troops resumed their station, and were speedily followed by the king himself, who, astonished at being for the first time confronted with empty benches, inquired, at the close of the service, the reason of so extraordinary an occurrence, when Brisac informed him of the test to which he had subjected the piety of the female portion of his court, and was rewarded by the hearty laughter of the monarch.

Meanwhile, the influence of Madame de Maintenon steadily progressed, for it was based upon esteem devoid of passion; and the death of the queen had rendered Louis XIV. more than ever dependent upon her friendship.

We have already shown that the monarch had, in the first instance, evinced considerable repugnance to her person, and even combated the inclinations of Madame de Montespan when she proposed to make her the *gouvernante* of her children; nor was it until he became convinced of her superior mental and moral qualifications that he took a less prejudiced view of the subject. He found her affectionate and zealous toward her young charge; indefatigable in her care of their education, which she based upon the most solid principles; patient under the violence of her patroness, which she never sought to avenge; cautious and discreet in the selection

of her friends; trustworthy under all circumstances, however trying; and attached to his interests, and anxious for his happiness, to an extent which rendered her bold enough to remonstrate whenever she saw him about to yield to any of the failings by which he was likely to sully the greatness of his reign, while religion ceased to be austere from her lips—for she talked to him of hope rather than of despair—and pointed his attention to the future rather than the past.

Her cotemporaries, and even those who felt aggrieved by the position to which she had so unexpectedly attained, have one and all admitted the extreme power of her intellect, the delicacy of her perceptions, her conversational talents, her penetration into character, and the soundness of her judgment; and even were it otherwise, the letters which she has left behind her would sufficiently attest her claim to each and all of these qualities. Nor were her personal attractions less calculated to attract than those of her mind; or, doubtlessly, without their effect upon the feelings of the king, who was becoming palled by the meretricious charms of the court beauties. Their fondness for display contrasted advantageously with the stateliness of her more matured loveliness; while, in the calm and dignified deportment which she exhibited, he found a welcome repose from the constant and wearisome pre-ensions of her self-constituted rivals.

The hopes which had been conceived, therefore, that the king would soon weary of so grave a companion, gradually faded, and it became the fashion to pay a court to Madame de Maintenon as exaggerated as the contempt which had formerly been evinced toward her person; but the mistress of the robes only profited by these demonstrations to effect projects of benevolence which, single-handed, she could not have accomplished. Such, to quote one example of this fact, was the establishment of an office of charity at Versailles, in 1684, of which all the women

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of rank readily became members, in the hope of thereby gaining the favor of the sovereign, and of which she herself consented to assume the presidency; while, at the same time, she declined to accept the office of lady of honor, the first appointment at the court.

This self-abnegation provoked many and opposite comments, for while her friends attributed the refusal to a modesty which induced her to consider her position as already sufficiently exalted for her merits, her enemies alledged that she had other and higher views, with which any mere court appointment was incompatible; and meanwhile it is probable that it simply arose from her disinclination to be constantly brought into contact with the dauphiness, of whose dislike she had already received many and mortifying proofs.*

At the period when Madame de Montespan founded the convent of St. Joseph, Madame de Maintenon had already collected, near the palace of Ruel, a number of well-born young women of impoverished families, whom she caused to be educated in a manner at once suited to their high birth and their altered circumstances, by two elderly nuns of talent, experience, and noble blood, who, on the destruction of their community, had applied to her for protection. The existence of this little school, or community, was no sooner ascertained than several families in reduced circumstances solicited for their daughters the benevolence of its founder; and Madame de Maintenon became convinced that the building which she had appropriated for their residence would no longer contain its inmates. A more extensive edifice was therefore purchased near Versailles; but as even this establishment soon proved inadequate to its purpose, the king, who ascertained that nearly all the pupils were the children of men by whom he had been faithfully served, considered that it would be expedient to extend the limits of Madame de Maintenon's

* Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

benevolence, by founding a spacious and noble institution for the education of the daughters of his nobility.

In pursuance of this object he accordingly acquired a vast and venerable chateau, the property of M. Seguier, situated at the entrance of the village of St. Cyr, near Versailles; and having pulled down the original edifice, raised above its ruins the regal foundation which took its name from the adjoining hamlet, and which became, ere long, celebrated throughout Europe. The building itself was of extreme architectural simplicity, but admirably adapted to its purpose, and the gardens were at once extensive and magnificent.

The king, anxious to ascertain its probable cost, consulted M. de Louvois; and that minister, whose estimates were always drawn up somewhat loosely, after directing the attention of the monarch to the fact that the community was to consist of four hundred persons, computed the outlay at five hundred thousand livres annually; while Madame de Maintenon, who had also made her calculation, estimated the expenses at only fifty thousand crowns; and, in this dilemma, Louis XIV. adopted a medium measure, and assigned a revenue of three hundred thousand livres to the establishment.

A short period of practical experience sufficed, however, to prove to Madame de Maintenon that even this princely income would not support an institution which became ere long so popular, that every noble family in the kingdom was anxious to partake its benefits; and she consequently cast her eyes on the rich abbey of St. Denis, which was then vacant, and proposed it to the king as almost sufficient to provide for the maintenance of the new establishment. This proposition startled the monarch; there was no precedent for such an appropriation; but when he reflected that the monks of St. Denis were living under the direction of a prior, and never even saw their abbot (who was generally a powerful noble, neither taking nor affecting any in-

terest in the abbey), he was induced to suppress it, and to consecrate its revenues to the establishment of St. Cyr.

The monks protested in vain: they were referred to Madame de Maintenon, who succeeded, if not in reconciling them to the transfer, at least in silencing their objections; and this was no sooner accomplished than the monarch caused a magnificent suite of apartments to be prepared for himself in the principal quadrangle, in order that he might occasionally assist, alike at the studies and the recreations of the pupils.

In the first instance the education of the children was confided to the care of canonesses; but as these ladies took only annual vows, and were free to retire when the period of their religious engagement had terminated, and as, since the foundation of the seminary, several of their number had already availed themselves of the privilege, while there was reason to apprehend that the example would be followed by others, the Abbé de Fénélon, who was the declared enemy of these temporary and capricious vocations, suggested the expediency of introducing at St. Cyr the same fixed and immutable vows as in other religious houses, and of enforcing them without loss of time.

The poor canonesses were startled by the sentence, and many among them vehemently refused to submit to a fate which they had never contemplated; but the eloquent abbé was proof against both tears and representations. He impressed upon them, that the rivers which had flowed from the beginning of creation had never presumed to arrest their currents, nor to deviate from their course—that the sun had never ventured to abandon its functions, nor to turn back upon its path of clouds—that wise kings never abdicated the thrones to which they had been called—and that God himself steadily pursued his mysterious and unwearied watch without rest or change of purpose, and thus indicated the duty of the creatures whom he had made. Suffice it that St. Cyr became a cloister, and that thence-

forward Louis XIV. counted a new convent in his dominions.*

The position of Madame de Maintenon became daily more and more difficult. Regularly at three o'clock each day the king proceeded to her apartments, and there, reclining in an arm-chair near the fire, he passed two or three hours—sometimes watching the progress of her tapestry work, and conversing with her on the events of the day, and at others, listening somewhat carelessly to Racine, who was summoned to read portions of the tragedies upon which he was engaged; at intervals inquiring of the more attentive Madame de Maintenon, "What is the opinion of your solidity on this production?" And thus summoned, the lady put forth all her powers to amuse a monarch who was rapidly becoming unamuseable.†

In truth, a weariness of existence was rapidly growing upon Louis XIV.; he had outlived his loves, his griefs, and almost his ambition; all he wanted was repose, and this he found in the society of an accomplished, judicious, and unassuming woman, who although he occasionally transacted business in her presence with Louvois, never presumed to proffer an opinion, save when he appealed to her judgment, and even then tendered it with reluctance and reserve.

These facts were, however, unknown to the world; and Madame de Maintenon was far from obtaining in general opinion the credit merited by her blameless deportment. In vain had the king, upon more than one occasion, proposed to her a friendship still more intimate. She was proof against so equivocal an ambition, and reminded him of the miseries which former irregularities of this description had entailed not only upon his favorites, but also upon himself; the domestic dissensions—the public reprobation—and above all, the remorse of conscience.

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

† Versailles Ancien et Moderne.

These arguments were as novel as they were startling to the self-worshipping monarch. He had so long been accustomed to see the dishonor, denounced by Madame de Maintenon with indignation, solicited as a favor beyond all price, that there can be no doubt her influence was increased by their utterance; but, meanwhile, her position was, as we have already remarked, one of extraordinary delicacy, while that of the king himself was not without embarrassment. Not even the death of the queen, which raised the dauphiness to the first rank at court, could induce that princess to emerge from her retirement, and her circle was gloomy and inhospitable at a period when Louis XIV. required entertainment. His children were advancing in age, and required more vigilance than he had energy to exert, although his affection toward them was sincere and unwearied. His first illusions were dissipated, and he felt his moral isolation; while his ebbing vanity suffered acutely from the calm and resolute self-respect of Madame de Maintenon.

It was probably this irritation of feeling which induced him to lend a willing ear to the proposition of Père la Chaise and Madame de Maintenon herself, both of whom had been urged to the atrocity of which they thus became the responsible agents, by the influence of the Jesuits (who had long looked with anger and impatience upon the increasing importance of the Calvinists in the southern provinces), that he should hasten to revoke the Edict of Nantes—a step upon which he had, however, long before decided, although he had hitherto deferred its execution.

On ascending the throne in 1643, Louis XIV. had confirmed the privileges of the Protestants, but subsequently all the restrictions to which they had been subjected under Louis XIII. were once more gradually put in force; nor was it long ere the new monarch carried his hostility toward the reformed religion to a height never attempted by his predecessor. In the first instance he had been

wary in his exhibition, but this caution was ultimately laid aside, until his severity was exerted so unequivocally that it compelled the catastrophe which supervened.

Every device which could be suggested to enforce proselytism was eagerly adopted; favors of every description were lavished upon those whom fear or avarice had converted to Romanism; they were exempted from taxation, from guardianship, and from local contributions; were excused their debts, delivered from the coercion of paternal authority, and even permitted to marry without the consent of their Calvinist parents; while they were, moreover, advanced in the several professions to which they devoted their talents. Far different, however, was the fate of those who clung to their persecuted creed for conscience sake.

Even from the year 1630 they had been made the victims of new hardships and of new indignities, until they were altogether deprived of the common rights of citizenship. Their colleges were closed; their youth shut out from every chance of an honorable or useful career; their churches interdicted; their inheritances wrested from them; and, finally, their dead forbidden to share the graves of their ancestors.* But they still lived; and even this privilege was now considered too great for the unfortunate Calvinists.

The aim of Madame de Maintenon, in urging the monarch to an act of such iniquitous barbarity as that of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, was, as she averred, the hope of proselytism; she forgot alike the blood and the tears which must inundate the soil of France; she did not pause to remember how much the proscribed reformers had already borne for the sake of their faith; nor to speculate upon the amount of suffering which they might still be willing to endure in its defense. She desired to purge the kingdom of what she considered to be

* Histoire de France. *Anquetil.*

a damnable heresy, and her bigotry closed the eyes of her mercy. Her fatal counsels admit of but one palliation: the idea was not her own; and she did but hasten a catastrophe which, as we have already stated, had long been contemplated by Louis XIV. himself.

As a proof of this fact, he had, in the year 1682, recalled the Abbé du Chayla from India, and had sent him to Mende, with the title of Archpriest, and Inspector of Missions in the Cevennes.

The history of this man is, from first to last, a frightful romance. The Abbé du Chayla was a younger son of the house of Langlade, who had, despite his predilection for a military life, found himself compelled to enter the church; but unable to support the monotony of the ecclesiastical profession in his own country, and eager alike for enterprise and excitement, had resolved on a missionary voyage to India, and arrived at Pondicherry precisely at the moment when the King of Siam had put to death, amid the most cruel tortures, several other missionaries whose zeal for proselytism had excited his displeasure; while, simultaneously with these executions, an order had also been promulgated which forbade all French priests to penetrate into Chinese-India; and the Abbé du Chayla no sooner ascertained this fact than he resolved upon entering the interdicted territory.

Three months afterward he was made a prisoner, and cited before the governor of Balkan, by whom he was summoned immediately to abjure his religion, or in his turn to suffer martyrdom. Undaunted by the terrible nature of his position, the abbé did not hesitate, but bending his knees in prayer, suffered himself to be passively led away by his executioners, and subjected to every species of torture of which the human frame is susceptible. Not even a groan escaped his lips; and, at length, with mutilated hands, wounded body, and legs crushed by their heavy fetters, he fainted from excessive anguish, and was

supposed to have expired. He was then lifted from the ground, and fastened by the wrists to a tree by the road side, where he was left as a warning to those who might be, like himself, disposed to brave the displeasure of the king.

At nightfall, a poor pariah released him from his bonds, dragged him to his miserable but hospitable hovel, and by perseverance restored him to existence. The French ambassador, informed of the fearful butchery to which he had been subjected, and unconscious that he still survived, demanded justice for this violence exerted on a subject of France; and the King of Siam, upon ascertaining that he had escaped with life, gladly restored a mutilated but living being to the minister who had sought only to reclaim a corpse.

Such was the man whom Louis XIV., probably foreseeing the rebellion which would ensue in the southern provinces of France on the promulgation of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, dispatched in an official capacity to the Cevennes, where the persecuted at once became the persecutor, and exercised barbarities hitherto unpracticed in a Christian land.

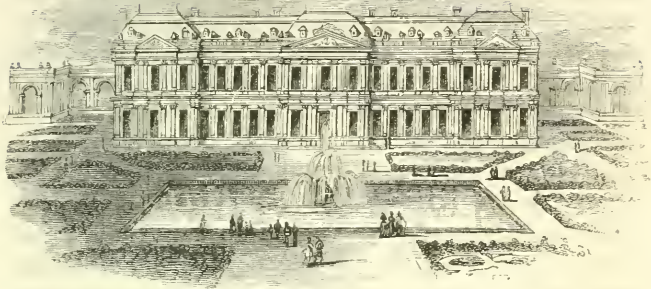
We have now before us a detailed account of the enormous and fiend-like inventions in which he combined the demoniacal ingenuity of Indian torture with the scientific cruelties of semi-civilization; but we dare not do more than glance at the page on which they are enshrined like a monument of execration. Suffice it that even his most ardent panegyrists—for even this wretched man had his flatterers—and his firmest allies never spoke of him without a feeling of dread and apprehension; while it is recorded of himself, that there were moments in which, as his own acts rose accusingly before his tortured conscience, he was seized with shuddering fits which forced him to his knees, where he frequently remained for hours together, with clasped hands, and so thoroughly mastered by his terror, that big drops of agony started from his pale fore-

head, and rolled like a death-sweat over his haggard cheeks.

And he it was who, aided by M. de Baviile, the Intendant of Languedoc, and supported by M. de Broglie, was to enforce in the ill-fated south the execution of the fearful decree which Louis XIV. was about to put forth.

On the 18th of October, 1685, the king ultimately signed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, which had already been presented to the council in the preceding April, and decided on in the following August; and it was when doing this that Louis XIV. added to the mottoes which he had already adopted that of *Lex una sub uno!** There was no need to write it in blood at Versailles—the hand of death was to engrave it elsewhere.

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle



CHAPTER XVII.

Court Annoyances—Resistance of Madame de Maintenon; her Influence on the Manners of the Court—Louis XIV. wearied of Madame de Montespan; her Banishment determined—The Duke de Vivonne—The Brother and Sister—The Drive to Clagny—Indignation of Madame de Montespan—The Pension—The Lettre-de-Cachet—Return of Madame de Montespan to Versailles—Interview of Louis XIV. and Madame de Montespan—Egotism of the Monarch—Intemperance of the Marchioness—Appearance of Madame de Maintenon—Madame de Montespan on a Sick-Bed—Threat of Madame de Maintenon—The Duke du Maine—Court Councilors—Interposition of the Dauphin—The unsuccessful Mission—The Court Physician—An indiscreet Inference—Mortification of Madame de Maintenon—Sudden Resolution of Louis XIV.—The Snow-Storm—The Primate of Paris—The Bridal Procession—Marriage of Louis XIV. and Madame de Maintenon—Departure of Madame de Montespan for Petit-Bourg; her Presentation to the Wife of Louis XIV.—The Tabouret—The Duke du Maine—Retribution—Final Departure of Madame de Montespan from Versailles.

NOR was the court itself destined to remain without its intestine warfare; for the king, more and more irritated

by the resolute refusal of Madame de Maintenon to listen to the overtures which he still persisted in addressing to her, and ill at ease as to the results of the fearful enterprise upon which he had entered, found his internal tranquillity menaced from within and without, and succeeded at last in persuading himself that he could not dispense with the possession of her entire affection; while incapable, from past experience, of believing in a virtue sufficient of itself to withstand temptation, he busied himself in endeavoring to discover the real cause of her opposition, when, as a natural consequence, his thoughts fastened upon Madame de Montespan.

It was easy to understand that a woman, however charming and attractive she might still be, must necessarily look with suspicion upon a rival who had once been all-powerful, and who still possessed over herself the advantage of comparative youth; and Louis XIV., with his usual egotism, no sooner imagined that he had discovered the real obstacle to his wishes than he resolved to rid himself of a person who had become not only indifferent, but even obnoxious to him. It is true that she was the mother of the most promising of his children, but he had made those children princes; that she had consecrated to him the brightest years of her life, but in return he had enriched her to a degree which insured not only the comfort, but even the luxury of those which were to supervene; that he had sullied her name with infamy, but it was an infamy which she had worn like a regal robe, and cinctured about her brows as proudly as a diadem; consequently, according to his kingly calculation, they stood upon equal ground.

Moreover, the temper of the marchioness had become soured by the desertion of the monarch; and, as she was utterly destitute of the real dignity which would have prompted her to endure the change in silence, she had not hesitated to overwhelm him with reproaches, which

were couched in no measured or courteous terms. She taunted him with his moral and natural defects; upbraided him with the sacrifices which she had made for his sake; sneered at the want of self-control which had rendered him, in the decline of life, the slave of a mere vain and mindless girl; and ridiculed without mercy the mature graces of his chosen friend.

All this was gall and bitterness to a monarch like Louis XIV., who had from his earliest years compelled the respect of those about him, and been for a time worshiped as something more than mortal; and, consequently, urged on the one hand by his growing attachment to Madame de Maintenon, and on the other by his desire to liberate himself from the thrall of an outworn passion, he determined, could he not otherwise secure the possession of his new favorite, to exact the disparition of Madame de Montespan from the court.

Nothing could be more easy than to form such a resolution, but its execution involved infinitely more difficulty. The timid La Vallière, the proud Mary de Mancini, and the virtuous Mademoiselle d'Houdancourt, had each in her turn yielded without expostulation; but no such calm concession could be anticipated from the fiery and sarcastic marchioness, who pointed haughtily to her children, and spoke loudly of her claims upon the gratitude of the king. It was, therefore, by no means wonderful that Louis XIV. should shrink from personally communicating his pleasure to the condemned favorite; and ere he proceeded to so extreme a measure as her banishment, resolve to have a final explanation with Madame de Maintenon, whose influence not only over himself individually, but also over the manners, and even, to all appearance, the morals of his court, had already produced the most striking effects.

Libertine exploits were no longer a theme of public conversation in the presence of women, and were only

whispered with precaution among the young nobles themselves, to relieve the tedium of a long detention in the royal antechambers, while religious subjects were openly discussed in the presence of the sovereign. The dresses of the court ladies had become more matronly in their fashion, the use of rouge was partially abandoned, and a certain staid gravity had succeeded to the coquetish bearing of the courtiers of both sexes. Balls became rare, and theaters remained empty, while every metropolitan church which boasted an eloquent preacher was filled to overflowing; and instead of the opera, the last intrigue, and the gaming-table, the highborn and the beautiful alike discoursed of Rome, indulgences, and the religious jubilee. The priesthood were rapidly becoming all-powerful, while the monarch, more and more dependent for his hourly comfort upon the tranquil pleasures and unceasing attentions for which he was indebted to Madame de Maintenon, felt the utter impossibility of leaving her free to abandon him, should her confessor urge her to such a step, or, on his own part, to retain her near him in so indifferent a character as that of his friend.

Under this impression he therefore made a last effort to overcome her scruples; but he submitted vainly to this condescension. Madame de Maintenon remained firm, and even threatened to abandon the court should the king again repeat his solicitations. More than ever convinced by so resolute an opposition (jarring as it did with all his previous experience of the sex), that nothing save jealousy could have enabled her so resolutely to maintain her purpose, Louis had no sooner asked and obtained the pardon of his error, than, convinced that by such a measure he should ultimately insure success where he had now so signally failed, he informed her of his desire that she should become the messenger of his displeasure to the offending favorite.*

* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

Like himself, however, she shrunk from such contact with Madame de Montespan; and after having with great reluctance consented to become an actor in so disagreeable a drama, she sent to request the presence of the Marquis de Vivonne, the brother of the marchioness, a man of prudence and honor, upon whose judgment and good faith she felt that she could rely.

At the close of their interview the marquis drove at once to the apartments of his sister, whom he found languid, discontented, and irritable. Nothing daunted, however, by the unpromising nature of her mood, he proposed to her that she should share his carriage and accompany him to Clagny, alledging that the pure air and exercise would tend to restore the tone of her nerves. To this proposal Madame de Montespan listlessly consented: to her, at that moment, any companionship was preferable to her own thoughts; and the brother and sister were in a few minutes beyond the boundaries of Versailles.

They had no sooner arrived at their destination than the marquis prepared to fulfill his mission, which he did in the most gentle terms, commenting upon the failing health and fading looks of the marchioness, and counseling her at once to abdicate all her pretensions to the favor of the king, and to retire to one of her estates.

Madame de Montespan answered only by a burst of passion; but M. de Vivonne was not discouraged. He reminded her that the monarch, although he had never distinctly commanded her retirement, had more than once hinted to her his wish that she should withdraw from the court, with the dignity befitting the mother of his children; he forced upon her the fact that her influence had long ceased, and that it was not probable, after having failed to maintain her supremacy over so pitiful a rival as Mademoiselle de Fontanges, that she could hope to cope with so powerful an antagonist as Madame de Maintenon; he

urged upon her the respect which she owed to herself, and the sacrifice which was due to the exalted position of her children; and finally he recalled to her memory the daily-increasing piety of the monarch, which caused him to look with bitter compunction upon the effects of a weakness that had led him to a twofold violation of the marriage tie, and drawn down upon him the censures of the church.

Madame de Montespan threw herself back among the cushions of her chair, and waved her hand disdainfully. She was, however, startled from her haughty attitude by his demanding whether the anonymous letters which she had from time to time received had not sufficiently served to intimate the pleasure of the king? and whether after such direct and unequivocal warnings, she was still resolved to expose herself to the indignity of being dismissed from a court whence she must feel assured that her absence was resolved upon, while she had yet time to retire with honor?

At the mention of these letters the eyes of Madame de Montespan blazed with fury. She had, indeed, received such; but believing that they were the mere productions of individual malice, and, consequently, a secret between herself and the writer, she had committed them to the flames, and dismissed the circumstance from her memory. Now, however, she learned that this was far from being the case; and with an ill-concealed tremor in her voice, she inquired if she were to understand that the letters to which he alluded were addressed to her by His Majesty?

The answer did not tend to reassure her; they had been written by the Marquis de Chamarante under the king's dictation, and were intended to open her eyes to the real nature of her position, and to enable her to retire with credit from a scene where her presence had become importunate. Now, however, the marquis proceeded to

declare, she had no longer the privilege of deliberation ; for he was commissioned to inform her, that if she did not immediately avail herself of the permission accorded to her through himself, to depart upon the instant from Versailles, she would be formally expelled by a *lettre-de-cachet*.

Madame de Montespan started from her seat. This was an indignity of which she had never dreamed ; and she was passionately pouring forth expressions of incredulity and defiance, when the marquis calmly bade her, instead of wasting moments which had now become precious, in idle invective, rather to summon her household to Clagny, and to set forth on the morrow either for his own chateau of Boissy, or for her palace at Petit-Bourg, where, on the following day, he would explain the precise circumstances of her position.

Madame de Montespan insisted, however, upon being fully informed on the instant ; and then learned that the king had resolved upon her final retirement, and that he had already settled upon her an annual pension of six hundred thousand livres,* in order that she might be enabled to support the state required for the mother of his children.

Madame de Montespan buried her face in her hands, and remained for a considerable time lost in thought ; and when she at length looked up, her lips were pale and her voice trembled. She had not shed a tear, but her breast heaved, and she had evidently come to a decision. Folding her shawl about her, she requested the marquis immediately to drive her back to Versailles, it being necessary, as she asserted, that she should collect her money, her jewels, and her papers ; after which she declared that she was ready, for the sake of her family, to follow his advice. M. de Vivonne, never doubting the sincerity of her words, at once complied with the request ; and having

* Equal in value to 2,400,000 livres of the present day.

conducted her to her apartments on their arrival at the palace, hastened to inform Madame de Maintenon of the success of his mission.

But the solitude of the banished favorite was not destined long to remain uninvaded; scarcely twenty minutes had elapsed when the door of her apartment opened, and Louis XIV. himself entered unannounced.

Nothing could be more characteristic of the two personages than the scene which ensued. Never were the self-satisfied and mean egotism of the monarch, or the intemperate violence of his old favorite, more fully demonstrated than in this interview. The king entered the apartment with all the tranquillity induced by the conviction that he was about to be disembarrassed of an importunate individual who had long ceased to be necessary to his happiness; and the marchioness watched his approach with all the forced placidity of one who scorned to let him see the extent of her mortification, but who was not, nevertheless, sufficiently mistress of her temper to control the passion that was gathering like a storm-cloud in the depths of her spirit.

There was, indeed, almost a smile upon the lip of the monarch as he advanced; and, feigning not to remark the difficulty with which she suppressed the feelings that were raging in her bosom, accosted her in a tone of careless courtesy, congratulating her upon the decision to which she had come, and of which he had already been apprised by M. de Vivonne, and assuring her that it was one which would be applauded by all the world. Thence he digressed to the period of their first attachment, and begged her to remember that eighteen years* had since elapsed; and that they were mutually indebted for its long duration simply to the circumstance that it had been alimeted by the difficulties consequent upon their previous position. He spoke of their children, as of his own personal

* It began in 1667. The marchioness was born in 1647.

property; expatiated upon what he had already done, and what he still purposed to do in their behalf; and called her attention to the fact, that, in the act by which they were recognized in parliament, her name had not appeared as their mother, in consequence of her *previous ties* having rendered such a measure impossible; but assured her that, so long as he lived, they should never be suffered to forget to whom they owed their existence. He next proceeded to declare that he was well aware that the most troubled years of his life, and of his reign, had been embellished by her wit and the charm of her society, and that he should ever retain this recollection; feeling that, although separated in fact, he should still be united in thought with a person who would always be remembered by himself as the mother of children very dear to him.

Crushed deeper and deeper by these accumulated insults, Madame de Montespan attempted no reply, but suffered the king to exhaust all his eloquence ere she interrupted his harangue; while, satisfied by the mute attention with which she listened, and never doubting that by his condescension he should be enabled to separate from her without the scandal which he had hitherto apprehended, he further proceeded to remind her that he had from time to time so greatly increased her fortune, that he believed it at that moment to be considerable; but that, nevertheless, he was prepared still more to augment its amount; and that, should the pension which had been announced to her by M. de Vivonne appear inadequate, he was willing, at her request, to increase it. That her children had become princes, who must, as a natural consequence, reside at the court, but that she might be permitted to see them frequently, as he would give an order to that effect; and, finally, that he would advise her to adopt the initiative, and to write to her husband, not to request him to annul and revoke the judicial and legal separation which existed between them, but to inform him

that she had become rational, and had at length resolved to reinstate herself in public opinion.

It was, perhaps, fortunate that at this moment the children of the marchioness, who had been summoned by the king to take leave of their mother, who was, as they were informed, about to *set out on a journey*, were conducted to her apartment; for, in all probability, it softened in some degree the asperity of the wounded and exasperated woman, whose pride and feelings had alike been lacerated by this lengthy and cold-blooded address.

Certain it is, that, after a short interval, during which Louis XIV. made no attempt to continue his harangue, she controlled herself sufficiently to remark, with a portion of her constitutional haughtiness, that she was lost in astonishment at the indifference with which a monarch, whose magnanimity had been vaunted by the world and credited by himself, could throw from him a woman who had sacrificed every thing to his will. She then reminded him, in her turn, that, from the period in which he had become estranged from her, she had never suffered herself to overstep the boundary of respect due to one who, in ceasing to remain her lover, had once more become her sovereign; but that she had submitted herself to his pleasure, if not without remonstrance, at least without public exposition; and she finally demanded to know for what reason an estrangement, which had already been supported by herself with patience for the space of two years, was to be rendered more conspicuous until the period when her two younger children would no longer require her care.

Louis XIV. started in alarm, as he inquired whether she had already altered her resolution, and was about to falsify the promise which she had made to her brother.

The reply was uttered with an expression of scorn that left no doubt of its sincerity. Far from seeking to retain her present worse than equivocal position, the marchioness declared that she should absent herself with delight from

scenes that to her had become hateful by the perfidy and treachery with which she was compelled to associate them, and that she would gladly consent never again to approach the person of the king, on condition that the odious woman who had succeeded in supplanting her unsuspecting benefactress should share her exile.

“The kings of Europe,” replied the monarch, pale with agitation and anger, “have never yet ventured to dictate laws in my palace, nor shall you, madam, subject me to yours. The person whom I have for too long a period suffered you to offend and mortify possesses ancestors as noble as your own; and if you did, indeed, open to her the gates of the palace, you, by so doing, introduced there goodness, gentleness, talent, and virtue. Be your vindictiveness as bitter as it may, this enemy whom you have slandered wherever you could find listeners, and who has upon every occasion endeavored to excuse and justify you, will remain near that throne which was defended by her fathers, and which is even now strengthened by her own wise counsels. In seeking to remove you from a court where your presence and your pretensions have long been alike misplaced, I wished to save you the knowledge, and, from kind feeling, to spare you the evidence, of *an event* calculated to irritate your nature, which every thing tends to exasperate; but stay here, madam, stay here, since you love great catastrophes, and are amused by them; the day after to-morrow you will be, more than ever, a *supernumerary* in the palace.”

There was no possibility of mistaking such an announcement; and Madame de Montespan at once felt that it implied the complete and public triumph of her rival, though she was yet far from foreseeing the extent of that triumph. She had, however, heard more than enough, and she fell senseless to the ground.

Her women, summoned by the king, who looked on rather with impatience than sympathy, soon succeeded in

restoring her to consciousness; while the first words which fell upon her ear were those of Louis, who remarked to her steward, "All this wearies me beyond endurance. She must leave the palace this very day."

"Yes, I will leave it!" exclaimed the exasperated woman, springing from the arms of her attendants, seizing a desert-knife which lay on a bureau, and thence rushing upon the little Count de Toulouse, whom his father held by the hand, "I will leave it—but first—"

At this moment of delirium a lateral door was suddenly opened, and Madame de Maintenon, who had probably apprehended some scene of a similar description, made one bound toward the wretched woman, and in the next moment had torn both the weapon and the affrighted child from her grasp; her face was bathed in tears; and as she appeared, the king tottered to the chimney-piece, buried his eyes in his hands, and wept profusely.

The children were removed by the attendants; and they were no sooner in safety than Madame de Maintenon, who had received a slight wound in wrenching the knife from the clasp of the unhappy mother, busied herself in binding her hand in her handkerchief, while her rival exclaimed, passionately, "Ah, madam, had I believed what the king told me fourteen years ago, my life would not have been in your power to-day." Madame de Maintenon started, and forced a faint smile; after which she clasped the hand of the marchioness with a look of sympathy, and quitted the apartment.

As the king saw her disappear, he aroused himself from the paroxysm of emotion by which he had been momentarily overcome, and slowly followed her example; nor could the supplications of the wretched marchioness induce him to delay his departure. "I entreated him in vain," she says, with a heart-brokenness which for a moment causes us to forget her frailty; "he did not return!"*

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

A violent fever was the result of this interview to the discarded favorite, who was thereby prevented from leaving the palace; but it induced no change in the arrangements which had been previously made.

For a considerable time the king had complained to his confessor of the resistance of Madame de Maintenon, and had more than hinted his desire that the reverend Jesuit would exert his influence over the mind of his penitent, and induce her to submit to his wishes; but he had been considerably startled when, on one of these occasions, Père la Chaise ventured to suggest that a private marriage would at once satisfy the scruples of the lady and those of his own conscience.

Louis XIV. hesitated; and while he remained irresolute, Madame de Maintenon, in reply to the passionate reproaches with which he again ventured to assail her, declared that the conflict she was compelled to sustain between her heart and her inclinations was already so great that she could no longer expose herself to a temptation to which she was resolved never to yield, but which was nevertheless undermining her health and ruining her peace; and that she had consequently resolved upon following the example of La Vallière, and dedicating the remainder of her life to the cloister; where she would spend it in combating a passion to which she felt that it would be a sin to succumb, and in prayers for him by whom it had been inspired.

This declaration affected Louis to a degree which almost deprived him of his reason, and he was still suffering from its first effects, when the Duke du Maine rushed into his apartment, and flinging himself at his feet, implored him not to sanction the departure of one who had really been his mother, and whom he loved with an intensity which involved all his earthly happiness.

Louis required little persuasion, for his own wishes coincided with those of his son, but the dread of ridicule still

restrained him ; and refusing to reply to the passionate entreaties of the duke, or to the reasoning of his confessor, whom he knew to be devoted to the interests of Madame de Maintenon, he resolved to consult Bossuet ere he finally compromised his word. When, however, Bossuet also pronounced his fiat in favor of the marriage, and represented to the king the disastrous effects which must inevitably accrue, alike to his reputation and to his eternal welfare, from a new connection similar to those by which the past years of his life had been too often sullied, combined with the obligations due to Madame de Maintenon for her refusal to plunge him once more into the same career of error, the monarch declared himself convinced, and authorized the bishop to announce to her the offer of his hand.

Upon this occasion the dauphin for the first time laid aside his apathy, and asserted himself as became the son of a great monarch. He no sooner ascertained the fact of the intended marriage than he hastened from Meudon to Versailles, and presenting himself in the royal chamber at an hour when the king was not accustomed to admit any one to his presence, he commenced his expostulations as a respectful child, and terminated them as the heir to the throne ; while, unused as was Louis XIV. to any opposition to his will, the arguments of the young prince were so powerful, and involved such high interests, that he consented to take further advice ere he carried his intention into effect. The difficulty was, however, whom to consult ; and as the monarch urged this fact with some querulousness, the dauphin suggested that he should demand the opinions of the Abbé Fénélon, and Louvois : two men of whose zeal and loyalty he had in numerous circumstances had ample proof, and who differed alike in profession and feeling.

This suggestion was followed ; and both Fénélon and Louvois protested against a marriage by which the per-

sonal dignity of the monarch and the interests of the nation must alike be compromised; when the dauphin, proud of the influence which he had for the first time exerted over the mind of his father, and satisfied with the promise he received from his own lips that the marriage should not take place, returned to Meudon, where he passed a fortnight in the happy conviction that it had been a mere caprice, which had terminated as idly as it had commenced; while the abbé and the minister alike congratulated themselves on the happy result of their arguments; the first little suspecting that his court favor was thenceforth at an end; or the second, if the evidence of St. Simon be worthy of credence, that his ill-omened interference on that occasion would ultimately cost him his life.

The first doubt of his entire success which was forced upon the mind of the dauphin was, however, engendered by a proposal officially made to him, that if he would consent to withdraw his opposition to the projected marriage, an illegitimate daughter, to whom he was fondly attached, should be immediately legitimated; but even this voluntary concession failed to produce any effect upon the mind of the prince.

“Return to those who intrusted you with this humiliating compromise,” he said, proudly; “and tell them that I do, and always shall, regard them as the most implacable enemies of France, and of the glory of her monarch. If I am ever unfortunate enough to become their master, I swear to you that I will give them cause to repent their audacity in striving to make me favorable to their plot, by offering to legitimize my daughter; and if the affection which I bear her were capable of inducing me to such an act of madness, I would pray to God, on my bended knees, at this very moment to deprive me of her rather than suffer me to sanction so glaring an impropriety. Leave the room, and never again venture into my presence.”

The resolute opposition of the dauphin appeared to ren-

der all further idea of the marriage impossible, when a slight indisposition, by which Madame de Maintenon was for a few days confined to her bed, and an incident consequent upon that indisposition, determined Louis XIV. to conclude it without further reference either to his family or his ministers.

It chanced that Daquin, the physician of the lady, entered the apartment during one of the frequent visits of the king; and being desired to act as though he were not present, proceeded to question his patient upon the several symptoms of her ailment; after which he inquired if he were not correct in assuming that she was likely to become a mother?

Nothing could exceed the indignation of Madame de Maintenon at such an inquiry. "Begone, sir!" she cried angrily, as she raised herself upon her elbow; "begone instantly, and never let me see your face again in my apartment!"

"Nor at my court," added the equally offended monarch.

"Such, sir," murmured the invalid, as the bewildered and mortified physician disappeared, and she herself fell back upon her pillow, veiling her burning cheek with her hand—"such is the result of my error. Innocent as I may be in my own eyes, the world does not acquit me; and I had no right to visit its mistake upon that incautious man; he merely judged of me by report—and that report condemned me."

"It shall do so no longer," said the king, firmly, as he rose, and left the room.

A deep snow was falling; and the wind, which drove it heavily against the casements of the archiepiscopal palace, was roaring in the wide chimney, and detaching a few slates from the ancient roof of the cathedral, when a loud knocking at the entrance-gate of the primate's residence suddenly echoed through the vast apartment in which he

was just listlessly concluding a game at chess with his almoner, and at intervals pitying the fate of the unfortunate wayfarers who were exposed to the inclement weather. In a few instants the door of the room opened, and a court messenger respectfully presented a sealed packet, which M. de Paris hastily opened; and having perused the contents, he dismissed the courier with the simple words, "That is sufficient;" upon which the functionary withdrew; and, as he closed the door behind him, the primate turned to the almoner, and said quietly, "Prepare, sir, if you please, a green vestment; mark the missal at the article *de matrimoniis*; put every thing necessary into a carriage, get into it yourself, and wait for me."

The clock of the cathedral struck eleven as the carriage left the portal of the archiepiscopal palace; and at half-past twelve M. de Harlay and his almoner reached the gate of the Chateau of Versailles, where Bontems was awaiting them, who had no sooner convinced himself of the identity of the visitors than he conducted them across the marble court to the private closet of the king, where they found Madame de Maintenon in full dress, with Louis XIV. standing beside her, while a few paces apart stood the Marquis de Montchevreuil and Père la Chaise.

As the eye of the king rested upon the archbishop, he exclaimed, "Let us go;" and taking the hand of the lady, he led her forward through the long suite of rooms, followed by the other actors in this extraordinary scene, who moved on in profound silence, thrown for an instant into broad light by the torch carried by Bontems, and then suddenly lost in the deep darkness beyond its influence. Nothing was to be heard as the bridal party proceeded, save the muffled sound of their footsteps, deadened by the costly carpets over which they trod; but it was remarked that, as the light flashed for an instant across the portraits of his family which clothed the walls, Louis XIV. glanced eagerly and somewhat nervously upon them, as though he dreaded

the rebuke of some stern eye or haughty lip, for the weakness of which he was about to become guilty.

And that some such feeling of morbid apprehension had indeed fastened upon his imagination was made manifest by the fact, that, upon entering the old chapel, which had been lighted up for the ceremony, the king gazed earnestly for an instant upon the last portrait that had been suspended there, and which was that of Maria Theresa; and Bontems, who chanced to be at his elbow, overheard him murmur to himself, "Have I seen aright? She seemed to look angrily upon me."*

The individuals collected about the altar were Père la Chaise, the Archbishop of Paris, the Marquis and Marchioness de Montchevreuil, Louvois, the Marquis de Chararante, Bontems, valet-de-chambre to the king, and Mademoiselle Nanon, the favorite attendant of Madame de Maintenon.

According to St. Simon, Louvois had only consented to be present on the express condition that the marriage should never be publicly declared; but be this as it may, he acted conjointly with M. de Montchevreuil as its official witness. A temporary altar had been erected in the king's cabinet; and he no sooner entered, leading Madame de Maintenon by the hand, and knelt down beside her, than Père la Chaise celebrated the mass, while the Archbishop of Paris presented the marriage rings, and finally pronounced the benediction; after which the nuptial party departed for the Chateau de Maintenon.

On the morrow all Versailles and the capital rang with the astounding news—Louis XIV. had become the husband of the widow Scarron!

On her return to the palace Madame de Maintenon took possession of a magnificent suite of apartments which had been expressly prepared for her; and although she retained her liveries, she thenceforward ap-

* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

peared only in the carriage of the king, where she occupied the seat formerly sacred to the queen. In private she received the honors due to royalty, and was addressed as "Your Majesty;" while the monarch, whenever he had occasion to mention her, designated her simply, *Madame*.

It is singular that Madame de Montespan, even hating her as she did, should assert that although the king was anxious to declare their marriage, Madame de Maintenon constantly refused to permit it; "and by this wise and prudent conduct reconciled in time even those who had been the most hostile to the measure;"* while St. Simon asserts, on the contrary, that she was greatly disappointed in her hope of entire recognition as Queen of France, and affords such detail of the fact that we are compelled to yield belief to his statement.

A few days after this quasi-royal marriage, Madame de Montespan, having partially recovered her health, removed to her residence at Petit-Bourg, where she was immediately assailed by the whole of her family, who hastened to impress upon her the necessity of losing no more time in paying her respects to Madame de Maintenon as the wife of the monarch, if not for her own sake at least for theirs, who must inevitably be compromised by any mark of disrespect on her part. Repugnant as was such a humiliation to her natural haughtiness, as well as to her outraged feelings, she was unable to contend against their united representations, and at length consented to gratify their wishes, in pursuance of which she appeared for the last time at the palace of Versailles, in a gorgeous robe of gold and silver tissue, looped with jewels.

As she entered the apartment, the king, who was seated near a table, rose for an instant, and bowed graciously, after which he reseated himself, while she made the three courtesies, with a pause between each, which were at that period customary at every court presentation; and thus

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

gradually approached Madame de Maintenon, who occupied a large arm-chair covered with rich brocade. She did not rise, both etiquette and the presence of the king rendering such a condescension impossible; but she flushed perceptibly, as she motioned her visitor to a *tabouret* which stood near her, and began to speak to her of Petit-Bourg, of her health, and of her children; remarking, with a smile, that she would confide a secret to her; which was no less than that the Prince de Condé had already asked the hand of Mademoiselle de Nantes for the Duke de Bourbon his grandson, and had promised that of his granddaughter to the Duke du Maine; and that in two or three years they should see these desirable marriages accomplished.

This perhaps well-intentioned confidence did not tend to reconcile Madame de Montespan to the part which she was then playing. With all her faults, she had been tenderly attached to her children, and she now learned their future destiny from a stranger. The *tabouret* had only wounded her pride; the sense forced upon her of her utter isolation and bereavement, drove the iron into her heart; and after a few more painful efforts at composure, she rose from her incommodious seat, and with a repetition of stately reverences withdrew from this scene of mental suffering.

As she passed through the saloons which separated the reception-room of Madame de Maintenon from the grand stair-case, she found them crowded with courtiers, all of whom were known to her, but by few of whom she was apparently recognized; and hastening to her own apartments, of which she still retained the keys, she threw herself upon a sofa, and sent to summon the Duke du Maine; for her woman-heart was at length completely crushed, and she longed to listen for a moment to the voice of affection and sympathy.

But her hour of retribution was come: Louis Auguste

de Bourbon saw in the soul-stricken woman before him, not the mother whom he was bound to honor, but the discarded favorite whose intimacy could induce neither profit nor advantage ; and she felt that it was so as he approached her without one sign of emotion, coldly remarking, "I am glad to see you again ; we were about to write."

The cup was full. The marchioness released her son from his attendance ; turned a long look on the magnificence which she was about to abandon forever ; and summoned her carriage, from whose window she saw the king, as she traversed the marble court, standing in a balcony to watch her departure.*

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

CHAPTER XVIII.

One day in the Life of Louis XIV.—Exclamation of Madame de Maintenon.

WE have already alluded to the stringent and uninterupted etiquet established by Louis XIV. at Versailles ; but we feel that we should not fulfill our duty as faithful chroniclers of the French court in the seventeenth century did we not present to our readers the detail of a day's observances, and by so doing enable them to appreciate the monotonous and trivial restraints imposed upon himself and all about him by the vanity of the "Great Monarch."

At eight o'clock in the morning, while one of the officers of the oven renewed the wood in the chamber of the king, the under-valets softly opened the shutters, carried away the collation,* the mortar,† and the taper,‡ which had been burning throughout the night, and removed the watch-bed.§ The first valet-de-chambre, who had, meanwhile, dressed himself in an anteroom, then entered, and remained silently beside the royal couch until the hands of the timepiece pointed to the half hour ; when he awoke the monarch, and

* The collation, or *in-case*, was a repast prepared *in case* the king should require refreshment during the night. It generally consisted of a bowl of soup, a cold roasted chicken, bread, wine, and water ; and an enamelled drinking-cup.

† The *mortar* was a small silver vessel, which owed its name to its peculiar form, and which was filled with water, on whose surface floated a mould of yellow wax, weighing half a pound, with a cotton wick in the center.

‡ The taper, which was also left alight throughout the night, was placed in a silver candlestick, standing upon the floor in a basin of the same metal.

§ The watch-bed was occupied by the head valet-de-chambre.

immediately passed into the waiting-room to announce that he no longer slept. An attendant thereupon opened the two battants of the door, when the dauphin and his sons, *Monsieur*, and the Duke de Chartres, who awaited this signal, entered to inquire how the king had passed the night. They were followed, after the interval of a moment, by the Duke du Maine, the Count de Toulouse, the first lord of the bedchamber, and the grand-master of the robes, and these were succeeded by the first valet of the wardrobe, followed by several officers bearing the royal vestments. Fagon, the first physician, and Telier, the head surgeon, had also the privilege of the *entrée* by virtue of their office.

Bontems* then poured into the hands of the king a few drops of spirits of wine, holding beneath them a plate of enamelled silver, and the first lord of the bedchamber presented the holy water, with which the monarch made the sign of the cross upon his brow and breast. This done, the dauphin and the Duke du Maine approached the bed, to inquire how His Majesty had slept, and the king, as he replied, asked in his turn of the latter after the health of Madame de Maintenon; then, still in his bed, he recited the short office of the Holy Ghost, which was no sooner terminated than M. de St. Quentin displayed a collection of wigs, from which Louis XIV. selected that which he intended to wear. When he at length rose, the first lord of the bedchamber put on his dressing-gown, which was always composed of some rich material; Quentin presented the wig, which Louis adjusted with his own hands, and Bontems drew on his stockings, and placed near him his slippers of embroidered velvet. The king had no sooner thrust his feet into these than he again crossed himself with the holy water, emerged from behind the balustrade which inclosed the bed, and seated himself in another large

* Head valet-de-chambre.

arm-chair which was placed beside the fireplace, when he demanded the *First Entrée*.*

The principal lord of the bedchamber immediately repeated in a loud voice, "*The first entrée!*" and an attendant stationed near the door then admitted those who were privileged to assist at the *petit lever*.†

The king only shaved every second day; on which occasions, while an attendant prepared the water, and held the bason, Quentin removed the royal beard, and afterward washed the parts upon which he had operated with a soft sponge saturated with spirits of wine and water. The king wiped his face himself, while Bontems held the looking-glass.

At the moment in which the master of the robes approached to dress him, the king demanded his chamber, or *Grande Entrée*, upon which three of his principal attendants took up their position at the entrance of the apartment, attended by several valets-de-chambre and door-keepers of the cabinet; admission to the *grand lever* being a signal favor for which even princes occasionally sighed for a con-

* Until the year 1789 this name was given to the familiar receptions which took place daily in the apartments of the principal members of the royal family of France. There were three descriptions of *entrée*: the familiar *entrée* took place when the king awoke, and was accorded only to princes of the blood, and occasionally to certain great nobles. Foreign princes, ambassadors, dukes and peers, Spanish grandees, &c., were admitted to the great or little *entrées*, which differed only in the hours at which they were held. The great officers of the crown, and of the king's household, were also privileged to be present. There was, moreover, the *entrée* of the cabinet, open to the great almoner, the king's equerries, the captains of the body-guard, the Swiss guards, the gendarmes, and all the ministers without distinction. The *entrées* were conducted with the same ceremony at the courts of the dauphin, the queen, and the princes and princesses of the blood.

† This term signifies the less formal reception accorded to the more especial favorites of the monarch, and involved less ceremony than the *grand lever*, by which it was succeeded.

siderable time in vain ; while the greatest precaution was observed to prevent the intrusion of any unprivileged person. Thus, as each individual presented himself, his name was whispered to the first lord of the bedchamber, who repeated it to the king. When the monarch made no reply, the visitor was admitted, and the duke walked back to his station near the fireplace, whence he marshaled the newcomers to their several places, in order to prevent their pressing too closely about His Majesty. Princes and governors, marshals and peers, were alike subjected to this tedious and somewhat humiliating ceremony, from which three individuals alone were excepted ; and these three were Racine, Boileau, and Mansard, who, on their arrival at the guarded door, simply scratched against the panel, when the huissier threw back the battant, and they stood in the presence of the monarch.

Meanwhile, the king was occupied in dressing himself. A valet of the wardrobe delivered to a gentleman of the chamber the socks and garters, which he, in his turn, presented to the monarch, who drew on the former himself ; a second then handed the *haut-de-chausses*, to which his silk stockings were attached ; and a third put on his shoes, and clasped their diamond buckles. Two pages, habited in crimson velvet, overlaid with gold and silver lace, then removed the slippers, while the king adjusted his garters, which were also buckled with diamonds.*

The royal breakfast succeeded. Two officers of the buttery entered, one carrying a loaf on an enamelled salver, and the other a folded napkin, between two plates of the like description ; while at the same time the royal cup-bearer presented to the first lord a vase of gold-enamel,

* Although the king, without an absolute disregard of etiquette, was at liberty to put on his garters with his own hands, he was not free to take them off at night ; and, while it was the admitted privilege of the head valet-de-chambre to unclasp that of the right leg, an inferior attendant was permitted to remove the other.

into which he poured a small quantity of wine and water, which was tasted by a second cup-bearer; the vase was then rinsed, and offered to the king upon a gold saucer; and he had no sooner drank, than the dauphin, giving his hat and gloves to the first lord in waiting, took the napkin, and presented it to the monarch to wipe his lips.

When he had finished his frugal repast, Louis XIV. threw off his dressing-gown, and while one of the higher attendants withdrew his night-shirt by the left sleeve, Bontems held the other. The latter then received from the hands of the monarch the reliquary which he wore about his neck, and transferred it to one of his subordinates, who carried it to the king's closet, where he remained to guard it. The royal shirt, which had, meanwhile, been warmed, was then given to the first lord, and the dauphin, once more disembarassing himself of his hat and gloves, approached and presented it to the king. A marquis then assisted in the arrangement of the *haut-de-chausses*, and a duke adjusted the inner waistcoat.

Two valets of the wardrobe next brought forward the royal sword, the vest, and the blue ribbon; when some man of high rank buckled on the sword, assisted in putting on the vest, and flung over it a scarf with the ribbon to which were attached the cross of the Holy Ghost in diamonds, and the cross of St. Louis tied with red. The king then drew on his under coat, with the assistance of the grand-master of the robes, adjusted his cravat of rich lace, which was folded round his neck by a favorite courtier, and, finally, emptied into the pockets of the loose outer coat, which was presented to him for that purpose, the contents of those which he had worn on the previous day. He then received two handkerchiefs of costly point from another attendant, by whom they were carried on an enamelled saucer of an oval shape, called *salve*, and his toilet once completed, Louis XIV. returned to the *ruelle* of his bed, where he knelt down upon two cushions, already pre-

pared for him, and said his prayers, all the bishops and cardinals entering within the balustrade in his suit, and reciting their devotional exercises in a suppressed voice.

At the conclusion of his prayer, the king received such of the foreign ambassadors as required an audience.

When the monarch was indisposed, or was undergoing medical treatment, which he did regularly every month, he received, in his bed, all the persons to whom he felt disposed to accord so great an honor, the most distinguished or intimate being ranged in two rows on either side; but this favor was never granted save to individuals of high birth, of great reputation, or formally invited by himself.*

From his chamber Louis XIV. passed into his cabinet, where he found, or was followed by all who had the right of entrance; and where he issued his orders for the day.† This done, every one retired, save the legitimized princes, MM. d'Montchevreuil and d'O., their former governors, Mansard, and the Marquis d'Antin, the son of Madame de Montespan. The interval which ensued must have afforded alike repose and satisfaction to the monarch, as well as profitable amusement to the members of his family, for it was then that they discussed plans, buildings, and gardens; and the king terminated the conversation only when compelled to do so by public business. During this time the court awaited the reappearance of Louis XIV. in the great gallery, the captain of the guard alone being seated near the door of the cabinet, where he was informed when the king was ready to attend mass, at which his private band sang an anthem.

During his progress to the chapel every one addressed

* In 1714, the First President de Novion having approached the bed of Louis XIV., who was indisposed, the Duke d'Aumont, first gentleman of the chamber, drew him back by his gown, exclaiming; "Where are you going? Retire immediately; persons of your description do not enter within the balustrade unless summoned by the king."

† Versailles Ancien et Moderne.

him who desired the privilege, it being merely necessary to intimate such a wish to the captain of the guard, and even this formality was dispensed with where the individuals were persons of high rank. On his return from the mass, the king entered the council-chamber, and at one o'clock he dined.

The dinner was always *au petit couvert*, that is, the king dined alone in his own chamber, at a square table placed opposite the center window, where three courses and a dessert were regularly served, Louis XIV. being constitutionally a great eater. When the table was laid, the courtiers entered, and the first gentleman of the chamber announced to the king that the dinner was served; the monarch then took his seat, and, in the absence of the grand-chamberlain, was waited on by the same functionary. Sometimes, but very rarely, the dauphin, and subsequently the dauphin and his sons, were present at the *petit couvert*, standing—nor did the king ever invite them to be seated—while, as a matter of course, the same ceremony was observed toward the princes of the blood and the cardinals. *Monsieur* frequently attended, presented the napkin, and remained standing like the rest, until after the lapse of a few moments, during which he continued to fulfill the duties of the grand-chamberlain, the king inquired if he would not be seated; upon which the Duke d'Orleans made a profound bow, and his royal brother desired that a seat should be brought for him. This seat was a stool, which was placed behind the chair of the monarch; but, nevertheless, *Monsieur* remained standing until the king repeated, "Be seated, brother;" upon which the duke availed himself of the permission accorded to him, and retained his position until the termination of the repast, when he once more presented the napkin, and thus completed his duties.

No lady was ever admitted to the *petit couvert* save Madame de Lamothe, the wife of the marshal, who had

retained this privilege from her former appointment of governess to the children of France; but it was one of which she seldom availed herself. Immediately that she appeared, however, a stool was placed for her, from the fact of her being patented a duchess.

The *grands couverts* were extremely rare, and were generally held at Fontainebleau, upon occasions of ceremony.

On rising from table the king paused for a few moments in the saloon, to afford the persons of rank who might desire to address him, an opportunity of so doing, before he returned to his cabinet; after which he entered, and the door was instantly closed. Then it was that he again devoted a short interval to his natural children, and the members of his household, and received the dauphin when he had not presented himself at the *lever*. Having done this he fed his dogs, and amused himself for a time by playing with them; after which he demanded his wardrobe, and changed his dress before the small number of courtiers whom the first gentleman of the chamber had thought proper to admit; and this was no sooner accomplished, than he left the palace by a private stair-case, in order to reach his carriage, which awaited him in the marble court.

Louis XIV. was not only partial to the open air, but it was to him a necessary of life, for when he was long deprived of it he suffered painfully from headache, an infirmity which he attributed to the inordinate use of perfumes in which his mother, Anne of Austria, had constantly indulged; and to which he had imbibed so strong an antipathy, that those who approached his person were compelled to forego a luxury at that period appreciated almost beyond any other. This great craving for fresh air, had rendered the monarch almost insensible to the changes of temperature to which he was necessarily exposed; he cared neither for heat, cold, nor rain, and it required that the weather should be bad indeed for him to forego his exercise, which con-

sisted either in stag-hunting, shooting, or overlooking his workmen. Occasionally, also, he drove out, accompanied by the ladies of the court, to whom he gave pic-nics in the forests of Marly or Fontainebleau. For these parties none were eligible unless expressly invited, save the principal officers of his household; but even on the occasions when these little fêtes were held in the gardens of Versailles, or in those of the Trianon, the king alone wore his hat.

At Marly, on the contrary, when the monarch went there unaccompanied by his female court, all were at liberty to follow him, to join him, or to quit him as they pleased; and that palace, to which Louis XIV. avowedly retired to escape from the etiquette of Versailles, also possessed another privilege. The king no sooner left the state apartments than he said, "Your hats, gentlemen;" upon which courtiers, officers of the guard, architects, and builders, obeyed him by covering their heads. The hunt had also its immunity, for one invitation sufficed, and the same indulgence was extended to the royal card tables. The king was partial to high play, and fond of seeing it constantly going forward. In the principal saloon the lansquenet was the leading game; but in the others all were indiscriminately permitted.

On returning from the drive the king again changed his dress, and remained for a short time in his cabinet; after which he proceeded to the apartments of Madame de Maintenon, where he remained until ten o'clock, which was the hour of supper, when the house-steward on duty, wand in hand, gave notice to the captain of the guard who occupied the antechamber, and who, throwing open the door, announced that the king was served.

A quarter of an hour afterward Louis XIV. walked to the supper-room. During the interval the officers had made the *preparations*; that is, they had tasted the bread and salt, and tried the plates, the fork, the spoon, the knife, and the toothpicks of the king. The meats had been brought

in (according to the ceremonial decreed by the court ordinance of the 7th of January, 1681), preceded by two guards, a huissier, an officer of the pantry, the controller-general, a controller of the buttery, and an equery of the kitchen, followed by two other guards, to prevent all contact with the royal food.

This done, Louis XIV. in his turn, preceded by the house-steward and two ushers, bearing flambeaux, advanced and took his seat in front of his *nef** and his *cadenas*;† and looking round him, found himself surrounded by all the princes and princesses of France, accompanied, in latter years, by their children; and, moreover, a numerous circle of courtiers and ladies. He immediately desired the princes and princesses to take their seats; and they had no sooner done so, than six noblemen stationed themselves at each end of the table, in order to wait upon the king, and to renew the trial of the meats. When the king wished to drink the cup-bearer exclaimed aloud, "Drink for the king."

The principal officers of the cellar made a profound bow, approached with an enamelled cup and two decanters upon a salver, and tasted the liquids; the king then drank, and the officials, with a second salutation, replaced the decanters upon the sideboard. When he had supped the monarch rose, and his example was followed by the whole of the guests. Two guards and an usher led the way; and the king, followed by all who had been present at the repast, proceeded to his bedchamber. On entering, he remained leaning for a few minutes against the balustrade at the foot of the bed; and then, after bowing to the ladies, passed into his cabinet, where he gave the watch-word to the captain of the guard. When this was done, all the royal family entered in their turn; the king occupied one arm-chair,

* The *nef* was a species of gold or enamelled vase, in which the linen was inclosed.

† The *cadenas* was a casket containing the knife, fork, &c.

and *Monsieur* a second, but the dauphin remained standing as well as the other princes. The princesses were all seated upon stools, and the ladies of honor were in waiting in the council-closet which adjoined that of the king.

Toward midnight Louis XIV. rose, and again went to feed his dogs; after which he returned and took his leave for the night, before he retired to his chamber to prayer. The *petit coucher* then commenced, to which all were admitted who had the privilege of the morning *entrées*, or who held office; and although the audience was a short one, it was, nevertheless, the moment chosen by those who had a favor to ask, or a petition to offer.

All had previously been prepared for the night-toilet of the monarch. The *en-cas* had been deposited upon the sideboard, the arm-chair wheeled to the fire, and the dressing-gown and slippers placed near it. The barber had collected the napkins and the combs; and the famous candlestick, with its two wax-lights, by which the courtiers estimated the amount of their present favor, was on a table near the fauteuil. When the king approached the chair, he gave to the valet-de-chambre his watch and reliquary, and loosened his blue ribbon, which he delivered to the nobleman in waiting, together with his waistcoat and cravat; he then seated himself, and the first valet-de-chambre, assisted by one of his companions, detached his garters, while two valets of the wardrobe removed his shoes, his stockings, and *haut-de-chausses*, and a couple of pages presented his slippers.

This done, the dauphin approached with the night-shirt, which had previously been warmed by a valet of the wardrobe, and the first valet-de-chambre having lifted the candlestick from the table, the king indicated the nobleman who was to have the honor of lighting him to bed, which was no sooner decided than the door-keeper exclaimed:

“Now, gentlemen, pass out.”

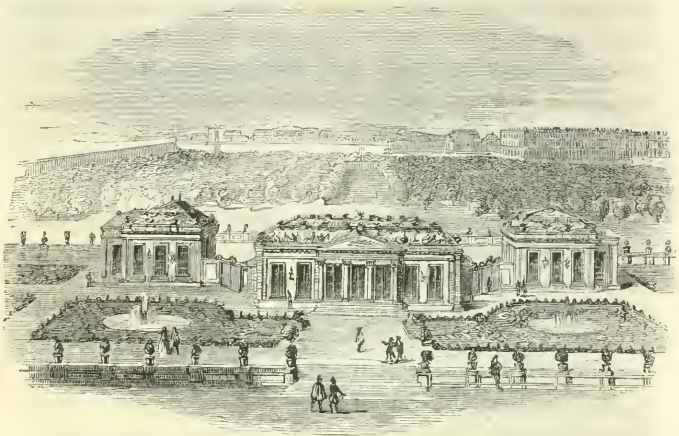
The whole of the assistants then left the room, save the

candle-bearer and the physician; when the king decided upon the dress which he would wear on the following day, got into bed, and made a sign to the physician that he might approach and ascertain the state of his health. The monarch was then finally left alone with Bontems, who closed his curtains, extinguished the tapers in the candlestick, arranged the night lights, and took possession of the watch-bed!*

We feel all the puerility of these details—all the tedium of these pompous nothings; but we have deemed it impossible to give an accurate idea of Louis XIV. as he really was, without condemning both ourselves and our readers to the weariness of this monotonous chapter.

Well might Madame de Maintenon exclaim, in a letter to her brother, written in 1684: "Save those who fill the highest stations, I know of none more unfortunate than those who envy them. If you could only form an idea of what it is!"

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.



Manow of Versailles

CHAPTER XIX.

Interior Economy of Madame de Maintenon—Divisions in the Royal Family—the Palace Etiquet—Madame de Maintenon attempts her public Recognition—Opposition of Louvois—The Satires of Meudon—The English Letter—Death of Charles II. of England—the Prince of Orange—Arrival of James II. and his Queen in France—the Duke de Lauzun—Munificence of Louis XIV.—Mary of Modena—Indisposition of Louis XIV.—Restlessness of Madame de Montespan—Marriage of Mademoiselle de Nantes and the Duke de Bourbon Condé—The Window of the Trianon—The Civil War in the Cevennes—Fête at Versailles—Departure of the young Nobility for the German Army—Prince Eugène—Imprudence of Louvois—Intercepted Letters—The Princess de Conti—Mademoiselle de Chion and M. de Clermont—Death of Condé—The “Hermitage” of Marly.

WE have already stated that immediately upon her marriage, Madame de Maintenon, being unable to bear the royal arms upon her equipages, compromised the difficulty by suppressing those of Scarron, and carrying only her own, without, however, adopting the widow’s lozenge.

The apartments which were prepared for her at Versailles, were at the top of the grand stair-case opposite to those of the king, and on the same floor; and a similar arrangement was thenceforward made in every palace which she from time to time inhabited. Moreover, public business was from the same period transacted constantly in her apartment, where two arm-chairs occupied either side of the fireplace, one for the monarch, and the other for herself; while two stools stood near, one intended for her work-bag and the other for the accommodation of the minister.

During the discussions which ensued, she was occupied either in reading or with her tapestry-frame, and consequently heard all that passed between the king and Louvois, but seldom uttered a word, save when appealed to by the former, and even then gave her opinion guardedly, appearing to take little interest in what was going forward; although it was soon known that she had previously exposed her views upon the various questions to the minister in private.

As regarded her social relations, she never paid visits to any of the princesses of the blood, not even to *Madame*; nor did any of them enter her apartments unless summoned to an audience—a circumstance which was so rare in its occurrence that it always became the gossip of the court. Whenever she desired to speak to the daughters of the king, she sent to command their presence, and as she almost invariably did so in order to express her displeasure at some imprudence of which they had been guilty, they always obeyed in trembling, and left her in tears. The Duke du Maine, alone, was free to come and go as he listed, always sure of an affectionate welcome, which he returned as warmly; for from his earliest boyhood he had loved *Madame de Maintenon* better than any other person upon earth.

From the period of the king's marriage, those divisions

commenced in the royal family, which were destined to throw so deep a gloom over the conclusion of his reign. The dauphin lived entirely at Meudon, seldom visited Versailles, and never again passed the night there; while the monarch could not conceal even from himself the painful conviction of his son's increasing distaste to a union which was equally unpalatable to his people. MONSEIGNEUR, indeed, lost no opportunity of expressing his sentiments upon the subject to those about him, and never gratified Madame de Maintenon by any other title than that of "my absurd step-mother;" a pertinacity of bitterness which deeply wounded the king. In vain, however, that Louis XIV., by constantly receiving company in the apartments of Madame de Maintenon, endeavored, in this manner, to overcome the repugnance of MONSEIGNEUR to his stately bride. The prince resolutely refused to the last to regard her as the wife of the monarch; and even, on one occasion, when the king had taken him by the arm, trusting that from respect he would not venture to break away from him, and had thus led him to the threshold of her apartment, he no sooner saw the door open than, disengaging his arm, he made a profound bow and instantly retired. Thenceforward the very name of the dauphin became odious to Madame de Maintenon; but this fact produced no effect whatever upon the prince.

Madame, in her turn, disappeared from the court, and passed her time at Fontainebleau, where she regularly spent several hours each day in writing those witty and satirical letters to her brother, Prince Anthony Ulric of Bavaria, and other friends at her native court, which afterward became so famous. Not satisfied by detailing in these the events which were passing before her own eyes, she diligently informed herself of all the details connected with the private life of Louis XIV., from his earliest years, and thus made her correspondence a court-history of the most curious description. Persons and facts were alike portray-

ed with a stinging pen; and enough has been said of the peculiar habits and feelings of Charlotte Elizabeth of Bavaria, to afford earnest of the unhesitating vigor with which her portraits were painted—while, as she bitterly hated Madame de Maintenon, she did not spare her one verbal indignity which could render her ridiculous in the eyes of a foreign court.

Thus persecuted from without, the quasi-queen found but slight compensation in the enforced homage of those of her own immediate circle, and the title of *majesty* conferred upon her by her personal attendants, whose extreme scrupulousness upon this point amounted to an epigram.

While the public were still sneeringly alluding to the strange elevation of “the widow Scarron,” Madame de Montespan throwing out keen and stinging inferences, calculated to sully the past reputation of “her children’s governess,” and the whole court shrugging their shoulders, half in regret and half in disdain, as they found themselves compelled to prostrate all their tastes and habits before a person hitherto their inferior both in birth and rank, the palace menials were prodigal of sonorous words, by which the favor of the king was so evidently conciliated, that the attendants of a higher grade made strenuous efforts to imitate their example. That they, however, experienced considerable reluctance to expose themselves to sarcasm through the adoption of this habit was made manifest on one occasion by Bontems, when in returning to Pélisson a book which he had lent to Madame de Maintenon, after making her acknowledgment for his politeness, the courtly servitor added, “I am assured that Her Majes—I *would* have said that *Madame* has read it.”

That this affectation of royalty was pleasurable to the lady herself, will not, perhaps, admit of doubt; for, although fearing to oppose the desire of the king that their marriage should remain unacknowledged, she never actually asserted herself as the wife of the monarch, she nev-

ertheless betrayed considerable satisfaction whenever circumstances permitted her tacitly to appropriate the privileges of her newly-acquired position.* Thus, on one occasion, when she presented herself at the gate of a convent into which all ingress was prohibited save to members of the royal family, and was announced to the abbess as Madame de Maintenon, the holy recluse had no sooner reminded her that she could only sanction her entrance in the event of her being the wife of the monarch, then she replied with a quiet smile, "You may open your doors, madam; you may open your doors."

Nevertheless, the royal bride found herself abandoned by the actual members of the royal family, and recognized only by the *legitimized* princes—a fact which assuredly rendered her desire to become the acknowledged wife of the monarch natural as well as probable. That her ambition alone would have sufficed to prompt such a wish, there can be no doubt; for what woman, placed in her position, and conscious that she had attained to it by her own propriety of conduct, would not have been desirous of profiting to the utmost by so extraordinary an elevation? She had involved herself in all the tedium of a royal existence, and it can scarcely be attributed to her as a crime that she endeavored to secure its immunities while experiencing its privations.

Her first effort to accomplish this recognition had nearly proved successful; for her influence over the mind of the monarch, far from declining after their union, became even more powerful than before; but Louvois, who had spies in every direction, no sooner ascertained that the king had, in a moment of weakness, suffered himself to be betrayed into a promise that it should be made public, and was preparing to redeem his word, than he hastened to the palace, and having requested His Majesty to dismiss his attendants, declared the errand upon which he came, and re-

* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

minded him that he had his royal pledge never, upon any pretext whatever, to declare the marriage. He then, with considerable warmth, expatiated upon the inconvenience and degradation of such a step as that which he meditated, and entreated that he would reconsider the matter before he was compromised beyond remedy.

Louis XIV. did not attempt to conceal his change of purpose; but he condescended to evasions, and began to move toward another apartment in order to escape, when the attendants, who had been careful when they were compelled to withdraw not to close the door completely after them, saw Louvois suddenly rush before the king, and, throwing himself upon his knees, present the hilt of a small sword which he always wore to the monarch, exclaiming, "Take my life, sire, that I may not become the witness of a disgrace which will dishonor you in the eyes of all Europe."

Louis XIV. made an impatient gesture, and still strove to withdraw; but the minister kept his ground, declaring that the king would no sooner have yielded to this weakness, than he would be the victim of his own mortification and remorse; and, finally, he so wrought upon the wavering disposition of the monarch, that he induced him to repeat his promise that the marriage should never be declared.

The Archbishop of Paris, whom Louvois had summoned to second him in his enterprise, arrived shortly afterward to confirm the king in his resolution; and thus, for a time, the hopes of Madame de Maintenon were frustrated.

The second attempt of the same nature proved equally unfortunate in its results. It was made on an occasion when the king for the first time caused the apartments of the late queen to be thrown open, upon the pretext of exhibiting therein the magnificent ornaments which he was about to present to the cathedral at Strasburg; but as it was generally believed, prior to their occupation by Ma-

dame de Maintenon. Such, however, was the opposition which he experienced, that, on the failure of this last effort, he authoritatively commanded the lady never again to venture upon such a request.*

Nor was this the only mortification to which Madame de Maintenon was subjected. Every day an epigram, a sonnet, or a ballad, made its appearance, which inflicted a bitter wound upon her pride, and cruelly harassed the king, by whom all these pungent and perpetual satires were traced to the court of Meudon; while these were, after a time, followed by a letter, forwarded to Madame de Montespan by the Duchess of Portsmouth, the celebrated mistress through whose blandishments Louis XIV. had sought to detach Charles II. from the Dutch alliance. It was entirely written by the hand of the English monarch, and was to the following effect:—

“Sire: I conjure you in the name of the Great Henry, whose precious blood circulates in both our veins, to respect the Protestants, whom he looked upon as his children. If, as it is reported, you wish to compel them to renounce their religion under pain of banishment from your kingdom, I offer to them an asylum in that of England, where I will prove to them that I have the honor of being the grandson of the Great Henry, by the protection which I shall afford to those who for so long a period fought with distinction under his banner. I feel persuaded that you will remove from about your person the perfidious advisers who could have imagined such a proscription. There are a great number of those Protestants who have shed their blood in your service. What a recompense do you reserve to them! Want, and the disgrace of being banished from their country—from the country of the Great Henry! Where is the man who would not feel it an honor to have been born his subject? And shall it be the heir to his throne, his grandson, who destroys a

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

work which it gave him so much trouble to consolidate, and which finally cost him his life? The kings of France should swear, on ascending the throne, never to suffer any Jesuit about their persons or in their families, since they were accused of coöperating in the assassination of Henry IV; and that they dare, in the present day, to insult him even in his tomb by destroying his most cherished work. Listen, my brother and cousin, to the representations of one of your nearest relatives, who loves you a king, and esteems you as his friend."

This letter, made public after the death of its writer by Madame de Montespan, produced the stronger effect as it seemed like a voice which had arisen from the grave to make a last and useless effort in favor of the unfortunate Calvinists; but Louis XIV. was already too far committed in this barbarous and inglorious persecution to recede.*

Charles II. died on the 16th February, 1685; and his successor urged by the French king to render himself absolute, and by the Jesuits to reëstablish alike their religion and their influence, commenced his reign as though these measures were already accomplished. Had he acted with more prudence it is probable that the English people, weary of revolution, might have gradually accustomed themselves to his faith, on condition that he left them in peace to exercise their own; but he was unguarded enough to receive the nuncio of the Pope publicly at his court, at the very moment when he imprisoned the seven Protestant bishops whom he had endeavored in vain to convert to the faith of Rome, and thus rendered himself obnoxious to the people at large by a line of conduct, both religious and political, for which they were totally unprepared.

Meanwhile, the Prince of Orange kept his eyes steadily fixed upon the throne of his father-in-law, and, after the birth of an heir to the crown, equipped the famous fleet

* Louis XIV. et son S'ècle.

which was destined to weaken the power of Louis XIV, and to depose James. In this strait, when the English king wrote to solicit assistance alike from the Emperor of Germany and the monarch of France, Louis alone prepared to aid his projects; but, before he had completed the necessary arrangements, it was announced to him by a courier, that the Queen of England and the Prince of Wales had landed at Calais under the protection of the Duke de Lauzun, who, after having gained the good graces of James II., as he had previously done those of Louis XIV., had been intrusted by the weak monarch with the safeguard of his wife and child. Neglected by both his daughters abandoned by one son-in-law, and pursued by the other, the unhappy James had no alternative save to solicit for them an asylum in France.

When informing the king of her arrival in his territories, Mary of Modena observed in her letter, that one circumstance alone lessened the joy with which she confided herself to the protection of so great a king, and that one was, that she dared not bring to his feet the individual to whom both herself and the Prince of Wales were indebted for their liberty and perhaps even for their lives.

In reply Louis XIV. declared that, partaking the hatred of the queen toward her enemies, he was equally ready to testify his satisfaction to the Duke de Lauzun by restoring him to his favor; and from that day granted to him the renewed privilege of the *grande entrée*, promising him, moreover, accommodation in the palace at Versailles.

“M. de Lauzun,” writes Madame de Sévigné to her daughter, in a letter dated 27th December, 1688, “must be much gratified by this adventure; he has exhibited sense, judgment, discretion, and courage; and has at last found his way to Versailles by London. He alone could have done this. The princess is indignant to think that the king is pleased with him, and that he is again to return to court.” And again, on the 10th of January, 1689,

she says, "He has apartments in the palace, at which he is much pleased. He has written to MADemoiselle, but she is so much incensed against him that I doubt if he will be able to appease her."

The new favor of the duke, in fact, angered the princess to so extreme a degree that she ultimately wrote to Louis XIV. to entreat that he would banish him from the capital, his infidelities, which never failed to reach her ears, having exasperated her feelings; and before the termination of the month, whether from the representations of MADemoiselle, or that Louis XIV. was displeased at the presumption and self-glory exhibited by the returned exile, the star of Lauzun once more paled. He was not only compelled to vacate his apartments, but was also refused the *entrées*; the romance and marvel of his chivalric expedition had subsided into mere commonplace, and he found himself simply an insignificant item of the great sum total of the court.

In this instance, however, the romantic duke had richly merited a better fate, for he had availed himself in a gallant manner of the opportunity which had been afforded him; and the English queen had in no degree exaggerated her obligation to the hitherto weak and egotistical courtier.

When Louis XIV. permitted the visit of Lauzun to England, in order to deliver the princess his cousin from an importunate and ungrateful inmate, he had, in order to veil his real purpose, and to continue his demonstration of interest in the fortunes of James, commissioned him to watch over the safety of that monarch and his family, and, in case of peril, to afford them all the assistance which it might be in his power to offer; although in so doing it is extremely possible that the French king did not for a moment contemplate the probability that Lauzun could become an efficient help to the persecuted Stuarts; while it is certain that the actual progress of events gave to the

mission of the duke an importance by no means anticipated even by himself.

In the course of December (1688) the Prince of Wales had been privately conveyed from Portsmouth to London, and concealed in a mean house outside the city, until he could with safety be removed from the country; while James and his queen had also secretly returned to London, in order to attempt a plan of evasion suggested by Lauzun, and which only could be effected from the capital. It was decided that the queen and her young son should first depart, under the charge of the duke, as by these means the escape of the king himself would be rendered less difficult and his progress more rapid; and, accordingly, on the night of the escape the queen went to rest as usual; but rose an hour after midnight, and having hastily completed her preparations for flight, was consigned to the care of the duke by the king himself, who, as he beckoned him to enter the royal chamber, wrung his hand convulsively, and with eyes streaming with tears, gasped out, in a low, husky voice,

“Here is the queen: you know where to find my son: I confide both of them to your zeal and loyalty. Do not forsake them until you have delivered them safely into the hands of the Most Christian King of France—the most pious, and the greatest of monarchs.”

Lauzun bent his knee, and pressed the royal hand to his lips in token of obedience, after which he withdrew to a remote corner of the chamber, while Mary of Modena approached the bed to take leave of her ill-fated husband. Their parting was a melancholy one, for each felt that it might, perhaps, be eternal; but after a time the weeping queen turned, with a gesture of entreaty toward the French duke, who succeeded in leading her from the room. In five minutes more the fugitives were seated in the carriage of the Florentine minister; and after having secured the person of the prince with his nurses, they made their

way to the river, near Westminster, where M. de Lauzun had a boat in waiting, rowed only by a single boatman, of whose fidelity and trustworthiness he had previously assured himself.

The night was dark and stormy; the rain fell in torrents, and the swollen river dashed its wind-swept waters heavily against the banks; but despite these unfavorable circumstances they reached the opposite shore so rapidly that the carriage which the duke had hired to convey them below Gravesend was not at its post when they reached the appointed spot; and thus, while Dufour, the confidential valet of Lauzun, proceeded to seek the missing coachman at a small public-house situated a short distance from the river, the queen remained for twenty minutes buried to her ankles in mud, and exposed to the whole fury of the storm.

The extreme energy and impatience of the French valet aroused the curiosity of the landlord; who, resolved if possible to solve what he felt convinced must prove to be a secret of some importance, no sooner saw the tardy coachman mount his box, and prepare to set forth in search of his employers, than he determined to accompany him, under the pretext of tendering his services. He accordingly armed himself with a lantern, and, springing upon the foot-board of the carriage, arrived with the equipage at the river-bank, when he instantly turned the full glare of the light on the shivering group who were awaiting its advent. Fortunately one of the servants of the duke, who immediately detected the motive of this sudden illumination, had the presence of mind to affect to slip, and throwing himself upon the bearer of the lantern, they both fell together, and in so doing extinguished the candle, and afforded to the illustrious fugitives an opportunity of entering the carriage undetected.

A piece of gold soon appeased the wrath of the landlord; and this done, the travelers drove off, and a mile

or two upon the road, were met by a friend of Lauzun, a certain M. de Saint Victor, accompanied by three horse-men, well mounted, and armed to the teeth, by whom they were escorted at a little distance, and thus protected from absolute danger, although still a prey to the most gloomy apprehensions.

It was seven o'clock in the morning when the little party reached the secluded bay in which a yacht, hired by the duke, was awaiting their arrival, whose captain was entirely ignorant of the individuality of his passengers, and not a moment was lost in their embarkation. The queen, closely veiled, and carrying the Prince of Wales under her arm like a bundle of clothing, at once descended to the cabin, where she remained throughout the passage; while M. de Lanzun, to whom every order given by the captain was instantly translated, stood prepared to plunge a dagger into his breast upon the slightest suspicion of treason. He, however, evinced no such intention; and after a favorable run, the yacht cast anchor at five o'clock in the evening at Dunes, near Calais.

By singular good fortune the infant prince, at that period only six months old, had never uttered a cry, either in the carriage, or on board the vessel; but at the moment when the anchor was dropped, having awoke hungry, and the nurse, then suffering from sea-sickness, being unable to satisfy his craving, he began to moan so piteously, that the sound soon attracted the attention of the captain; who, instantly suspecting the truth, turned with a gesture of intelligence toward the duke, exclaiming, "I will lose no time in putting my little friend ashore:" and at the moment of disembarkation, when the queen emerged from her hiding-place, and stood unveiled upon the deck of his vessel, he approached her with profound respect; and seizing an opportunity when he could not be overheard by any of the crew, murmured, with downcast eyes, "I shall probably be hanged on my return; but I shall at least die

with the consciousness that I have assisted in saving the life of Your Majesty.”

Mary of Modena strove to smile amid her tears as she extended her hand, and permitted him to raise it to his lips; after which she repaid his loyalty with regal munificence, and stepped on shore. At Calais she was received by M. de Charost, who lodged her in the house of a wealthy citizen, apologizing for an absence of ceremonial, which had been solely occasioned by his ignorance of her intended arrival; to which address the fugitive queen answered, with a sad smile, as she flung herself into a chair with the royal child clasped to her bosom, “Spare yourself all further excuses, sir; it is more than three months since I have felt so well, and so tranquil as regards my own fate or that of the Prince of Wales.”

An hour after her landing, Mary of Modena addressed the letter to which we have already alluded to Louis XIV., who hastened to reply in a spirit of chivalry worthy of a great and prosperous monarch.

Nevertheless, although assured of a welcome which gratified her heart and satisfied her dignity, the queen resolutely refused to proceed farther than Boulogne until she received satisfactory assurances of her husband's evasion, determined, as she declared, should he unhappily be arrested, to return and share his martyrdom. The high-hearted Mary of Modena was not, however, destined to undergo so bitter a trial, for news soon reached her of the successful flight of James from the capital, upon which she at once commenced her journey toward Paris.

When Louis XIV. was informed that the illustrious fugitive was approaching, he proceeded, accompanied by *Monsieur* and *MONSEIGNEUR*, to meet her, and halted near Chalon, in a cross-way whence several roads diverged, where he waited more than a quarter of an hour before any trace of the travelers appeared; at the close of that time, however, the carriage containing the Prince of

Wales halted a few paces from his own, and it had no sooner done so than the king alighted, and opening the door with his own hand, said, cheerfully, "I must make the first visit." He then took the royal infant in his arms, kissed it several times, expatiated upon its beauty, and only restored it finally to its nurse in order to welcome the queen.

Mary of Modena no sooner recognized Louis XIV. than she alighted in her turn, and advanced toward him with an unsteady step; but in the next instant the lips of the king were fastened upon her forehead.

"Sire," she said, in a trembling voice, "you see before you an unfortunate princess, who comes to seek her only consolation in the kindness of Your Majesty; and I will venture to add that I am not altogether unworthy of it, as I have always been sincerely attached to your interests."

"Madam," replied Louis, with one of those beaming smiles which rarely but gloriously irradiated his fine countenance, "I render you to-day only a melancholy service; but I trust soon to do you one of more importance, and more worthy alike of you, of the king my brother, and of myself.

He then presented *Monsieur* and MONSEIGNEUR to the royal stranger, who, after an exchange of compliments, followed the king into her coach, where she was already accompanied by Lady Powis and the Signora Vittoria Montécuculi, to whom she was much attached. Thus they proceeded to St. Germain, where they arrived at four o'clock; and they had no sooner driven into the grand court of the palace than the king alighted, and offering his hand to his illustrious visitor, conducted her to a magnificent apartment which had belonged to the late queen, saying, courteously, as they crossed the threshold,

"If, indeed, Maria Theresa of Austria can still feel an interest in earthly things, even in that heaven to which her soul has ascended, she can but be gratified on see-

ing her place occupied by another Mary, so beautiful and so virtuous."

After having thus nobly installed his royal guest, Louis XIV. with his suite returned to Versailles; and on taking possession of the palace of St. Germain, which was thenceforward to become the abode of the illustrious exiles, Mary of Modena found herself at the head of the same household which had formerly belonged to the French queen, and surrounded by every appliance of comfort and luxury; while among the costly presents which had been prepared for her, she discovered a purse containing ten thousand louis d'ors.

Meanwhile, James II., after a perilous passage, had landed in his turn at Ambleteuse, where he was met by the Duke d'Aumont at the head of the nobles of the province, and escorted to Boulogne, whence Mary of Modena had only departed on the previous evening. On the morrow, after mass, the fugitive king put a loaf of bread and a small bottle of wine into his pocket, and, throwing himself into a hack-chaise, proceeded to Abbeville, where he slept; and afterward halted at Luzarche, where he found a relay of horses, and several suits of clothes which had been forwarded for his use by Louis XIV.

On the 7th of January, the French king dispatched a gentleman of his bedchamber to the English monarch, to request that he would immediately set out for St. Germain, where he himself awaited his arrival in the sleeping-room of the queen, who was reposing after the fatigue of her hurried journey. Louis XIV. reached St. Germain at five o'clock; and at half-past six James II. drove into the court, preceded by a number of torch-bearers, and accompanied by the first valet-de-chambre of his royal host, and the Chevalier de St. Deaude, the lieutenant of the body-guard, who had been selected by Louis as the immediate attendants of the exiled monarch, and who had hastened to receive his orders at the outer gate of the palace.

As he alighted, the eye of James fell upon the figure of Lauzun, who, in the midst of a crowd of courtiers, was waiting to welcome him; and throwing his arms affectionately about his neck, he exclaimed, earnestly, "Here is a good friend whom I am delighted to meet in this place."

Louis XIV. had, meanwhile, advanced as far as the state guard-room to welcome his royal guest; and as he approached, James bent his knee; but he had no sooner done so than Louis raised and embraced him several times in succession; after which he said, gayly, "Let us lose no more time; the queen is dying to see Your Majesty;" and the two sovereigns forthwith preceded to the apartment of Mary of Modena, the French king persisting in walking on the left of his companion, despite his efforts to prevent it.

The meeting of the royal pair was most affecting, and tears stood in the eyes of Louis XIV. as he witnessed their emotion; nor was it until they had begun to recover their composure that he prepared to return to Versailles; when, on perceiving that James was about to conduct him to the gate, he remarked, with a smile, "You must forego your purpose, for to-day you are still my guest. To-morrow, when you visit me at Versailles, I will do the honors in form: a compliment you shall return the next time I come to St. Germain, after which we will dispense with ceremony."

As he was traversing the state apartments the munificent monarch caused a casket containing ten thousand pistoles to be deposited on a bureau in the English king's bedchamber; after which he glanced around to satisfy himself that the sumptuous apparel and other luxuries which he had ordered to be transported there for the comfort of his guest had been duly delivered; and then ascending his carriage, was driven rapidly toward Versailles, surrounded by his noble and brilliant body-guard.*

* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

Nor did the munificence of the French monarch limit itself to this princely reception: before night the court of James was regulated; six hundred thousand livres annually were allotted for the expenses of his establishment, and he was provided with the same guards and officers as Louis himself. Immediate preparations were, moreover, set on foot to effect the restoration of the fugitive king; who, however, as weak in adversity as he had previously been puerile in prosperity, took little interest in the efforts of his generous ally; but passed his time principally in the society of the Jesuits, whose convent he frequently visited, asserting that he was a member of their order, and, what is still more singular, the assertion was literally true; for he had, while Duke of York, caused himself to be admitted one of the brotherhood.

This pusillanimity in a dethroned king so lowered him in the eyes of the court, that he became a theme for the ballad-mongers; and after having been driven out of England, was fated to become the jest of France; while so little merit did he derive from his bigotry that the Archbishop of Rheims, the brother of Louvois, said publicly in his antechamber at St. Germain, "We have here a worthy man who has lost three kingdoms for a mass." From Rome he received nothing save indulgences and lampoons; and throughout the whole revolution his faith availed him so little, that when the Prince of Orange, although the head of the Calvinist party, put to sea for the purpose of dethroning him, the Ambassador of the Catholic King at the Hague caused masses to be said for the success of the expedition.*

During the ceremonial receptions of the English sovereigns by the different members of the royal family, Madame de Maintenon had remained secluded in her own apartments; but these were no sooner at an end than she prepared in her turn to pay her respects to the exiled queen,

* Le Siècle de Louis XIV.

and for that purpose proceeded to St. Germain, where she was detained for several minutes in an antechamber before she was admitted to her presence. The delay was accidental, and the time which it occupied was short; but the first grew into an insult, and the latter swelled into centuries, when subjected to the morbid irritation of jealous haughtiness, consequent upon a sudden elevation and a false position.

Thus was it that, in an accidental circumstance, Madame de Maintenon—too high-placed to consider herself as a mere subject, and although not the recognized Queen of France, yet esteeming herself, as the wife of the king, at least on an equality with an English princess—felt deeply aggrieved at the necessity in which she had found herself of waiting the convenience of another, and immediately imbibed a strong prejudice against the royal exile.

The graceful reception of Mary of Modena was well calculated to remove any unfavorable impression, had she had a less tyrannical feeling to contend against than that of mortified vanity; for as her stately visitor swept into the room with the expression of haughty humility which she well knew how to assume, Her Majesty exclaimed frankly, "I trust, madam, that you will forgive the delay which has occurred in your introduction, when you remember that I am myself much more to pity, in having lost so much time, during which I might have enjoyed the happiness of seeing and conversing with you."

Despite this graciousness, however, the disconcerted favorite, on her return to Versailles, complained bitterly to Louis XIV. of the indignity to which she had been subjected by his royal guests; and although the king affected to smile at the circumstance, and to declare that it involved no possible affront, it is nevertheless certain that when, some days afterward, the King and Queen of England appeared at Versailles, Madame de Maintenon contributed in no slight degree to render their position one of difficulty.

James and Mary were anxious in their misfortune to retain as many external evidences of their rank, and to exact as much respect from those about them as they could still enforce ; while Louis XIV., at the instigation of his wife, endeavored to make them acknowledge his own supremacy in all things ; and thus, it was a considerable time before the proper ceremonial to be observed between the two courts could be regulated.

Ultimately, however, it was decided that James II. should consider himself as on an equality with MONSEIGNEUR, and that Louis XIV. should act in the same manner toward the Prince of Wales ; while the dauphin, who was only to occupy a folding seat in the presence of the English king, was to be authorized to use an arm-chair in that of his wife, and this great question once decided, the exiled sovereigns, who had, in their hour of need, come to ask of France a refuge from persecution, and who had been so royally received, soon became the observed of the whole court ; upon whom, however, they severally produced a very different impression.

The mean, undignified, and characterless physiognomy of the king, his vacillating principles, limited intellect, and bigoted prejudices, formed a fearful contrast with the physical and mental perfections of his high-minded and beautiful consort. To eyes and hair of the deepest black, Mary of Modena combined a complexion of the most dazzling whiteness, while a somewhat ample mouth was redeemed by a smile of the most exquisite sweetness, and teeth of extraordinary beauty. Tall and finely formed, the English queen boasted, moreover, hands and arms which both in color and form might have vied with those of Anne of Austria herself, and her voice was singularly harmonious. Highly intellectual, she not only conversed agreeably, but frequently put forth ideas alike startling and novel ; while the extreme propriety of her conduct, based upon a religious principle which, however admirable in

itself, she carried to an excess bordering upon superstition, was at once the marvel and the reproach of the beauties of the court of Louis XIV., who did not scruple to whisper among themselves that the nullity of James II., combined with the atmosphere of Versailles, would not fail ere long to work a moral revolution in the staid and matrouly bearing of the English queen: a prophecy which was, however, never realized.*

The energetic but somewhat tardy efforts of Louis XIV. in favor of his royal guest were suddenly interrupted by a dangerous illness. Although the French king had as yet only attained his forty-ninth year, a premature old age was fast growing upon him: he had already suffered severely on several occasions from gout, but the indisposition which now supervened was of a nature to create general apprehension. It was induced by an internal fistula, and although the science of surgery had made considerable progress during his reign, it was not yet sufficiently advanced to cope with so unfamiliar a malady. The Cardinal de Richelieu had died of the same disease from the inability of those about him; and consequently the danger of the monarch spread consternation throughout France. The churches were constantly crowded with devotees, offering up prayers for his recovery, and general lamentations were heard on all sides.

Felix, the head-surgeon, no sooner ascertained the precise nature of the king's ailment than he shut himself up in the Hôtel-Dieu, and, during an entire month, assisted by the most able members of his profession, invented instruments calculated at once to abridge the necessary operation, and to render it less painful; and with these he operated upon patients similarly affected in the public hospitals, as well as others who were induced by the offer of large rewards and the hope of cure to submit to the same trial; but most of these died under the knife, and

* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

were buried during the night. Notwithstanding this precaution, however, the bodies were seen leaving the Hôtel-Dieu, and a rumor spread that a conspiracy against the life of the king had been discovered, and that the culprits had been put to death by poison and torture. General alarm ensued, and every one was for a time in terror of momentary arrest.*

Having at length acquired the necessary dexterity, Felix warned the king to prepare for the operation, without concealing from him the peril to which he would be exposed; but Louis XIV. did not shrink from the danger, merely desiring that the affair might be kept a profound secret, in order not to increase the public alarm, and commanding that the dauphiness should receive company, and give a ball, as though his indisposition were of a trivial nature.

Four persons only were, accordingly, aware of the extreme peril of the crisis, and these four remained in his chamber throughout the operation—Madame de Maintenon, Louvois, the Dauphin, and Felix, who himself made all the preparations, and ultimately removed the fistula without assistance. Throughout the whole agony the king did not utter a groan; but, exhausted as he was, insisted upon receiving the ministers, who accordingly transacted business during the evening at his bedside; and, in order that no sensation should be created in foreign courts by a report of his danger, he, on the following day, gave audience to the several ambassadors; while to this physical and moral courage he superadded, on this trying occasion, a munificence worthy of a great monarch, by presenting to the skillful operator who had rescued him from death a fine estate valued at more than fifty thousand crowns.

From this period the king never again frequented the theaters, while the dauphiness, whose melancholy hourly increased, and who was already suffering under the first

* Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

attacks of the wasting hypochondria of which she ultimately died in 1690, entered into no public amusements, and remained constantly in her own apartments.

Madame de Montespan, who, as we have already stated, quitted Versailles in tears and wretchedness, had left behind her a void at court that was destined never to be filled up. Her wit, her magnificence, and her profusion had collected about her a circle as brilliant as it was attractive, and one which the increasing seriousness of the king offered no encouragement to renew. Nor did the lady abdicate with more philosophy than the courtiers witnessed her departure; for although in her first moments of mortification and resentment she retired to the convent of St. Joseph, her worldly habits rendered such a seclusion intolerable to her; and she wandered from Paris to Bourbon, and from Bourbon to Fontevrault, without finding peace or consolation anywhere.

More than ever tenacious of the honors due to her position as the mother of the king's children, she caused her hôtel in the capital to be fitted up with almost regal splendor, superintending all the details herself with the most rigorous exactness. There was but one arm-chair in her reception-room, and when she was visited by the princes her sons, they were merely accommodated with chairs without arms. When they took their leave, she accompanied them in consideration of their rank, to the center of the room; but this was a condescension which she never exhibited save toward MADemoiselle and themselves.

Certain historians have asserted that, at this period, although unable to submit herself to a monastic life, she performed austere penances, and wore a garment of hair-cloth; but she herself makes a jest of these assertions, declaring that she preferred works of charity, and indulged in these without restriction, believing them to be far more efficacious than the infliction of any personal suffering.

In 1686 the king married Mademoiselle de Nantes, the elder of her daughters, to the Duke de Bourbon-Condé ; but although the bridal ceremonies were of the most magnificent description, the festivities by which they were accompanied were not sufficiently brilliant to arouse the court from its increasing torpidity. The poor little princess, who had only just attained her twelfth year, could scarcely move under the burden of her jewels, and her head-dress was declared by Madame de Maintenon to weigh more than her whole person.

The only taste which Louis XIV. still retained in all its original force was that of building ; and after having made the palace of Versailles the wonder of all Europe, he proceeded to erect the Trianon, of which Le Nôtre designed the gardens in a style perfectly dissimilar to that he had employed for those of the royal residence, of which the present edifice was merely destined to be an appendage. Originally, according to Madame de Sévigné, the spot selected by the monarch had been occupied by a pavilion, about which were cultivated flowers and fruit-trees of various descriptions, and which bore the name of the Palace of Flora. This pavilion was lined with plate-glass, and porcelain mosaics, and ornamented without by china vases, while the gardens contained long avenues of orange trees, myrtles, and jasmins, planted in the open ground. Pretty as it was, however, the king soon wearied of it ; and having purchased some adjacent land from the monks of St. Genevieve, he commissioned Mausard to build a palace in imitation of the Italian villas. Within a year the elegant edifice, which has since become so celebrated as the favorite retreat of the lovely and unfortunate Marie Antoinette, was completed.

On one occasion Louis XIV. went to examine into the progress of the building, accompanied by Louvois, when he remarked that a particular window was out of proportion, and did not harmonize with the rest ; the minister,

however, jealous of his dignity as controller of the royal works, would not admit the objection, but maintained that it was perfectly similar to the others.

The king made no reply, but on the following day he returned to Trianon, and desired Le Nôtre to declare his opinion as to the size of the disputed window. Le Nôtre, fearful of offending either the monarch or his minister, endeavored to give an evasive answer, upon which Louis commanded him to measure it carefully, and he was reluctantly compelled to obey; Louvois, meanwhile, murmuring at the pertinacity of the king, and Louis himself walking to and fro, in great irritation. The result of the trial proved that the window was too small, and the monarch had no sooner ascertained the fact than he turned angrily to his minister, declaring that he was becoming weary of his obstinacy, and that it was fortunate he had superintended the work himself, or the building would have been crooked.

As this scene had taken place in the presence of both courtiers and workmen, Louvois was deeply stung; and on entering his own house, he exclaimed, furiously, "I am lost if I do not find some occupation for a man who can interest himself in such trifles. There is nothing but a war which can divert him from his buildings, and war he shall have. I will soon make him abandon his trowel."

He kept his word; and Europe was once more plunged into a general war, because a window had been made a few inches too narrow, and that a king had convicted a minister of error.*

It is, however, necessary, before we proceed, that we should take a brief retrospect of the intestine struggle in which Louis XIV. was already unhappily engaged.

During a considerable time the king congratulated himself upon the decision with which he had commenced

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

the extirpation of heresy in his dominions; for, deceived by the lists of conversions that he received from the stewards and other officials in the provinces, as well as seduced by the continual congratulations and praises of the Jesuits, he began to look upon himself as an apostle, and to believe that all his past sins would be blotted out by the prowess of that sword which he was now wielding for the faith. The converts were estimated to him by thousands, all of whom were stated to have at once abjured their errors and communicated. There were, as he was assured, two thousand in one town and six thousand in another all restored to the true church. "And this, sire, by the mere sight of your troops," asserted Louvois, "as I had foretold to your Majesty."

Louis XIV., who was in himself essentially truthful, and who never suspected for an instant that a man in whom he reposed the most implicit and entire confidence would willfully deceive him, accordingly placed the firmest faith in reports which flattered at once his vanity and his bigotry, while the victims of his error were, in fact, sacrificing their consciences to their fears or to their interests, and purchasing immunity from the evils they apprehended by feigned abjurations, which were no sooner uttered than they were compelled to commit blasphemy, by partaking of the most sacred of all the sacraments with a lie upon their lips, and thus filling France with sacrilege.

After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes there were few families who had not to deplore some of their members condemned to exile; and, despite all the precautions by which he surrounded himself, the monarch was occasionally compelled to feel that the great work of conversion had not been carried on without much individual suffering. He was, however, more annoyed than remorseful at the discovery, and the only effect which it produced was an increase of reserve that led him to avoid every occasion of recurring to the subject; while so much did

he dread to overhear the conversation of the great officers of state, during his drives, that when he was about to sleep or shoot at Marly or Meudon, he, from this period, traveled alone in a calèche; and these drives, an occasional hunt, concerts, cards, and at intervals some tedious court ceremony, soon formed the sole amusements of that circle which had, only a few years previously, been the envy and admiration of all the civilized world.

On one occasion, however, in 1687, Louis XIV. gave a fête at Versailles which recalled, by its magnificence, the most palmy days of his reign. Four stalls were erected in the great saloon, covered with every luxury suited to the four seasons; and their contents were estimated at fifteen thousand louis d'ors. Gold and silver stuffs, jewels, and precious stones glittered on all sides, and for these the courtiers of both sexes gambled without incurring any risk, and carried away whatever they chanced to gain. When the tables were removed, the king and the dauphin distributed the remainder of the prizes among the guests; but, despite this profuse liberality, the entertainment, profitable as it was, went off gloomily; all were anxious and ill at ease, for gayety had given place to grandeur, and etiquet had superseded enjoyment.*

It was probably this fact which, at that period, induced some of the most gallant of the young French nobility to exchange the tedium of so ponderous and burdensome a magnificence for the novelty and excitement of foreign warfare, and to offer their services to the Emperor of Germany, whose forces were then in Hungary in arms against the Turks. Among these noble volunteers were included the Prince de Conti, the son-in-law of the king, and the Prince de la Roche-Sur-Yon, as well as Prince Eugène, and many other members of the most illustrious families in France.

The latter, who was the son of the Countess de Sois-

* Histoire du Règne de Louis XIV., par *Reboulet*.

sons, had been destined for the church, but his predilection for a military life induced him to join the expedition, and to abandon forever all pretensions to the cardinalate; when Louvois, discovering that his example was likely to prove contagious, and feeling that it was imprudent for France to strengthen the hands of a power against which she might soon declare herself in her turn, conceived and executed one of those extreme and disgraceful measures which were only too common throughout the latter years of the reign of Louis XIV., and which that monarch himself encouraged, in order to ascertain the secret feelings and motives of his courtiers. Having intercepted the letters brought by a courier from the seat of war, as well as possessed himself of others addressed to the illustrious combatants, he brought the whole, still sealed, to the king.

It was in vain that Madame de Maintenon endeavored to make him comprehend the extent of his imprudence; not daring to expostulate aloud, she was condemned to find all her efforts useless, and, as the letters were opened one by one, she became convinced that the mischief which must ensue was incalculable. Nor was Louvois less embarrassed when he discovered that among them were one from his own son and a second from the husband of his daughter; but he had passed the Rubicon, and was compelled to abide the issue.

Louis XIV. read through the whole of the packet, from the first sheet to the last, with the most complete composure, although the task must have been one of deep and bitter mortification. In it he found letters from the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, the Duke de Villeroy, and many other young men of the highest rank, who, full of the excitement and enterprise by which they were surrounded, drew caustic comparisons between the court of Versailles and the camp of Buda, and jested on the subject of the "citizen king, who was growing old before his time with his peasant-woman," laughed at his taste for

sieges and his aversion to battles, and made merry on the subject of the palace festivals and the quasi-queen.

All this was gall and wormwood to a monarch who, intoxicated with the incense of adulation and jealous of his personal renown, was now condemned to see himself hurled from his pedestal, and to learn the hollowness of the plaudits by which he had been elevated to its summit.

But even this was not the worst effect of the imprudence of which Louvois had been guilty: the iron had to be driven home, and it was so; for, ere long, the king laid his hand upon two letters which were fated to wound him to the heart's core. One was from the Cardinal de Bouillon, containing a bitter satire on the conduct of the monarch, his government, and his person, and filled with those unpalatable truths which are never forgotten, while the other was from his daughter, the Princess de Conti, who, in giving to her husband a detail of the proceedings of the court, had made use of a slighting expression toward himself.

The result of the ministerial experiment was consequently calamitous in every way. It augmented the distrust of Louis, who thenceforward never ventured to place faith in any of those by whom he was surrounded, while it involved the temporary exile of the heedless young men who had been incautious enough to trust their ebullitions of gayety or spleen to the sanctity of a seal. In the case of the Cardinal de Bouillon, the great almoner, a man whose age and whose profession should alike have guarded him from such an imprudence, and who was, moreover, the inveterate enemy of Louvois, the king was more severe; and he was sentenced to perpetual banishment from the court.

Nor was the young princess fated to escape unpunished. She had long been the favorite of her father, who, in his gravest moments, had always a smile to bestow upon her witty and sarcastic sallies; but on her next appearance

in his presence he turned upon her a look of cold disdain which sent her weeping to the feet of Madame de Maintenon. There, however, she found little consolation, although her crime was communicated to her; and as she still knelt, suffocating with sobs, and unable to utter a word in extenuation of her fault, she heard the low, stern voice of her step-mother exclaim, "Weep, weep, madam, for it is a great misfortune to have a bad heart."

The penance of the princess was, to appear once a day before the monarch, who, although he did not address to her one word of anger or reproach, yet gazed upon her with such a sad and reproachful expression that she could better have supported the most passionate invective.*

This was not, however, fated to be the most serious cause of displeasure given by Madame de Conti to her royal father; for, during the campaign, an intrigue was discovered at court in which the Prince de Conti had been the principal culprit, seconded by the Marshal de Luxembourg and his son, the Duke de Montmorency, and of which the princess was destined to be the first victim.

It may be remembered that, before the commencement of the war, the dauphin had spent his hours of relaxation in the saloons of his handsome step-sister and in the society of her maid of honor, where he found himself surrounded by a circle devoted to his interests, who, however, apprehensive that, should they not secure the confidence of Mademoiselle Choin, they might ultimately lose that of the prince himself, devised a method by which they believed that they should definitively establish a claim upon her regard that would never be gainsaid.

M. de Luxembourg had a relative at court named Clermont, an ensign in the royal guard, who was one of the handsomest men of the day, full of courage and ambition, but limited in his resources. The marshal, anxious to push his fortunes, had introduced him to the notice of

* Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

Madame de Conti, by whom he had been received with marked favor, and where he had succeeded in attracting the favorable notice of the dauphin; and it was determined that, during the absence of the prince in Germany, he should be informed of the great influence exerted by Mademoiselle Choin over his mind, and urged to ask her hand. The young soldier pleaded that the very circumstance which they advanced tended to render such a proceeding both onerous and full of peril; but he was quickly reassured by the declaration that the bond between the dauphin and the maid of honor was simply one of friendship; and that, should he resolve to win her affections and to make her his wife, he might be prepared for advancement even beyond his hopes.

M. de Clermont, poor, ambitious, and by no means unconscious of the value of court favor, listened eagerly to the specious reasoning of his friends, paid his addresses to Mademoiselle Choin, and ere long had reason to feel assured that his suit was by no means hopeless; but, unfortunately, M. de Clermont had previously devoted himself, in a marked manner, to the Princess de Conti; and he had no sooner proffered his hand to her maid of honor than the latter declined its acceptance upon the sole plea of his passion for her mistress. The dilemma was a difficult one. The protestations of the suitor failed to satisfy the lady; and at length, in order to convince her of the perfect sincerity of his passion, M. de Clermont consented to place in her hands all the letters which he had received from the princess; and this pledge was no sooner given than the approval of the dauphin was solicited and obtained to an alliance by which, on his return to France, he secured the society of two persons to whom he was attached, while even the Princess de Conti declared herself gratified by the event without suspecting that she had been betrayed.

Throughout the whole of this negotiation letters had

been passing, by every courier, to and from the dauphin and the Prince de Conti in Germany, Luxembourg and Clermont in Flanders, and Madame de Conti and Mademoiselle Choin; and this vigorous correspondence at length attracted the attention of the king, who, suspecting some cabal, immediately adopted his usual system of detaining and examining all the letters dispatched by the several parties. Thus the whole plot was revealed to him; and, shortly afterward, a day of rain rendering him unable to take his usual exercise, immediately that he rose from table, he sent to desire that his daughter would attend him in his cabinet. Such a summons at once surprised and alarmed the princess, who was accustomed to see him only at stated hours; and it was consequently with considerable trepidation that she prepared to obey. On arriving in the outer cabinet, her lady of honor could proceed no farther, and she was compelled to encounter the presence of the king alone, who had no sooner remarked her entrance than he addressed her in a tone of great severity, declaring that dissimulation would avail her nothing, for that he was aware of her correspondence with M. de Clermont, and then, without allowing her time to recover the first shock of such an announcement, he thrust his hand angrily into his pocket, and drawing out a mass of papers, demanded sternly if she recognized the writing.

The poor princess, who at once identified her letters, attempted in vain to sue for pardon, for before she could articulate a word she fainted—a circumstance which softened the anger of the king, who having seated her in a chair, and restored her to consciousness, placed the letters in her hand, representing to her with a gentleness for which, ten minutes previously, she could not have ventured to hope, the imprudence and want of dignity of which she had rendered herself guilty by so culpable an exhibition of weakness. Madame de Conti readily

admitted her fault, promised amendment, and implored to be forgiven; when the king, moved by her tears, proceeded in a still more gentle tone to assure her that this was not all; for that he had still to make known to her how unworthily she had placed her affections, and to what a rival she had been sacrificed.

The princess gasped for breath: this was a blow for which she was utterly unprepared; and she was still struggling against the emotion it had induced, when the monarch, more in sorrow than in anger, declared his determination that she should not quit his presence until she had read aloud, not only her own letters (which had been sacrificed to the vanity of one of her own attendants), but also those which had subsequently passed between the affianced lovers, and which teemed with a bitter irony directed against herself.

In vain did the convulsed and mortified princess cast herself at her father's feet, drowned in tears, stifled with sobs, and scarcely able to articulate. The king had decided that she should pay the penalty of her fault; and when, still kneeling before him, she had at length completed her odious task, she buried her face in her spread hands, and gasped out the two words *pardon* and *vengeance*. The first was at once accorded, and the second was not long delayed.

An order was dispatched to the Duke de Luxembourg to send M. de Clermont to the citadel of Tournay, and to direct him immediately to tender his resignation; after which he was commanded to proceed to Dauphiny, with an express understanding that he was not to leave the province. Mademoiselle Choin at the same time received instructions to retire forthwith into a convent; but, as the offending maid of honor was in possession of her secret, Madame de Conti deemed it expedient to part from her upon friendly terms, and accordingly lent her one of her own carriages to convey her to the abbey of Port Royal

at Paris, where she was constantly visited by all the members of the dauphin's court, who were well aware that the severity of the king had in no degree diminished the affection of the prince for his banished favorite.

Neither to the Prince de Conti or his noble coadjutors did the monarch, however, condescend to utter one word of reproach. Their crime had placed them under the ban of his displeasure, which was a sufficient punishment for individuals of their rank; but he forwarded a detail of the whole conspiracy to their "fat friend," as the dauphin was invariably designated throughout the correspondence, in the firm belief that such a revelation would suffice to detach him, not only from the friends who had caballed against him, but also from the lady whom he had distinguished by his preference.*

From 1675, when Condé resigned the command of the armies of France, until 1686, he had lived peacefully in his delicious retreat at Chantilly, where he surrounded himself with artists and men of letters. He rarely appeared at court, for, remembering the services that he had rendered to the monarch, he felt wounded by the coldness and reserve with which he was always received. In consenting to the double marriage of the Prince de Conti and the Duke de Bourbon with two of the legitimized daughters of the king, he had felt secure of overthrowing the barrier by which he had hitherto been separated from his sovereign; but the result was far from consonant to his expectations. Louis XIV. was compelled to respect Condé, and even to esteem him; but he had won the surname of Great, and Louis XIV. recognized no greatness save his own. The European reputation of the conqueror of Rocroy had unfitted him for a courtier.

Shortly after the marriage of the Duchess de Bourbon she was attacked by small-pox, and the prince could not be restrained from visiting her during the progress of the

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

disease ; when the illustrious warrior, whom death had so often spared upon the field of honor, fell a victim to his paternal tenderness, and carried from her chamber the poison to which he was fated to fall a victim.

On his death-bed he overcame all his resentment, and wrote to entreat the king to pardon the Prince de Conti, who had returned to France, but whom Louis had hitherto refused to restore to favor, or even to admit into his presence. When the letter was delivered, the prince had already ceased to breathe ; and the fact was no sooner made known to the king than, forgetting on his side the jealousy with which he had so long regarded him, his eyes filled with tears as he exclaimed,

“ I have lost my bravest captain ! ”

The dying request of the hero was granted. Louis XIV. saw Conti, and pronounced his pardon ; but he was not long fated to profit by his return to favor, as he died shortly afterward from the effects of a drug incautiously administered, leaving behind him the most beautiful young widow in France.

At the close of 1679, although the palace of Versailles was not yet completed, it had already ceased to please the king. He discovered that it betrayed too much art, and displayed too little nature ; and that while its dimensions were well suited to the dignity of the monarch, they were altogether ill fitted to the comfort of the man ; and Louis XIV. was not even yet disposed to sacrifice every personal gratification to the exigencies of his rank. He had, indeed, gratified his vanity by the wilderness of stone and marble that he had raised, but the very immensity of the result displeased him ; and he began to sigh for a sylvan villa, or a rustic hermitage, where he might for a while escape from the perpetual *representation* to which he was condemned elsewhere.

He looked around, but he possessed no residence which satisfied this new craving : St. Germain was too old, Vin-

cennes inconvenient, and Fontainebleau at too great a distance from the capital; when at length a site was selected near Marly, a small village on the left bank of the Seine, situated within three leagues and a half from Paris, in a valley bordered by an extensive forest. It is true that nothing could be more unpromising than the nature of the soil upon which the new palace was to be erected, for the valley was one wide marsh, which it was necessary to drain before a firm foundation could be obtained; but after the difficulties that he had overcome at Versailles, Louis XIV., to whom the retired situation of Marly appeared to offer the very advantages he sought, did not hesitate to disregard this solitary disadvantage, although it entailed great difficulties in the erection of the building, and involved an enormous outlay, which was seriously increased by the necessity of leveling a portion of the surrounding heights, in order to prevent the view from the windows from being bounded by the narrow extent of the valley itself.

Louis XIV. had commenced by desiring a hermitage in this secluded spot; but as the work advanced he became enamored of his own creation, and resolved that Marly should possess, as well as Versailles, its lakes, its gardens, and its park; while in order to facilitate the execution of this project, as regarded the latter palace, the celebrated hydraulic machine was forthwith commenced, destined to convey the waters of the Seine into the reservoirs of Versailles; upon whose completion the king accorded an annual pension of eight thousand livres to its inventor, M. de Ville, a native of Liège.

The palace of Marly was no sooner tenantable, although still far from completed, than Louis XIV. began to make it his frequent residence; and as no one was allowed to accompany him there who was not designated by himself, a temporary abode at Marly became at once the touchstone of royal favor, and the aim of universal ambition.

At the king's *coucher* a list was presented by one of the gentlemen of the bedchamber, containing the names of the applicants for this distinction; and as they were slowly pronounced, Louis XIV. answered by a gesture of dissent where he was not disposed to accord so high an honor suffering such as he approved to pass without remark, and indicating others whom he desired to oblige.

The motive of the monarch for this arrangement was stated to have been his wish to exclude Madame de Montespan, who, at the commencement of these pilgrimages to the hermitage at Marly had not yet left the court; while the fact that she was twice permitted to visit the new palace was attributed to the influence of Madame de Maintenon, who, from the circumstance of her own position not being at that period perfectly assured, was not willing to incur the responsibility of an indignation which would have exhausted its bitterness upon herself.

The idea of the edifice, or rather collection of edifices, which composed the royal retreat of Marly, was as convenient as it was singular. The center and principal building consisted of an immense square pavilion detached on all sides, near which were grouped six others of smaller dimensions. The main construction was ornamented on the exterior by Corinthian columns, between which were painted in fresco trophies, heroic allegories, and devices from the designs of Le Brun. The building had four fronts, each crowned by a projecting triangular portico, and the landings of the terrace-like steps, which were situated in the angles and along the several faces of the edifice, were ornamented by sixteen groups of children and eight sphinxes in bronze, the production of a young sculptor named Coustou.*

* Nicholas Coustou, who was born at Lyons in 1658, studied under his uncle Coysevox, and at twenty-three years of age carried off the principal prize from the Academy of Sculpture. It was in Rome that he executed his fine statue of the Emperor Commodus as Hercules,

These steps led to four vestibules which acted as entrances to the four suites of apartments on the ground floor, reserved for the monarch and the princes of the blood, all communicating with the Great Saloon, which was of octagonal form, having four fireplaces, and was supported by Ionic pillars, above which were painted figures representing the seasons. Four spacious windows, with gilded balconies, and four oriels surrounded by garlands of flowers, supported by Cupids, gave light to this magnificent apartment, and in front of the building extended a vast esplanade, known as the *amphitheater*, ornamented by fourteen costly vases.

The lesser pavilions were appropriated to the royal guests, two of whom were accommodated in each building; and as it was understood that the husband of every lady who had received an invitation was expected to bear her company, the temporary *chez soi* of Marly was frequently more domestic and stringent to many of the courtiers than that of their own hôtels in the capital; while all individuals, of whatever sex, found in the apartments destined to them every article, both of use and luxury, which could be exacted either by comfort or refinement.

This villa-palace was approached by a superb avenue of trees, and its park extended to the boundaries of that of Versailles. An iron grating of elaborate workmanship inclosed the circular court, on either side of which stretched away the spacious stables; the gardens were designed by Durusé, and were celebrated for their artistic arrangement; but the gems of Marly were its miniature lakes and graceful fountains, of which the quality of the water was

now at Versailles. Four of the figures in the gardens of the Tuileries are also by his hand—the *Julius Cæsar*, two *Venuses*, and the *Hunter*, seated beneath a tree with his dog at his feet, as well as a group typifying the *Seine* and the *Marne*. The *chef d'œuvre* of Coustou is, however, his *Descent from the Cross*, known as the *Vow of Louis XIII.*, which adorns the choir of Nôtre-Dame. Nicholas Coustou died in 1733.

esteemed as above price. The finest work of Coustou enriched one of these noble sheets of water, which was known as the Fountain of the Winds—the group consists of an aged man leaning upon an urn, and representing the Ocean, while the Mediterranean is typified by a graceful woman with her child by her side, whose arm is flung across that of the principal figure, to designate the canal of Languedoc.

Such was ultimately the “hermitage” of Marly, where Louis XIV. originally declared that he desired simply a modest villa in which he might pass a few days in retirement, with half a dozen chosen courtiers and a limited retinue, but where he ultimately sunk large sums of money, not only in permanent creations, but also in passing caprices and puerile conceits. Large trees were transported from the forests of Fontainebleau and Compiègne at an enormous cost, only to add by the rich shadows of their foliage to the enjoyment of some rural fête, and afterward to wither where they stood, or to give place to others. Nor was this the only change undergone by the grounds of Marly; for a courtier, exiled for a time from this exclusive retreat, was sure to find on his return groves and bowers where he had left sheets of water, and foaming cascades, and fountains whose basins teemed with gold-fish and glittered with the floating lotus, where he had previously sauntered beneath the leafy gloom of forest trees, or gathered exotic flowers for “the lady of his thoughts.”

Let it not be supposed, however, that while Marly underwent these extraordinary and meaningless changes, the more regal pile of Versailles was suffered to remain uncompleted. We have already alluded elsewhere to the magnificence alike of its external and internal arrangements, and the resolute expenditure of both human life and national treasure by which every difficulty had been gradually overcome. Originally Versailles had boasted neither wood, water, generous soil, nor noble prospects—

half marsh and half sand, the adjacent land had appeared to defy alike the art and the labor of man ; but these unpromising materials had been cemented by human blood and human sweat, and the rarest blossoms and the goodliest timber learned to thrive under such costly forcing, while the empty reservoirs and gasping fountains, whence the waters evaporated or drained away, despite every exertion, were ultimately fed to repletion by the hydraulic machine of Marly.

Many millions had, indeed, been swallowed up by this gigantic work, and the shades of the thousands who had perished under the task might hover around its walls, and shriek out their wail of bitterness through its echoing galleries ; but Versailles was resting proudly on its foundations, and already presenting to admiring Europe the noblest monument of the reign of Louis XIV.



CHAPTER XX.

League of Augsburg—Intrigue of Louvois—First Campaign of the Dauphin—Burning of the Palatinate—Destruction of the French Fleet—The Upholsterer of Nôtre-Dame—Gallantry of the Duke de Chartres—Persecution of the Calvinists—Death of the Abbé de Chayla—Negotiation—Death of the Dauphiness—The Convent of St. Cyr—Racine's Esther—Jealousy of the Princesses—Proposed Marriage of the Duke de Chartres—Insolence of Louvois—The Fire-Tongs—National Apprehensions—Liberality of the Cities—Royal Plate sent to the Mint—Declining Influence of Louvois; his Death—Indifference of the King—The Royal Message—Suspicious of Poison.

REVERT we now to the war threatened by Louvois after the adventure of Trianon.

The league of Augsburg had already been formed at the

instigation of the Prince of Orange; but although numerous rumors as regarded its purpose and extent had from time to time reached the French court, nothing was definitely known until 1687, and Louis XIV. had made no preparations for so widely-extended and menacing a war. He was still, as we have shown, exhausting his finances in the erection of palaces, and in the acquisition of luxuries from all quarters of the globe; and it is possible that Louvois, anxious to avoid a collision with the other European powers, while an intestine struggle was wasting the southern provinces of the kingdom, would have devised some expedient for averting so great a peril, had not the footrule of Le Nôtre been applied to the window of the Trianon; but the ill-omened pertinacity of the king upon that occasion suddenly changed his views. He felt the necessity of self-preservation, for he saw that his influence was on the wane, and he forthwith proceeded to secure the election of the Cardinal de Furstemberg to the archbishopric of Cologne, in opposition to the interests of Bavaria, which was the natural ally of France, conscious that by so doing he must provoke the hostilities he had lately deprecated.

This act accomplished, he continued to pursue the war in the most cruel and determined manner, deluging the whole Palatinate in flame and blood, and leaving William of Orange free to pursue his projects upon England; thence he carried it into Italy, where he treated the Duke of Savoy with so much indignity, without the cognizance of Louis XIV., that he in turn threw himself into the ranks of the general enemy;* and with the assistance of Austria, which sent him a force of four thousand men under the command of Prince Eugène, the Duke Amédée recommenced that wild war amid mountains and ravines which was so congenial alike to the nature of his territory and the peculiarity of his genius, while the prince forced the French to raise the siege of Coni, and the Duke of Bava-

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

ria arriving with a reinforcement, compelled them to cross the Alps.

It was on this occasion that the name of Prince Eugène became known in Paris as that of a soldier. On his return from the campaign against the Turks, he had solicited from Louis XIV. the command of a regiment, which was coldly refused; and he had then addressed a letter to the king, wherein he stated that as His Majesty rejected the proffer of his services, he was about to tender them to the Emperor of Germany. This letter afforded a theme of jest to the monarch, who on the same evening gave it into the hands of the Marshal de Villeroy at the card-table, demanding, "Does it not strike you that I am about to sustain a great loss?" to which question the marshal, little anticipating the annoyance to which he was subsequently to be exposed by the young prince, answered in as light and supercilious a tone.

William of Orange still occupied Texel when the French army, amounting to a hundred thousand men, were marched upon Germany, under the command of the dauphin, who, on this occasion, made his first campaign; and in default of Condé, now in his grave, and of Créqui, who had also died in the course of the preceding year, Henry de Durfort, Marshal de Duras,* was appointed second in com-

* James Henry de Durfort, Duke de Duras was the descendant of a noble family of Guyenne, and the nephew of Turenne, and was appointed Governor of Franche-Comté, and Marshal of France in 1675. After commanding the army in Germany, he was named captain of the body-guard, and died in 1704. His estate of Duras was erected into a duchy in 1685. His son became also a marshal of France, and was appointed to the command of the national guard at the commencement of the revolution. His grandson, who was first gentleman of the king's chamber, was compelled to fly his country in order to save his life. He returned, however, under Bonaparte, and was appointed by Louis XVIII. adjutant-general and peer of France. His wife, who was the daughter of the Count de Kersaint, was celebrated by her novels of *Aurika* and *Edward*.

mand, the generals -Catinat* and Vauban, and several others of less repute, serving under his orders. The dauphin had, at this period, attained his twenty-seventh year; and as this was the first occasion upon which he had been permitted to assert himself as the heir of a great kingdom, he received the command with a joy which he did not attempt to disguise. At the moment of his departure, when he was about to take leave of his royal father in the presence of the whole court, Louis XIV. thus addressed him:

“ My son, in thus sending you to command my troops, I afford to you an opportunity of making known your value. Go, then, and show it to the whole of Europe, in order that when I shall be no more none may be able to perceive that the king is dead.”

The prince received a special commission to command, as though he had been simply a general officer chosen by the sovereign; and the letters of his royal father were addressed, “ To my son the Dauphin, my Lieutenant-General, commanding my Army in Germany.” Every precaution had, moreover, been taken to secure him from the mortification of personal failure; for although he lent his name and his presence to the expedition, Marshal Duras really commanded the troops; Boufflers† was at the head of a body of men on the French bank of the Rhine, and

* Nicholas de Catinat was born in Paris in 1637. He abandoned the bar for the army, and in 1667 was appointed to a lieutenancy in the guards. He distinguished himself in several engagements, and on being promoted to the rank of lieutenant-general in 1688, he possessed himself of the whole of Savoy and a part of Piedmont; while in Flanders he behaved with equal gallantry. Having been appointed Marshal of France in 1693, and the war having recommenced in 1701, he was intrusted with the command of the army in Italy, against Prince Eugène, who commanded that of the Germanic empire. He died in 1712.

† Louis Francis, Duke de Boufflers, and marshal of France, afterward immortalized himself by the defense of Lille in 1708, and contributed greatly to the success of several engagements. He died in 1711, and it was said of him that *his heart died the last*.

the Marshal d'Humières at that of another in the direction of Cologne. Heidleburg and Mayence were soon taken; and the siege of Philipsbourg, always a necessary prelude whenever France declared war against Germany, was commenced, under the direction of Vauban. The dauphin joined the army on the sixth day after the opening of the trenches, and, brave without temerity, affable to those by whom he was approached, and liberal and indulgent to the troops, he soon gained the affection of the whole army. Philipsbourg was taken, after a resistance of nineteen days; Manheim only held out during four; Franckendal surrendered in two; while Spire, Trèves, Worms, and Oppenheim opened their gates without a struggle.

Such was the progress of the French arms when the famous order, signed by Louvois, reached the royal camp, that the Palatinate was to be reduced to cinders, and the whole face of the country turned into a desert. There was no possibility of resisting the command, iniquitous and impolitic as it was; and, accordingly, the French generals, in the very heart of the winter, announced to the citizens in their flourishing and handsome towns, to the inhabitants of the villages, and to the owners of more than fifty stately castles, that they must forthwith quit their dwellings, which were about to become the prey of the flames. Men, women, and children consequently found themselves houseless; and while one portion of these unhappy victims of cruelty and ambition were wandering over the country in search of shelter, and others were escaping to find an asylum in exile, the troops, who, on such occasions, excited by the destruction of their own hands, invariably exceed the orders of their superiors, burned and pillaged the whole face of the country. Manheim, the residence of the electors, fell first; its palaces were destroyed, and the dwellings of its citizens lay in one ruined heap around them; its tombs were desecrated by the rapacity of the soldiery, who anticipated that they contained treasure, and the ashes which

they had so long enshrined were scattered to the winds of heaven.

So long as Colbert lived, Louis XIV. had never openly persecuted the Protestants, for that great minister had succeeded in convincing him that they were one powerful prop to the prosperity of his kingdom, and neither Madame de Maintenon nor Père la Chaise had ventured to put forth an adverse argument, for the mastery of mind on the side of Colbert was too unequivocal to admit the faintest prospect of success in such a struggle, while to every attempt made by Bossuet and Fénelon to undermine the interests of those whom they denominated "Huguenots," he contented himself by replying, "Gentlemen, you are now following the promptings of your Sorbonne conscience; but you have another, and if you will suffer it to be heard it will argue differently."

Colbert was now, however, no more, and intolerance and blood-thirstiness had replaced mercy and sound judgment.

This was the second occasion upon which Louis XIV. had carried destruction into the heart of this fair country; but the flames by which Turenne had consumed two towns and twenty villages of the Palatinate were a mere bonfire beside the present conflagration. All Europe looked on in horror, and the officials by whom it was carried into execution, blushed at the enormities of which they were the agents.

Louis XIV. had authorized this cruelty in his voluptuous palace, surrounded by all the luxuries of wealth and all the consciousness of power; his gilded apartments gave back no echo of the heart-wrung groans of a whole province, rendered destitute by his will; his painted ceilings admitted no view of the houseless and ruined thousands to whom he had made the future one period of bitter trial. But although he could not witness the effects of his egotistical ambition, he was fated to feel their results in the

hatred and execration of all the European nations, who openly condemned alike his harshness and his impolicy.

This fearful war did not, however, cause the French monarch to forget or to neglect the pledge which he had given to James II., and it was while his troops were following up their career of victory in Germany that he equipped the fleet intended to convey an army of twenty thousand men to England, and to effect the restoration of the exiled sovereign. The failure of this expedition, which destroyed forever the hopes of the last Stuart, was the first check that the power of Louis XIV. had ever received upon the high seas, and the mortification was comparatively great; while it was by the light of the flames kindled in the Palatinate that William of Orange, who had already established himself firmly upon the throne of his father-in-law, crossed the channel to attack the French troops upon the very spot where he had first opposed them. He had already proved himself no contemptible adversary, and his purpose was no sooner ascertained than it was consequently found necessary to oppose him by a general of equal talent, when the choice of the king fell upon the Marshal de Luxembourg, who, having incurred the jealousy of Louvois, as Turenne had previously done, had been for several years unemployed.

In this campaign the marshal acquired the title of the Upholsterer of Nôtre-Dame, from the fact of his having captured at the battle of Fleurus two hundred of the enemy's standards, which he hastened to forward to the capital; and, during its continuance, it was rendered famous by the sieges of Mons and Namur, commanded by the king in person, and the battles of Steinkirk and Neerwinden, when the Duke de Chartres, the son of *Monsieur*, then only in his fifteenth year, commenced his military career in a manner which gave brilliant earnest of his future reputation.

But it was not only against these external wars that

France had now to contend. The intestinal struggle in which she was engaged was also mining her strength. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes was bearing its fruits, and the flames of the Palatinate had extended to the Cevennes. The Abbé de Chayla had proved faithful to his principles, and had pursued the work of proselytism with a fatal energy suited to his character. He had torn children from their parents, and shut them up in monastic houses, where they were subjected to such frightful penances, in expiation (as they were told) of the heresy of their relatives, that they had in many cases expired under their sufferings. Nor would he even afford to the dying the happiness of passing away in peace and prayer, but haunted their beds of death with prophecies of everlasting perdition should they not recant their errors and become converts to the Romish faith, and threats that after they had ceased to breathe their bodies should be dragged upon hurdles to the common sewers of the city, there to find a grave.

But as many, despite all his exertions, were discovered to have evaded his horrible denunciations, and found asylums where they could spend their last few hours of life unagonized by his fearful visitations, he proclaimed a sentence of *lèse-majesté* against all who should harbor heretics, under whatever circumstances, and thus closed many a door which would have been piously opened to their necessities.

Both within and without, the kingdom of France was like a huge vampire battenning in blood, and the archpriest, or rather archfiend, Chayla, was so conscious that his own martyrdom must inevitably follow those of his victims, that while he was ruthlessly pursuing his career of murder he was at the same time preparing his tomb in the church of St. Germain. Every day was marked by new arrests, by new tortures, or by some execution; but the individuals he persecuted the most rigorously were the alledged proph-

ets, whom he denounced as the fomenters of the heresy. One of these preachers was burned at Montpellier, and another was hanged; while a third, named Laquoite, who was to have been broken on the wheel, disappeared from his prison on the night preceding his intended punishment, without leaving a trace of the means by which his liberation had been accomplished.

A rumor immediately spread that, like St. Peter, he had been led invisibly from his dungeon; and ere long he reappeared, preaching a crusade against the Abbé de Chayla, whom he denounced as the Antichrist; when, all who had been the victims of the fanatic and bloodthirsty missionary, and all whom he had bereft alike of their parents and of their children, assembled beneath his banner; and under the command of a blacksmith named Laporte, and Esprit Segurier (who, after Laquoite himself, was the most revered of the twenty or thirty prophets or preachers of the Protestants), marched upon the abbey of Montvert, where Chayla had taken up his residence. They were all armed with scythes, halberds, or swords, while a few among them also carried guns and pistols.

The abbé was in his oratory when, despite the order which he had given that he was never to be disturbed in his devotions, one of his servants rushed into the apartment to warn him that a party of fanatics were descending the mountain; but, believing it to be a mere attempt to deliver certain prisoners whom he had consigned to the dungeons of the abbey, he contented himself by desiring the officer of his guard to march out at the head of his men, and disperse the heretics. The latter had, however, no sooner ascertained the strength of the enemy, than, instead of risking a collision, he found that he had better prepare for a defense; and, accordingly, causing the gates of the abbey to be closed, he posted his men in the rear of a barricade, hastily formed under an arch which led to the apartments of the archpriest. These preparations were

scarcely terminated when the outer gate was driven in, and the reformers burst into the court, demanding the immediate restoration of the prisoners, to which vociferous summons the abbé replied by an order to fire upon the besiegers.

As it was obeyed, one of the reformers fell dead, and two others were grievously wounded; but this spectacle only increased the fury of their companions, who instantly precipitated themselves upon the barricade, which they, ere long, overthrew, under the directions of Laporte and Esprit Segurier; one of whom had to avenge the death of his father, and the other that of his son, both executed by order of their common enemy; whereupon the soldiers retreated for refuge to a lower hall, situated immediately beneath the chamber in which the abbé was engaged in prayer with his followers. During the attack the Protestants had lost two of their number, and had five others wounded, when their two chiefs, fearing a further sacrifice of life, and apprehending a resistance as desperate as their own attack, proposed the release of the prisoners, and the subsequent burning of the abbey.

A portion of the besieging force accordingly set forth to discover the prisons of their co-religionists, while the remainder kept guard over the issues of the building, to prevent the escape of its inhabitants; nor were they long engaged in these duties, for the captives having surmised from the unusual turmoil that deliverance was at hand, shouted aloud to guide the steps of their friends to the dungeon in which they were incarcerated. The sight of these unhappy victims was well calculated to increase the frenzy of the assailants. They were, as we have elsewhere stated, six in number: three young men, and three girls of tender age, who had been apprehended in the attempt to make their escape from France. They had already passed eight days in their frightful prison, where their legs were inserted, as human wedges, between the

sides of a cleft beam, the bones crushed and the limbs disabled ; their bodies swollen with agony, and their physical and mental powers alike prostrate. In this miserable state they were borne from their dungeons, amid cries of fire ! fire ! and ere many seconds had elapsed every inflammable substance of which the besiegers could avail themselves was cast into a heap, and ignited by means of a straw bed which they discovered in the guard-room.

This death-pile had no sooner began to affect the flooring of the upper chamber than the abbé endeavored to escape from the window, by the assistance of his sheets, which, firmly knotted together, were secured by his attendants ; but these proving too short, he was compelled to leap the remainder of the distance, in doing which one of his legs was broken, and he barely retained sufficient strength to crawl behind a buttress, where he endeavored to conceal himself. The attempt proved, however, unsuccessful ; for the flames, as they gathered in volume, soon betrayed him to his enemies, who rushed toward him in a body, exclaiming, " Death to the archpriest ! death to the executioner ! " In vain did Esprit Segulier, who, at this awful moment, felt his vengeance yield before the frightful peril of the destined victim, shout to his followers to spare his life, in the name of that God who wills rather the repentance than the death of a sinner ; they were, for the first time, deaf to his exhortations, and answered only with cries of vengeance. Segulier, however, persisted in his work of mercy ; and, bestriding the body of Chayla, declared that his life should be spared if he would instantly recant his past heresies, and thenceforth devote himself to the propagation of the faith.

The abbé answered only by a disdainful negative, and Segulier was compelled to abandon him to his fate.

The first blow which reached him was dealt by the hand of Laporte, who, as he drove his poniard to the hilt in his body, reminded, him of his father whom he had consigned

to the flames at Nismes. The archpriest did not utter a sound, but a stream of blood which issued from his breast proclaimed that the wound was deep and serious: the weapon was then transferred to Seguiet, who, in his turn, struck, calling upon the name of his son, who had been broken on the wheel at Montpellier. Even his aim was not, however, mortal, although a second stream of blood gushed from beneath the flowing garments of the abbé, the voice of whose murmured prayer became audibly more feeble; and then a third approached and seized the dagger, invoking the memory of his brother, who had been put to death in chains; and this time the steel entered the heart of the wretched man, who fell forward upon the earth, and expired.

But the work of vengeance was even then incomplete; and as he lay, a bleeding mass before them, the weapon was passed from hand to hand; while, as it was successively buried in his body, each who struck cursed him in the name of a martyred relative, until two-and-fifty stabs had almost obliterated in his remains every trace of their previous humanity.*

After so frightful a catastrophe as this the Calvinists had no longer a hope of mercy; and the war of extermination proceeded with various success, until the year 1704, when it was terminated by a negotiation between the Marshal de Villars and its then chief, the celebrated Jeau Cavalier.

Meanwhile the French court had become less and less attractive. The dauphiness had been spared the knowledge of the ruin of her country by a melancholy death; finally attributed to the fact of her having been visited by the Princess de Conti, at the birth of the Duke de Berri, so excessively perfumed that she was unable to contend against the effect of the overcharged atmosphere. Her loss excited little regret, either in the king or her husband,

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle

who had long ceased to interest themselves in one whose secluded habits offered them neither excitement nor pleasure and she was no sooner consigned to an early grave than she was forgotten.

As we have already stated, Louis XIV. had ceased to encourage literary talent, or to attend theatrical representations; and it was destined to be the convent of St. Cyr which renewed the taste for intellectual pursuits. Madame de Maintenon, more and more embarrassed to discover some method of entertaining a monarch whose powers of enjoyment were visibly waning, at length bethought herself of requesting Racine, who had forsaken the stage for Port-Royal and the court, to write a sacred tragedy, which might be represented by her pupils.

The poet accordingly produced *Esther*, which has always been regarded as an allegory, wherein the triumph of Madame de Maintenon over the Marquise de Montespan was shadowed forth in that of the humble Israelite and the pious Mordecai over the haughty Vashti and the impious Haman; and after this tragedy had been rehearsed in the convent, it was finally enacted on several occasions before the king at Versailles, in the winter of 1689, when prelates and Jesuits alike sought permission to witness so extraordinary a spectacle, in which the talent of the performers, their beauty, and their grace, proved even more attractive than the genius of the great dramatist.

Even these amusements, however, could not compensate to the king for the constant annoyance to which he was exposed by the perpetual dissensions of his three daughters, who appeared to have inherited the same feelings of rivalry that had previously existed between La Vallière and Madame de Montespan. At Marly, the king and the dauphin both dined at the same hour, and in the same apartment; and the ladies of the court seated themselves as they pleased at either table, with the exception that the Princess de Conti was always at that of MONSEIGNEUR, while the

two other princesses were placed at that of the monarch. Madame de Maintenon also dined at the latter, where she occupied a seat opposite to Louis XIV.; and on one occasion it chanced that the king, despite his usual gravity, amused himself at the close of the repast by playing at forfeits for olives with the Duchess de Bourbon, which caused her to drink several draughts of wine more than usual, the king also affecting to do the same. The Princess de Conti, whose jealousy was excited by this playfulness, could not conceal her chagrin; and when the party rose from table, as the king was passing her, he was so much displeased by the expression of her countenance that he dryly remarked that her seriousness was doubtless intended to rebuke their intemperance, after which he left the room; and he had no sooner retired than the Princess de Conti, enraged at the rebuke, made a bitter comment upon certain prolonged suppers, in which her sisters had latterly indulged; upon which Mademoiselle de Blois, in her low and languishing voice, replied by a rejoinder so stinging that the princess was for the moment silenced.

The prolonged repasts with which the princesses had thus been publicly taunted were, indeed, little suited either to their rank or their sex; for, when wearied by the gravity and etiquet of the court circle, they were accustomed to celebrate a species of orgie in their own apartments, after the supper; and on one occasion, when the dauphin had at a late hour quitted the card-table, and hearing a noise in their quarter of the palace, entered to ascertain its cause, he found them engaged in smoking, and discovered that they had borrowed their pipes from the officers of the Swiss guard. He immediately broke up the party; but the adventure reached the ears of the king, who, on the following day, expressed his displeasure in no measured terms, to the great delight of the Princess de Conti, who thus triumphed in her turn; but Louis XIV., wearied by these scenes of folly and recrimination, at length threatened

to banish them all from the court; and, alarmed by the menace, peace was apparently restored.*

The establishment of his legitimized daughters had ever been a subject of great anxiety to the king, and having succeeded in introducing the two elder into the houses of Conti and Condé, he became desirous of marrying the third to the Duke de Chatres, his own and only nephew, who ranked above all the other princes of the blood; but he remembered the comments which had been made upon the two former alliances, and was thus enabled to estimate the difficulties which must naturally attend the accomplishment of one still more startling. He was well aware also of the jealousy with which *Monsieur* insisted on all the prerogatives and privileges of his rank, and his repugnance to every thing that tended to render them less absolute; while he was equally conscious that *Madame* belonged to a nation which regarded unequal marriages with abhorrence, and was of a character well calculated to resist a measure by which she would not fail to consider her son dishonored. Nevertheless, the resolution of the king was taken, and during the space of four years he prepared his measures to secure the success of this darling scheme.

Meanwhile Louvois, not satisfied with having burned and sacked Manheim, Worms, and Spires, proposed to Louis XIV. the destruction of Trèves also, which, as he alledged, could be easily converted by the enemy into a fortified place; but the monarch was by this time satiated with blood, and refused to comply with the suggestion, and the minister had no sooner quitted the room than Madame de Maintenon, arousing in favor of the Bavarians the religious scruples which she had laid to sleep during the persecutions in the Cevennes, warmly supported the resolution of the king, and expatiated upon the enormity of a vengeance which involved the innocent as well as the guilty, reminding him that although these extreme meas-

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

ures had emanated from the minister; all the obloquy had hitherto fallen upon himself.

She could have advanced no other argument so powerful as this; for Louis was above all things tenacious of his perfectibility, and consequently ill constituted to bear the odium of another's acts; and thus, although he listened in silence, Madame de Maintenon felt that her point was gained.

Louvois had not insisted strongly on his iniquitous purpose when he saw the monarch disinclined to yield; but as pertinacity was a marked feature in his character, and that he had long discovered the power of firmness over the mind of Louis XIV., who, alike from indolence and indecision, generally suffered himself to be swayed by those about him, he resolved to maintain his position; and accordingly, when, after the lapse of a few days, he had again transacted business in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, and was about to retire, he informed the king, while restoring his papers to his portfolio, that having been convinced, when on a former occasion he had suggested to His Majesty the burning of Trèves, that he had simply negatived a measure of such undeniable necessity from a religious scruple, he had taken the act upon his own responsibility, as well as upon his own conscience, and had dispatched a courier to the seat of war, with an order for the immediate destruction of the city.

The lips of the king quivered with passion as the audacious minister thus braved him to his face, and by a sudden impulse he seized the fire-tongs which were lying near him, and would inevitably have struck him, had not Madame de Maintenon, with great presence of mind, sprung between them, and torn the weapon from his hands.

While she was thus engaged Louvois rapidly prepared to leave the room; but before he could reach the door, the king, still trembling with indignation, commanded him instantly to dispatch a second messenger to countermand

the order which he had given, adding, that should his courier arrive too late, and that a single house had fallen a prey to the flames, his head should be the forfeit of his disobedience.

The crest-fallen minister apparently hastened to obey, but the messenger of whom he had spoken was still awaiting the issue of the conference, even Louvois himself having hesitated to incur so heavy a responsibility without the royal sanction, which he had adopted so dangerous a method to enforce; and he was consequently dispatched without the fatal order, leaving the king fully persuaded that his diligence alone could insure the preservation of Trèves.*

Ere long Louis XIV., as well as the whole of his subjects, began to entertain serious apprehensions as regarded the termination of a war which had commenced under such favorable auspices. On all sides he saw either declared enemies or doubtful allies, while his army, although sufficiently strong to sustain any ordinary hostilities, was unequal to cope with the united forces of Europe, and the new levies were raised too slowly to supply the deficiency.† The treasury, exhausted by the public buildings, and other expenses incident upon them, was so deficient that it became necessary, even at the commencement of the war, to discover some expedient by which to insure supplies; and for this purpose offices under the government were invented, which were imposed upon the most opulent of the citizens, and for which they were compelled to pay an exorbitant price. The cities also contributed largely. Toulouse set the example, by making a donation of a hundred thousand crowns; Rouen followed with the same sum; Paris tendered four hundred thousand francs, and many others contributed in the same proportion.

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

† Mémoires de Madame de la Fayette.

The king received all the deputations authorized to present these offerings with an affability and condescension which sufficiently testified their necessity, and, in his turn, sent to the mint all the valuable pieces of massive silver furniture which had adorned not only the gallery and state-rooms of Versailles, but even the private apartments, and which had so long excited the wonder and admiration of all its foreign visitors. Nothing was retained; but, great as was the sacrifice, its proceeds were far from presenting an equivalent—all these precious articles, wrought with a skill that formed their principal value, and which had been purchased by an outlay of millions, producing merely the price of the metal of which they had been composed; while the publicity of the measure only served to excite the raileries of the common enemy, and to encourage continued hostility toward a nation, so soon compelled to resort to such an expedient.*

The influence of Louvois was, meanwhile, perceptibly on the wane; and a second adventure sufficed to lose him forever the estimation and favor of the king. In the spring of 1691, Louis XIV. formed the project of besieging Mons, and had decided that the ladies of the court should accompany him in the expedition; but the minister entered a formal protest against this arrangement, asserting that, at such a crisis, it was an expense which could not prudently be contemplated; and the king, deeply mortified alike by the opposition and its declared cause, was compelled to yield. It was at this siege that Louvois committed the last imprudence which was fated to fill up the measure of his disgrace.

As the king was inspecting the outposts, he remarked a cavalry picket which he considered to be injudiciously placed, and of which he accordingly changed the position; when, in the course of the same day, chancing to repass the spot, he found it once more stationed at the very point

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

from which he had removed it in the morning; and, indignant at so palpable a disrespect to his orders, he inquired of the officer in command who had authorized him to return to his original post.

He was informed that it was M. de Louvois who had marched the picket back an hour previously.

The next question of the king was, whether M. de Louvois was aware that it was His Majesty himself who had posted his men in a new position. And the reply was affirmative.

“Is this his business?” exclaimed the king, angrily. “He believes himself to be a great warrior, and to know every thing.” And then, with an authoritative gesture, he commanded the picket to return to the spot where he had himself posted them.

Although Louvois was ignorant of all the motives of displeasure which the monarch harbored against him, he soon became convinced that his ruin had been determined. He felt that the thunderbolt was about to fall. “I know not,” he exclaimed to a friend, “if he will content himself by dismissing me from office, or if he purposes to condemn me to a prison; and I care not what his decision may be when once I have ceased to hold the reins of government.” In vain did his confidant endeavor to reassure him, by recalling to his memory that he had, during the last ten years, repeated the same apprehension at least a score of times. “I may have done so,” was the melancholy reply; “but now all is changed. We have a hundred times had bitter altercations, and I have left his cabinet when he has been angry and excited, yet, on the following day, I have found him calm and courteous. It is so no longer; for the last fortnight his brow has never been without a frown. He has made up his mind to sacrifice me.”*

Weighed down by this conviction, Louvois became

* *Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire de Louis XIV.*, par l'Abbé de Choisy.

broken in mind and weakened in body. A slow fever fastened upon him, and he was soon quite incapable of concealing his uneasiness. The Maréchale de Rochefort and Madame de Blanzac, two of his most intimate friends, having paid him a visit at Meudon, he proposed, in the course of the day, to drive them out; and while so engaged, they heard him talking earnestly to himself, and at several intervals caught the words, "Will he do it? Will they make him do it? No, no. Nevertheless—No; he dare not."

During this monologue, the mother and daughter, who listened in silence, were suddenly startled by perceiving that the horses were on the very edge of a piece of water into which they were about to plunge; and the Maréchale had only time to seize the reins, and to utter a piercing shriek, in order to arouse the minister from his revery, and warn him of the danger to which they were exposed, when he turned toward his affrighted companions with a melancholy smile, confessing that he had been so buried in thought that he had entirely forgotten the duty in which he was engaged.

Finally, on the 16th of June, 1691, his fate was determined. He had on the 14th transacted business as usual with the king, in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon when another stormy scene took place. Louis XIV., who still remembered and resented, with great bitterness, the burning of the Palatinate, and who had by no means forgotten the still more personal offense of the displaced picket, made no effort to conceal his resentment, but thwarted in every instance the projects of his minister, and opposed his opinions so determinedly that the patience of Louvois at length gave way, and, suddenly throwing upon the table a packet of papers which he chanced at the moment to hold in his hand, he rushed from the room, exclaiming, "It is impossible to serve you."

When he reached home, the war-secretary abandoned himself to the most gloomy despair. The first furious ebullition of his royal master might have been the mere impulsive effect of temporary passion, but the persevering verbal indignity to which he had been that day subjected was too systematic to admit of any such misconception. Ambition was the one ruling passion of his life; he cared not for the mental labor or the moral responsibility entailed upon him by the difficult and onerous office which he held; he forgot all in a sense of the power that it conferred; and he felt that, in losing place, he lost all for which he cared to live.

At eleven o'clock on the same night the heart-broken minister received a private letter from Madame de Maintenon, in which she assured him that the king had consented to overlook his impetuosity, and that he was at liberty to present himself, as usual, on the following day in the council chamber—a permission of which he gladly availed himself—when, as he had been assured, Louis XIV. met him without a vestige of displeasure, and addressed him almost with a smile. Louvois, however, was too well acquainted with the secret thoughts and lip-deep policy of his royal master to be so easily misled. For five-and-twenty years he had been accustomed to study not only his words, but also his looks; and the very calmness of the king upon this occasion, when he had so recently been subjected to an affront from a subject, sufficed to convince the minister that his influence and his power were at an end forever, and that even his person was not secure.

At the termination of the council he retired at once to his residence, which he reached on foot, and where he had no sooner arrived than he commanded that the Marquis de Barbesieux, his son, might be desired to follow him to his chamber. In five minutes the summons was obeyed, but it was too late; for, when the marquis entered the room, his father had already expired.

The impression of Louvois had, however, been a correct one; for his arrest on the succeeding day, and his imprisonment in the Bastille, had already been determined on.*

When the death of his minister was announced to Louis XIV. he was about to visit his fountains; but he had no sooner received this intelligence than he began to walk rapidly to and fro in his apartment, uttering from time to time a few incoherent words, and on one occasion exclaiming, hoarsely, "the wretched man must have dreaded the fate of Fouquet!" drawing, as he spoke, a paper from his bosom, which he tore into a thousand fragments. Some of these were collected, and afterward joined together, by the care and skill of a curious courtier, when they proved, as he had anticipated, to be portions of a *lettre-décapet*, bearing the name of the offending minister.

Pale, thoughtful, and agitated, the king was about to descend into the gardens, when a gentleman of the household of James II., who had been hastily dispatched from St. Germain for that purpose, approached him, and in the name of his master offered a compliment of condolence on the loss which he had so suddenly experienced.

"Sir," said the monarch, in an accent of which the cheerfulness admitted no mistake, "make my acknowledgments to the King and Queen of England, and assure them in my name that neither their interests nor my own will suffer from the circumstance."

As the messenger was retiring, his majesty beckoned to M. de Lauzun, who chanced to be passing, and invited him to become his companion in a saunter through the park, when, as he traversed the orangery, evidently overwhelmed by thought, he suddenly raised his eyes toward that wing of the palace in which the minister had just expired; and the window of the death-room being open,

* This fact was communicated by the king himself to Monsieur de Chamillard, by whom it was repeated to the Duke de St. Simon.

continued for a considerable time to gaze earnestly in that direction, until a strange expression passed over his countenance, and bending toward his companion, he whispered in his ear, with a constrained smile, "Just see the force of imagination—I could have declared that I recognized in the distance the face of M. de Louvois!"

During the evening, however, Louis XIV. recovered his composure, and no allusion was made in his presence to the fatal event which had so recently occurred, until the advent of *Monsieur*, who, as he entered the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, exclaimed, earnestly, "Oh! sire, what a loss you have just sustained."

"By no means," was the cold reply; "if M. de Louvois had not died so suddenly, he would have been in the Bastille within two days."

The indifference of the king, was, however, exceeded by that of Madame de Maintenon, who had never forgiven the opposition of the deceased minister to the recognition of her marriage; and so little did she endeavor to conceal her real feelings, that upon being asked by a friend if she intended to put up prayers for the soul of the deceased, she answered, with some asperity, that she had sins enough of her own which required her prayers, and was not consequently called upon to expiate those of others.

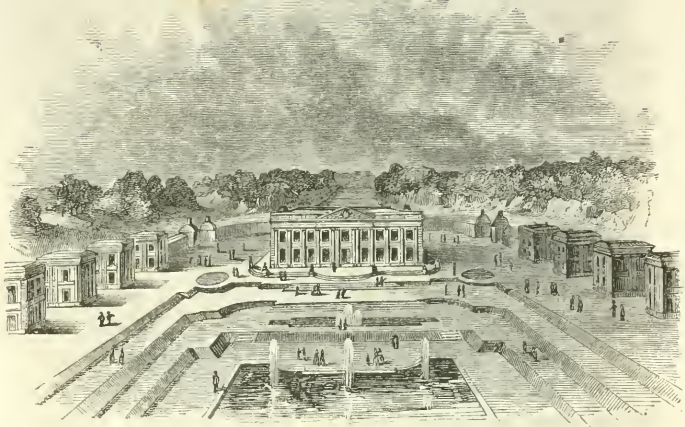
Rumors of poison followed close upon the death of the minister; and St. Simon even asserts that the crime was proved at the *post mortem* examination of his body. According to the statement of the duke, Louvois, who was a great water-drinker, always had a jug full of that liquid placed upon the mantel of his cabinet, from which he drank whenever he required it. He had swallowed a draught from this jug before he proceeded to the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, and just as a servant retired who had been alone in the room for several minutes. This man was subsequently arrested, and put upon his trial; but it had scarcely commenced when he was lib-

erated by the king's order, and the depositions which had been taken committed to the flames, with an express command that no further investigation should take place.

Louvois was no sooner in his grave than a marked and striking change was effected in the manner of Madame de Maintenon. We have stated elsewhere that, although continually present at all the discussions which arose between the king and his minister, she invariably remained silent, and apparently abstracted, until appealed to for her opinion. She had also hitherto stringently abstained from influencing (at least visibly) any public measure, or the fortunes of any public man, while she had limited her familiar circle to a small number of individuals, and those selected rather for their social qualities than their political position; but suddenly a revolution, alike of feeling and of action, supervened; she became the center of court favor, the object of court adulation, and the source of court advancement. "My attendants never served me as they should have done until they saw me leaving your apartments," wrote one of the first nobles of France to the *ci-devant* "widow Scarron" upon one occasion; while a second courtier, in a circle where the history of the century was under discussion, observed that, after the death of Louvois, the next chapter should be headed, "End of the reign of Louis the Great," and the succeeding one "Reign of Frances d'Aubigné."*

The epigram was a bitter one.

* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.



CHAPTER XXI.

The Marquis de Pomponne—Industry of Louis XIV.—Social Advancement of the Ministers—Marriages of the Duke de Chartres and the Duke du Maine—Governors of the Duke de Chartres—The Abbé Dubois—Portrait of Philip d'Orleans—The Royal Brothers—Frivolity of Monsieur; his Portrait; his Costume; his Insignificance—The Value of an additional Inch—Magnificence of Madame de Montespan—Madame de Maintenon and the new Duchess du Maine; her Arrogance—Stinging Rejoinder of the Duke d'Elbœuf—Cowardice of the Duke du Maine—The Dutch Journal—Death of Mademoiselle—Presumption of M. de Lauzun—Capture of Namur—The Ghost-Seer—Madame Armond—A baffled Intrigue—Power of Madame de Maintenon—Distrust of the King—Equivocal Position of Madame de Maintenon—The Monarch and the Court Ladies—Ambulatory Banquets.

A MONTH after the death of Louvois the Marquis de Pomponne was called to the council; Torey, his son-in-law, confirmed in his appointment as minister for foreign

affairs, and the Marquis de Barbesieux made secretary of the war office; and from this period Louis XIV. devoted himself, with increased energy, to the transaction of public business. Those who were the most familiar with his habits were lost in astonishment at the activity which he evinced. He limited his hunting excursions to a couple of hours; returned to the palace at a given moment; devoted four hours to reading, writing, and dictating to his secretaries; and frequently dismissed the princesses immediately after supper, in order to expedite his foreign couriers.* Nor was it merely by his own example that the king encouraged his ministers to increased diligence; he also rewarded it by valuable presents and personal distinction; and during the latter years of his reign they succeeded in placing themselves on a level with the nobility, whose dress and manners they adopted, and with whom they formed alliances calculated still more to lessen the disparity which had formerly existed between them; while their wives ultimately obtained the privilege of driving in the royal equipages, and dining at the royal table.

Two marriages of importance were, however, destined, at the commencement of the year 1692, to relieve for a time the monotony of public business and the tedium of the court—those of the Duke de Chartres and the Duke du Maine. Louis XIV. had, as we have already stated, been for several years endeavoring to obtain the consent of *Monsieur* to an alliance between his son and Mademoiselle de Blois,† the youngest daughter of Madame de Montespan, in which he ultimately succeeded through the influence of the Chevalier de Lorraine, the favorite of the

* Lettres de Madame de Maintenon.

† This princess was the third of the king's daughters who had borne the same name; the first having been Mary Anne, Princess de Conti, of whom Madame de la Vallière was the mother; and the second a former daughter of Madame de Montespan, who died at an early age.

duke ; but he had found it impossible to secure either that of *Madame* or of her son, until the agency of an individual, whose insignificance would have appeared to place him beyond the pale of so exalted an intrigue, liberated the monarch from his embarrassment, and enabled him to accomplish a marriage which he had so long desired.

Monsieur had been singularly unfortunate in his selection of governors for the Duke de Chartres ; as, although they had in every case been men of distinguished merit and acquirements, his mania for exalted titles had caused him to appoint persons already so far advanced in life, that they succeeded each other with a rapidity inimical to the interests of their pupil. In the interval from 1683 to 1692, M. de Chartres had no less than four—the Duke de Navailles, marshal of France, an honorable, virtuous, and learned man, lived only two years after his appointment ; the Marshal d'Estrades, also an accomplished preceptor, did not longer fill the office, although he was seventy-nine when he died ; the Duke de la Vieuville, the least eligible of the three, survived one year longer ; and was replaced in his turn by M. d'Arcy, a councilor of state, a brave soldier, and a skillful diplomatist, but who, unfortunately for the young duke, had been about him only for a short period when his marriage emancipated him from all guardianship.

During the intervals consequent upon these changes, the duty of governor had been performed by M. de St. Laurent, deputy-master of the ceremonies to *Monsieur*, a man of obscure birth and unprepossessing person, but, nevertheless, well calculated to educate a prince. His want of nobility had, however, sufficed to deprive him of the title of governor ; although upon every occasion when a vacancy occurred, as well as when etiquette required a new appointment, the capacity and merit of M. de St. Laurent caused him to retain all the authority of the office, even while others enjoyed the honor.

In the course of his frequent visits to the curate of St. Eustache, with whom he was on terms of intimacy, M. de St. Laurent formed an acquaintance with a youth named Dubois, whose extraordinary intellect made a strong impression upon his mind. He was the son of an apothecary of Brive-la-Galliarde in Lower Limousin, who had pursued the study of physic at Rheims under a Dr. Letellier; but the latter having died before his studies were completed, had bequeathed him to the kindness of the curate, who being, in his turn, unable to provide for him, had recommended him to the notice of M. de St. Laurent.

As the young man wrote a fine hand, his new patron presented him to the Duke de Chartres in the capacity of writing-master; but ere long, conscious that he was thus cramping his genius, he caused him to assume the abbatial costume, in order to secure to him a befitting position in the establishment, and promoted him to the study, where his duties consisted in preparing the prince for his final examination by himself. Thus St. Laurent at once found the personal relief which his increasing infirmities began to render necessary, and had the satisfaction of witnessing the daily progress of his royal pupil.

From the period in which Dubois had advanced in fortune, he had courted the good graces of the Chevalier de Lorraine and the Marquis d'Effiat, who bore unlimited sway in the household of *Monsieur*; and at the death of M. de St. Laurent, as the *soi-disant* abbé was already established in the functions of tutor, his new friends became anxious that his official station should be confirmed. This, however, could not, as they were well aware, be easily accomplished, owing to the obscurity of his birth, which was still fresh in the memory of every one. They consequently temporized; raised objections to the persons proposed; caused the postponement of the appointment; expatiated on the extraordinary improvement of the young prince under his tuition; and at length, when they had

rendered *Monsieur* weary of the subject, succeeded in securing the nomination of their new *protégé*; who, in return for so great a service, and conscious of the necessity of their continued support, lent himself unscrupulously to all their views.

The first service which they exacted from the titular abbé was his coöperation in promoting the marriage between the Duke de Chartres and the king's daughter; to which the young prince was strongly opposed, not merely because any matrimonial alliance must tend to interfere with his favorite pursuits and habits, but also through the influence of his mother, who, justly proud of her four-and-thirty quarterings, which had as yet been unsullied by any derogatory alliance, looked upon the union of her son with one whom she persisted in calling "His Majesty's bastard," as a disgrace which could never again be obliterated.

Dubois had, however, the advantage of constant companionship with his pupil, who soon discovered that the presence of his preceptor was quite as essential in his hours of recreation as in those of study.

Philip of Orleans, the future Regent of France, had, at this period, far outgrown his age, both in physical and mental power; and although still a boy in years, was manly in all his ideas and habits. He prided himself greatly upon a fancied resemblance to Henry IV., whom he endeavored to imitate in every particular; but the analogy between them was not so striking as regarded their persons, for the Duke de Chartres had neither the long countenance of that monarch nor his strongly-marked Bourbon nose, nor his lofty forehead; the cynical expression of their eyes alone conveying any idea of resemblance.

The prince was of middle height, and eminently graceful in his deportment, although he walked badly, owing to an organic weakness to which he had nearly fallen a victim

in his infancy; his eyes were bright and lively, his mouth joyous, his complexion high, his face round and full, and his nose thick and flat, with large nostrils; in short, it was a countenance of mingled intellect and sensuality, which was the very transcript of his character. His hand was singularly white and well formed, and he was so anxious to preserve its beauty, that it was said by a celebrated writer of the time, that "each of his nails exacted as much care as a reliquary."

A solid education, pursued with ardor, had accelerated the precocity of his intellect; for not only had he studied all the modern languages, formed a thorough acquaintance with the authors of antiquity, turned his serious attention to the important questions of philosophy and politics, and mastered much of the knowledge necessary to the administration of the internal economy of a kingdom, but he had also secured those resources against the tedium of a court and the etiquet of royalty which were able to render him at every crisis independent of both, by cultivating literature and art. His favorite studies were, however, mathematics and astronomy, and his darling pursuit chemistry, to which he devoted a great portion of his time. He was an agreeable musician, a pleasing poet, and a good artist, and excelled in every thing which required quickness, memory, and address. He cared little for field sports, and still less for the etiquet of Versailles; preferring the liberty which is so seldom accorded to persons of his rank, to all the high-sounding honors to which he might fairly have laid claim. His first campaign at the siege of Mous had sufficed to prove that he was courageous even to temerity; while his governor, the Marquis d'Arcy, had been compelled, at the battle of Leuze, to throw himself before him at the risk of his own life, in order to prevent his falling into the power of the enemy. In temper he was joyous and affable, slow to take offense, and so thoroughly devoid of egotism, that he was frequently

wanting in justice to himself. He despised and detested every thing which savored of revenge, and readily forgave an injury even before it was acknowledged. He was, however, slow to believe in the probity of mankind, and had no faith in female virtue, his early experience of the sex having tended to give him an unfortunate bias, and to lead him to consider such a quality as at once unnecessary and inconvenient; and consequently, with all his talents, all his acquirements, and all his refined tastes, he early became dissipated, fickle, and heartless.

Such was the ardent and ill-regulated nature upon which Dubois was called to exercise his influence, and he did not hesitate to pander to the worst passions of his pupil in order to retain and increase it, while the excesses in which he encouraged the young prince became at length so notorious that they reached the ears of the king, and excited his extreme displeasure, and this was the precise moment chosen by Dubois to extort his reluctant consent to a marriage, which, as he ably represented, would tend at once to restore him to the favor of the monarch.

Monsieur had already, as we have previously stated, been induced by the Chevalier de Lorraine to accede to the wishes of his royal brother, and although his pride had for a time revolted at the idea of bestowing his only son upon a daughter of Madame de Montespan, he had ultimately done so the more readily as he was sincerely attached to the banished favorite, and foresaw, in the projected alliance, an increase of personal favor with the king. Moreover, the dominant feature of *Monsieur's* character was weakness. He habitually permitted himself to be governed by every one who acquired an influence over him, and did not appear to perceive that he was a mere puppet in the hands of his favorites.

Of *Madame* he stood in an awe which was so thoroughly appreciated at court, that during the early favor of Madame de Maintenon, when that lady had incurred the displeasure

of the duchess by a sarcasm, and the prince complained of the insult to the king, saying that it had greatly offended *his wife*, Louis XIV. had replied, with a smile,

“For one who piques himself on speaking his native language with so much correctness, you have just committed a grievous error, in which I will set you right. Here is what you should have said: ‘I am come to complain of Madame de Maintenon, who, by some ambiguous words, has offended, or has endeavored to offend, *my husband.*’”

Monsieur, conscious of the absurdity of his position, could not restrain his laughter, and the sarcasm of the mistress of the robes was suffered to go unpunished.*

The great delight of *Monsieur* consisted in building, in masquerading, in fêtes, and in amusements of every description. He cared nothing for more exalted pleasures, or more intellectual pursuits; he disliked reading, and detested all serious conversation, but entered with delight into the gossipry of the court-ladies, and the frivolities of the courtiers. The ball-room and the table were the two great occupations of his life, and he was conspicuous in both, for he danced admirably, and ate voraciously. The kingly magnificence which he displayed at his court in the Palais-Royal, and at St. Cloud, extended to the merest trifles, and his toilet-table was a mass of plate and jewelry. His prodigality, excessive as it was, met, however, with no rebuke from Louis XIV., who, satisfied by the deference and respect which he always exhibited toward his person, and satisfied that he would never oppose his measures, indulged him in all his expensive and fantastic follies. Morally, *Monsieur* was null. He had more manner than mind, more simplicity than wit, more carelessness than kindness, more indiscretion than frankness, and more distrust than prudence; and in his case qualities which would have been estimable in others degenerated into defects.

* Mémoires de Madame de Montespan.

This sketch of *Monsieur* would, however, be incomplete, did we not subjoin a description of his person, as he appeared at the marriage of the Duke de Chartres.

In stature he was very short, a defect that he endeavored to overcome by the immense height of the heels of his shoes, which were surcharged with ribbons, and gave him the appearance of walking upon stilts, while the extreme rotundity of his figure destroyed the grace of his carriage, and made his movements heavy. He bore a considerable resemblance to Louis XIII., save that he did not possess the same elevated cast of countenance. His face was extremely long, his nose prominent, his eyes large and dark, and his mouth small. His physiognomy had an expression of kindness, which was, however, counteracted by haughtiness; and when he smiled, which he did frequently, and generally at an unfortunate moment, his whole appearance was rendered less prepossessing by the exhibition of two ranges of teeth which were unfortunately defective. He wore an immense black wig, curled, and slightly powdered, which, brought forward upon his shoulders, fell on either side to his chest in absurd and almost ridiculous profusion, and also a quantity of rouge, and even patches. His coat was composed of green silk, with stripes and button-holes of gold embroidery, and was gathered into folds upon the hips in order to increase their apparent size, which fell below the knees like a tunic; the buttons were of emeralds set in gold, and his waistcoat, of rose-colored silk, embroidered with golden flowers in a profusion which almost concealed the original material, was traversed from right to left by the blue ribbon of the Holy Ghost, supporting a sword whose hilt was incrustated with diamonds, and disappeared under an enormous green bow fringed with gold. Ribbons were profusely scattered over the whole of his costume, and ornamented not only the principal articles of his dress, but even his white satin shoes, and his round beaver with its double circle of

feathers overhanging the edges on all sides, which he never placed upon his head save in cases of absolute necessity, or on occasions of rigorous etiquet. The principal feature of his costume was, however, the extraordinary and prodigious display of jewelry in which he indulged. Crosses and stars were profusely strewn over his vest; he had rings upon every finger, and bracelets on his wrists; triple ruffles about his hands; and a cravat and collar of Hungarian point almost beyond price; and in this extravagant attire he divided his attention between the courtiers and the mirror, into which he gazed with evident satisfaction, and by whose aid he was enabled speedily to correct every little derangement in his attire consequent upon the heat and pressure of the throng.

Such was *Monsieur* in the year 1692—a weak friend, a harmless enemy, and an effeminate prince; and under these circumstances it will scarcely appear extraordinary that he should so far forget his dignity as even to sacrifice the honor of the house of Orleans to present convenience and probable advantage. *Madame*, however, was differently constituted; and her indignation was so violent when her son at length announced to her that he had acceded to the wishes of the king and the orders of his father, that in the first paroxysm of her anger and mortification she answered him by a blow.

But aware that against the will of Louis XIV. the supineness of *Monsieur*, and the concession of her son, she had no alternative save ultimate compliance, *Madame* at length resolved to reconcile herself to what she persisted, nevertheless, in calling her dishonor; for she dreaded that should she continue to indulge in an opposition which must necessarily prove fruitless, the king might be induced to punish her pertinacity by abandoning the interests of the Elector-Palatine, of whom he was at that period the support.

In consequence of this somewhat tardy reflection, there-

fore, *Madame* gradually suffered herself to be appeased, and even attended the reading of the marriage contract, without betraying one symptom of indignation; especially as Louis XIV. gave to his daughter a dower of two millions of livres, to be paid at the close of the war; and an annual income of two hundred thousand, with a marriage-gift in jewels estimated at two hundred thousand crowns; renewing, moreover, to the Duke de Chartres the donation already made to *Monsieur* of the Palais-Royal, bequeathed to the crown by Cardinal Mazarin.

The marriage was accomplished with great magnificence, to the chagrin of the Marquise de Montespan; who, after having vented her annoyance in a letter which she wrote on the occasion to the Bavarian princess (and which was couched in terms well fitted to arouse all the pride of *Madame*, and to strengthen the hatred she had long borne toward the haughty favorite), did not condescend to recognize the alliance in any other manner.

Only one month later it was followed by that of the Duke du Maine with Anna Louisa Benedicta de Bourbon, Mademoiselle de Charolais, the second daughter of the Prince de Condé.*

The king had in vain endeavored to dissuade M. du Maine from marriage, frankly declaring to him, that it was not persons in his position who were called upon to found a family; but, urged by the wishes of the duke, and in compliance with the entreaties of Madame de Maintenon, whose affection for her nursling continued to be boundless, Louis XIV. at length consented to the measure, although in direct opposition to his better judgment. He had always been anxious that the legitimated princes should remain unmarried; but as he found it impossible to convince the duke of the propriety of such an arrangement, he resolved to seek him a wife in one of the first houses in France; upon which the prince, informed of

* Granddaughter of the Great Condé.

what had transpired, proposed one of his own daughters to the monarch.* M. de Condé saw that the rank, the influence, and the favor of the king's natural children were increasing from day to day; and the fact that one of them had actually become Duchess de Chartres, rendered him more than ever anxious to secure the Duke du Maine as his son-in-law. In these views he was earnestly encouraged by *Madame*, who had begun to have painful apprehensions that Louis XIV., after having disposed of her son, would next deprive her of her daughter, and who consequently rejoiced to see the danger of such an event removed through the agency of the prince.

The proposition was no sooner accepted than it became necessary to choose between the three sisters; and as they were all extremely small, the selection was made by measurement; when Anna Louisa Benedicta proving to be the tallest by an inch, it was decided that she should become Duchess du Maine. The marriage took place with the same ceremonies as that of the Duke de Chartres; but on this occasion, Madame de Montespan, whose vanity was flattered that the alliance should have been solicited by the family of the bride, was regal in her liberality. She presented the bed, of which the hangings, embroidered with gold and pearls, cost more than a million of livres of the present day; and gave to her daughter-in-law a casket of jewels estimated at two millions of that time; while she also refused to receive again one of her three costly services of plate, which had been borrowed of her by her son on the occasion of the bridal banquet. Nothing could more thoroughly tend to demonstrate the satisfaction of the marchioness than this profusion, for she was naturally avaricious, and averse to making presents; but the opportunity here afforded, alike of exhibiting her magnificence and of offering an additional affront to *Madame*, was too precious to be sacrificed to mere feelings of economy.

* Souvenirs de Madame de Caylus.

The settlement actually made, or the donation really bestowed, by Louis XIV. upon his favorite son on the occasion of his marriage was never known; and it is believed that, as he had already been rendered extremely wealthy by the compulsory bequests of MADemoiselle, it was willfully kept secret, in order not to shock the feelings of the nation, which had begun to evince some symptoms of having awakened to a consciousness of wide contrast existing between the prodigality of the nobles and the poverty of the people. All that transpired was the fact that, on the eve of the ceremony, the king had presented to the bride two costly caskets, the one containing a suit of diamonds, and the other a set of mixed jewels.

From the moment of the marriage, Madame de Maintenon attached herself strongly to the wife of her favorite. "The princess," she wrote to the Abbess of Maubuisson, "is about to pass the Holy Week in your community. Compel her to rest herself thoroughly. They kill her here by the restraints and fatigues of the court. She is crushed under the weight of gold and precious stones. They will prevent her from growing, and destroy her health. She is prettier without a cap than with all their ornaments. She eats nothing, in all probability does not sleep well, and I am dying with fear lest they should have married her too young. I wish I could keep her at St. Cyr, dressed like one of the pupils, and romping as merrily. There are no austerities practiced in conventual houses equal to those to which the etiquet of a court subjects the great."

In another letter she describes the young princess as "pretty, amiable, cheerful, and witty;" but as though she had nevertheless a latent doubt of the final result of the motherly interest which she was taking in her welfare, she adds, "If she deceives me, I renounce all princesses for the future." Nor was it long ere she perceived that even with the good qualities which she had discovered, or believed that she had discovered, in the new duchess, there was no solid foundation

to work upon: "You have deceived me," she writes, more sadly than reproachfully, to the governess of the princess, "on the principal point upon which I consulted you—that of religion. She has no tendency whatever toward piety, but is anxious to do every thing that she sees others do. I do not desire to make her a bigot; but I confess that I should like to find her more regular in her devotions, and more agreeable alike to God, to the king, and to the Duke du Maine, who has sufficient good sense to desire his wife should be more virtuous than those by whom she is surrounded."*

We have already stated that the Duke du Maine was witty, cunning, and deceitful, but eminently agreeable whenever he sought to please; while his enmity was the more dangerous from the fact that, when he desired to revenge a wrong, he hesitated at no meanness or falsehood which could insure success. His wife possessed an intellect equal to his own, but she exercised it in a different manner, and frittered away capabilities of a high order upon novels and plays, making the latter almost the business of her life, committing them to memory, and afterward causing them to be performed at her little court. Her courage was masculine in its extent and violence: she was adventurous, bold, and passionate, ever acting upon the impulse of the moment, and careless of all results. She despised the weakness of her husband, and openly reproached him with an economy which she designated as avarice, and to which she at once declared that she would never lend herself.

M. du Maine was unequal to contend against this fiery spirit; even his subtlety was at fault; and while he persisted in the same line of conduct by which he had long succeeded in persuading the monarch that he was utterly devoid of that very ambition which was in fact perpetually gnawing at his heart, passing whole days in his closet, avoiding society, hunting without attendants, and dining alone in

* Lettres de Madame de Maintenon.

his apartment, he was condemned to the mortification of seeing the duchess hold a magnificent court of Sceaux, (which splendid estate had been presented to him by the king upon his marriage), and plunge into expenses by which he was ultimately ruined, without venturing to expostulate, such was his terror of the violent disposition of his wife.

To this want of moral courage the Duke du Maine added a total absence of personal bravery; and the fact was so well known that it at length became the common jest of the courtiers, who sought so little to disguise from him their opinions upon the subject, that on one occasion, at the close of a campaign, the Duke d'Elbœuf inquired of him where he expected to serve during the following year, remarking that wherever His Highness went he had made up his mind to accompany him. The prince inquired for what reason. "Because," was the sarcastic reply, as the duke glanced toward the bystanders, "near your person one is sure to be safe."

M. du Maine bit his lip, and turned away without making any rejoinder.

This unfortunate failing of his favorite son had, however, remained unknown to Louis XIV. until he on one occasion met with a paragraph in a Dutch journal, in which the most flattering panegyrics were poured forth upon the courage of the Duke du Maine, who had, as it was asserted, after exhibiting during the progress of an engagement the desperate valor of a hero, finally received a severe wound, and been carried from the field insensible. The eye of the king flashed and his brow flushed as he read the passage, while he even forgot the danger of the smitten prince in the pride that he felt at his heroism; but this paternal joy was destined to be short-lived. In the next number of the journal an apology was made for the error into which it had been betrayed, by a mistake in the name of the brave officer who was so grievously wounded, and an assurance given that the Duke du Maine

was not only unhurt, but that he had never, throughout the whole of the action, been exposed to the slightest danger.

This elaborate contradiction awakened the suspicions of the king, and he inquired of one of his valets-de-chambre, named La Vienne, from whom he frequently learned truths which others endeavored to conceal, if he had heard a doubt cast upon the personal courage of the Duke du Maine. La Vienne remained silent, a circumstance which only increased the curiosity and apprehension of the monarch, who forthwith insisted upon a reply, and thus urged, the reluctant attendant was compelled to admit that the cowardice of M. du Maine had long passed into a proverb, not only in the armies of His Majesty, but even in those of the enemy—a revelation which was one of the most heavy blows, alike to his pride and his affection, to which throughout his reign Louis XIV. was ever subjected.*

The marriage of the duke was not agreeable to MADEMOISELLE, to whom he was indebted for the principal portion of his fortune. Mademoiselle de Bourbon had offended her by a want of respect on several occasions, and she declared that if the alliance ever took place she would never see either the duke or the duchess again, a threat which was nevertheless disregarded, for there was nothing further to be hoped from her generosity, and her displeasure was too unimportant to change the resolution of the king.

MADemoISELLE was not long destined, however, to endure this mortification; for, on the 5th of April in the following year she died in the palace of Luxembourg, at the age of sixty-three years, the richest private princess in Europe. The hatred which had replaced her former passion for Lauzun was too powerful for her strength; and after living for years in a wearisome and monotonous pomp, which she dragged from one of her estates to another, without obtaining from it either consideration or

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

solace ; absenting herself entirely from the court save on occasions of ceremony when her presence was essential ; frittering away her intellect in vain and idle futilities ; and finding her principal occupation in assuming mourning at the death of every personage with whom she could claim the slightest and most distant connection, and explaining in the most prolix manner to those about her the exact degree and amount of the consanguinity and alliance of each, she ultimately fell into a state of languor and suffering which, after enduring for many months, terminated in death.

Monsieur and *Madame* were her constant companions during her sickness, for, in addition to the close intimacy which had long existed between herself and the prince, he coveted her immense fortune, and became, as he had anticipated, her sole legatee. The largest portion of her original possessions had, however, as we have already seen, passed into other hands.

On the death of the princess, M. de Lauzun assumed the mourning of a widowed husband, and appeared at the funeral in a black cloak—an exhibition which seriously displeased the king, who commanded the Duke de St. Aignan to desire him instantly to retire. “I can not at such a moment listen to the voice of pride,” was the cool reply of the former favorite when the message was delivered to him ; “I am absorbed by my grief, and could wish to see the king more occupied by his own ;” and he remained to the close of the ceremony ; while, even when the period was passed in which the trappings of wo should in every case have been discontinued, he nevertheless persisted in changing his liveries to a shade of brown so deep as to be almost black, in order, as he stated, to keep alive the memory of *MADemoiselle*, whose portrait was to be seen in every apartment of his house.

The campaigns of 1692 and 1693 were the last in which Louis XIV. ever took an active part, and the capture of

Namur his closing exploit; and it was on his return to Versailles, after this expedition, that Madame de Maintenon is asserted to have resolved upon making a final effort to effect her recognition as Queen of France; but all ordinary means having failed to accomplish her purpose, she now, according to these authorities, determined to have recourse to supernatural agency, believing that although the monarch had resisted all human intervention he would not venture to dispute what he could not fail to consider as a decree from Heaven.

One day, accordingly, a farrier from the little town of Salon, in Provence, arrived at Versailles, having made the journey on foot, and proceeded at once to the palace, without even waiting to rest himself, where he applied to M. de Brissac to obtain for him an audience of the king, to whom he had, as he declared, something of the highest importance to communicate. M. de Brissac, however, declined the mission, the obscure station of the applicant not rendering him eligible for such an honor. But the peasant was not to be repulsed, and his pertinacity was so great, and his applications for admittance to the presence of the monarch so persevering in every quarter where he imagined he had a prospect of success, that the circumstance at length reached the ears of Louis himself, who, anxious to see how far the resolution of the man would carry him, caused him to be told that what he requested was impracticable, as the King of France was not accessible to every comer. Nevertheless, the peasant refused to yield, asserting, that if he could once see His Majesty, he would tell him things which were only known to himself, and which would at once convince him that he was not required to listen to an impostor; but demanding, if this interview were really impossible, that he might at least be admitted to one of the ministers of state.

The king, curious to ascertain the result of this singular adventure, desired the Marquis de Barbesieux to receive

the man on the following day, who, when he next made his appearance at the palace, was accordingly directed to his apartments; but the peasant shook his head, observing that he had requested to be introduced to one of the ministers of state, and that M. de Barbesieux was not a minister of state. This objection startled every one; for the man had only been in Versailles a few days, and it was not anticipated that he could so soon have acquainted himself with the exact rank of the great officers of the crown. It sufficed, however, to render the king more than ever desirous to penetrate the mystery of his errand; and he accordingly deputed M. de Pomponne, whose ministerial functions could not be disputed by this extraordinary farrier, to grant him the desired interview.

On learning by whom he was to be received, the peasant at once declared his willingness to confide his secret; and he was no sooner alone with the minister in his cabinet than he related, that one night as he was returning at a late hour to his village, he suddenly found himself, while passing under a tree, surrounded by a great light, in the center of which there appeared to him the figure of a woman, young, fair, and beautiful, dressed in a long, white robe, over which she wore a royal mantle; and he had scarcely remarked all this, when, as he asserted, she thus addressed him: "I am the Queen Maria Theresa. Go to the king, and repeat to him the circumstances which I am about to communicate to you. Heaven will assist you during your journey; and when you arrive, should the king doubt that it was I who sent you, then relate to him a circumstance of which he alone is cognizant, which no other person can know, and by which he will at once recognize the truth of what you will have to tell him. If, in the first place, as is extremely probable, you can not obtain an audience of himself, demand to speak to a minister of state; but, above all things, make no com-

munications to others, whatever may be their rank. Depart boldly and speedily, and execute what I command on pain of death."

The peasant had scarcely, as he declared, solemnly pledged himself to implicit obedience, and learned the secrets upon which his mission was to be based, when he once more found himself alone and in darkness, and so thoroughly bewildered by the scene through which he had just passed, that he was unable to pursue his homeward path; but, throwing himself down under the tree, ultimately forgot his terrors in sleep.

When he awoke on the following morning, he attributed the whole adventure to a dream, and made no preparation for his journey; but, two days afterward, as he was passing by the same spot, the vision reappeared, uttering menaces so fearful, in consequence of his disobedience, that he again promised to comply, pleading as an excuse for his first failure, his utter destitution, and the impossibility of his undertaking so long a journey without the means of subsistence. To this objection the vision had, however, he said, replied by directing him to wait upon the commissioner of the province, and to inform him of what he had seen, and the orders which he had received; adding, that he would then supply him with all that was necessary.

Nevertheless, it required a third apparition to convince the peasant, as he declared to the minister, that he was really in his right mind; but his terror became so great at the threats which were fulminated against him on this last occasion, that he immediately departed for Aix, where he told his extraordinary story to the commissioner, who, without hesitation, gave him a small sum of money, and urged him to set forth upon the instant.

Such was the tale to which M. de Pomponne was destined to listen; and wild and extravagant as it appeared, it yet contained elements which startled the judg-

ment of the statesman; but it was in vain that, by every means he could invent, he endeavored to acquire a knowledge of the assumed communication which was to be a pass-word to the confidence of the king, as the man resolutely refused to confide it to any ears save those of the monarch himself.

When he was informed of this circumstance, Louis XIV. could no longer restrain his curiosity, but resolved personally to converse with the peasant, and for this purpose he desired that he might be introduced into his cabinet by a private stair. Their first interview, which was strictly secret, lasted an entire hour; and on the following day another took place of equal length, attended with the same precautions.

On the succeeding morning, as the king was descending the same stair-case by which the ghost-seer had been introduced, in order to attend a hunt, M. de Duras, who by his high rank and still higher favor was in a position to say whatever he pleased to the monarch, began to speak of the farrier of Salon with extreme contempt, and terminated his attack by a proverb which at that period was very commonly used, "Either that man is mad, or the king is not noble." As the words passed his lips, Louis XIV. suddenly stopped, and replied emphatically, "If the proverb be true, duke, then it is I who am not noble; for I have twice conversed with him, and each time at considerable length, and I have found all that he has said replete with good sense and truth."

The extreme seriousness with which this declaration was made startled all by whom it was overheard; but as M. de Duras still ventured to reply by a doubtful gesture, the king added, "Learn that this man has spoken to me of a circumstance which occurred to myself more than twenty years ago, and of which no one living can be aware, since I never divulged it to any human being; and this was the apparition of a phantom in the forest of St.

Germain, who addressed me in the precise words which he has since repeated."

The same result ensued to the last, whenever the name of this peasant was mentioned before the king. Throughout the whole period of his residence at Versailles all his expenses were defrayed by the house-steward of the monarch; and when he was at length dismissed, the king not only presented him with a sum of money, but commanded the commissioner of Provence to take him under his especial protection, and, without removing him from his original sphere, to be careful that as long as he lived he should be amply provided for. It was not, however, to be anticipated that so singular an event as this could be suffered to pass quietly into oblivion; and accordingly, despite the silence of the king and the discretion of his minister, enough transpired upon the subject to enable the newsmongers of the court to collect the following particulars.

There was resident at Marseilles a certain Madame Armond, whose life had been one long romance, and who, plain in person, limited in means, and an untitled widow, had nevertheless contrived so to fascinate all with whom she came into contact, that no one was surprised when she at length induced M. Armond, the naval commissioner of Marseilles, to marry her under the most extraordinary circumstances. This lady had been for years the most intimate friend of Madame de Maintenon; and it was accordingly conjectured that in some moment of extreme confidence, which had since escaped his memory, the king had imparted to the latter the secret of the apparition of the forest of St. Germain, which he believed himself never to have revealed, and that Madame de Maintenon had, in her turn, confided the circumstance to Madame Armond, who had made it her passport to the credulity of the farrier, as well as his own watch-word to the confidence of the king; while, as regarded the mission with which this strange messenger was intrusted by the vision clad in white and covered by a

royal mantle, it was readily discovered to be an entreaty from the deceased queen that His Majesty should, without further procrastination, publicly acknowledge Madame de Maintenon as her successor—a report which, moreover, coincided with that which had obtained at the period of Maria Theresa's death, that she had, in her last moments, placed her marriage-ring in the hand of Madame de Maintenon !*

If these rumors were, indeed, founded in truth, it is certain that the plot did not succeed, and that she never renewed a similar attempt, for she soon became convinced that the declared resolution of the king upon this subject would never be shaken ; and she had sufficient control over herself to accept his decision without a murmur, and to resign herself to his will. Nor had she reason to repent her prudence, for the monarch no sooner perceived that he had nothing more to apprehend from her pertinacity than his respect, his confidence, and his affection increased tenfold, and her influence became so powerful that her interference sufficed to secure results which were otherwise unattainable.

A proof of this fact is afforded by the circumstance that a lady of small fortune, who was anxious to accomplish the marriage of her daughter with the heir of a wealthy family, whose members did not consider the alliance sufficiently advantageous, conceived the idea of introducing herself surreptitiously into the antechamber of Madame de Maintenon toward the close of her dinner hour ; when, having succeeded in arriving there, she counterfeited indisposition, and approaching a window with a napkin in her hand, requested a glass of water. She was seen thus occupied by several persons to whom she was known, and was supposed to have been an invited guest ; the report of her having been seized with sudden indisposition at the table of Madame de Maintenon became current, and the

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

intelligence of her favor in such a quarter having reached the family of the coveted bridegroom, they no longer withheld their consent to the marriage.*

This anxiety to secure the interest of Madame de Maintenon was, without doubt, a consequence of the power which Louis XIV. had ceded to her over the affairs of the court; but this power by no means extended to those of the government: indeed, in all subjects connected with state policy, the king was so constantly on his guard against her that, on several occasions, when she had openly betrayed her purpose, and that he discovered a particular minister to be endeavoring to favor one of her relatives or friends, he made a point of opposing the arrangement for that very reason, and could never be induced to yield, even making a merit to herself of his firmness. When this occurred, Madame de Maintenon at first had recourse to tears, and was on thorns for several days afterward, but having secured the appointment of Fagon as principal physician, and feeling herself safe in the hands of a man who could essentially serve her, and whose opportunities of so doing were certain and frequent, she ultimately affected illness after scenes of this description, and generally contrived by such means to carry her point.†

It is presumed also that Louis XIV. had reason to suspect Madame de Maintenon of some secret intrigue, for his perseverance in keeping her almost constantly in his sight became at this period so determined that she complains of it in one of her letters as of an insupportable restraint. "The king," she writes, "is perpetually on guard over me. I see no one. He never leaves my room, and I am compelled to rise at five in the morning in order to write to you." And again, on another occasion, she exclaims, mournfully—"I experience more than ever that there is no compensation for the loss of liberty."

* Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

† Mémoires de St. Simon.

Her happiest moments were passed at St. Cyr, where she delighted to spend whole days in the midst of her pupils. "They occupy me considerably," she was accustomed to say, "but far more agreeably than the intrigues of people who are alternately the deceivers and the deceived, and frequently both at the same time. My difficulty is to keep them occupied in school from morning till night, which is not easily managed when girls are eighteen or twenty years of age."*

The public, who were not aware of these facts—some from personal dislike, and others from jealousy of her presumed influence—invariably rendered her responsible for every thing that occurred, especially when the results were unfortunate or unpopular; and thus her position became one of constant annoyance as well as of perpetual difficulty. A queen in her own apartments, she had no sooner passed the threshold than she became a mere private individual. She affected no state, gave precedence to all women of rank, and neither made nor received visits, save in the case of the English queen; nevertheless, it must be remarked that all general officers, when they either left Versailles to join the army or returned from a campaign, and all great personages who were compelled to absent themselves from the court on important business, both in going and returning, never failed to pay their respects to her. Her chosen society was limited to a few persons of both sexes, but her solitude was nevertheless perpetually invaded.

In one of her letters she says, "I can only secure a quiet moment by chance. Madame de Dangeau dines with me, and in all probability Madame d'Haudincourt also, who will request an explanation of our reason for not eating every thing that is served up. I shall lose patience; she will blush at my irritation, and I shall follow her example. The princesses who have not attended the hunt will come

* *Lettres de Madame de Maintenon.*

in, followed by their cabal, and wait the return of the king in my apartment in order to go to dinner. I shall take no more interest in these visitors than I inspire. The hunters will return in a crowd, and will relate the whole history of their day's sport without sparing us a single detail. They will then go to dinner, and Madame de Dangeau will challenge me, with a yawn, to a game of backgammon, &c. Such is the way in which people live at court."

Superadded to these restraints and intrusions, the victim of her own ambition had also to endure the egotistical actions and caprices of a monarch who, "born under the purple" and accustomed to see his own convenience and comfort the care of all about him, had long ceased to perceive that they might prove inimical to the happiness of others. In the most dissipated years of his life, Louis XIV. had never sacrificed either his wishes or his vanity even to the indisposition of those to whom he professed himself to be the most passionately attached, let the cause of that indisposition be what it might. Whatever were their sufferings—and there is evidence that upon several occasions they were severe—he would exempt them neither from the fatigue of traveling nor from the etiquette of the court. They must be full-dressed, covered with jewels, and tightly laced; dance, keep late late hours, and always be ready to amuse him, or to start at a moment's notice upon any excursion which he proposed, without appearing to heed the cold, the heat, the wind, or the dust with which the carriage was constantly filled, because he was, as we have elsewhere remarked, partial to fresh air, and never would suffer the windows to be closed. One complaint of inconvenience sufficed to exclude the murmurer forever. He seldom permitted any one but ladies to enter his coach, which was always stored with fruits, meats, and pastry; and before the party were a league upon their way he invariably proposed that they should partake of some refreshment. Although he himself never touched any food

between his regular repasts, it afforded him great amusement to see others eat; and in order not to incur his displeasure, it was necessary to devour every thing he offered—a necessity which was as imperative upon his own daughters and daughters-in-law as upon the ladies of the court.* MADemoiselle, on more than one occasion, complains bitterly in her memoirs of the annoyance to which she was subjected by the immense quantities of food that she had been compelled to swallow while driving with the king.

* Mémoires de St. Simon.



CHAPTER XXII.

Family Circle of Madame de Maintenon—The Count d'Aubigné; his Excesses—The Truncheon in Specie—The Marriage-Promise—His enforced Retirement; his Evasion—Marriage of the Duke de Lauzun—Disappointment of the Bride—Arrival of the Princess Adelaide of Savoy in France—Treaty of Riswick—Death of James II.—Household of the future Duchess de Bourgoyne—Indisposition of the King—Advantages of a Tête-à-tête—Premature Salutations—The Duchess de Lude—Reception of the Princess—The Court at Versailles—Letter to the Duchess of Savoy—Madame de Maintenon educates the Princess; her Docility—Return of Mademoiselle de Choin to Meudon; her supposed Marriage with the Dauphin; her Harshness—Extravagant Preparations for the Marriage of the Duke de Bourgoyne; his Portrait—The King's Ball—Court Felons—The Hat-Bearer—The fatal Prophecy.

THE sufferings to which we have alluded in speaking of Madame de Maintenon were not, however, the only ones to which she was subjected; for the conduct of her

brother, the Count d'Aubigne, was a perpetual source of vexation and alarm ; while that of her own family had been sufficiently ungracious throughout her early struggles to make her distrustful of their subsequent attachment. During her widowhood they had not only utterly neglected her, but treated her with absolute contempt ; and it was not until she had secured the friendship of the king that all her connections, even to the most remote degree, asserted their claims to relationship, and were to be found perpetually in her apartments. Among them were several petty nobles of Angoumois and Poitou, who had resided all their lives upon their estates, and who differed only from the other landowners about them by the privilege of wearing a sword ; but there were also several who did no dishonor to her new rank. The Abbé d'Aubigné was one of these ; and Louis XIV. was so much pleased by his appearance and demeanor, that Père la Chaise hastened to bestow upon him the archbishopric of Rouen, with the prospect of a cardinalate, should Madame de Maintenon retain her influence.

Among her female relatives were the three daughters of the Count de Villette, who were all handsome and well bred, and a beautiful child, the only daughter of the Marquis de Villette, to whom she soon became greatly attached, as well as to her three brothers ; and this bevy of fair girls and graceful youths, who were constantly about her person, became the companions and playfellows of the legitimized children of the king, and formed a little court of which Madame de Maintenon was justly proud.

The Count d'Aubigné, her only brother, for whom she had a great affection, was her senior by several years, and she had no sooner begun to acquire some credit at court than she exerted herself to advance his fortunes. He was a man of fine person and agreeable address, but his dissipation was unbounded, and, having been his own master from boyhood, he was selfish and headstrong. His

libertine habits had excited animadversion even in his youth, and at the age of fifty he still pursued the same unblushing career of vice. Through the interest of his sister, M. d'Aubigné was transferred from an obscure government to one of considerable importance, in which he made himself extremely popular, but where his extravagance so overwhelmed him with debt, that Madame de Maintenon was several times compelled to liberate him from his difficulties. At the gaming-table he was so notoriously reckless that, on one occasion, when the Duke de Vivonne, the brother of Madame de Montespan, on whom the king had conferred the dignity of marshal of France, entered a saloon in which play was going forward, and remarked that the board was covered with gold, he exclaimed, as he crossed the threshold, "I will risk a wager that it is D'Aubigné who has favored us with all this display; it is a magnificence worthy of him." To which remark the count replied, carelessly, "You would gain your bet, for it is in truth myself who, as you see, have received my truncheon in specie."

The ready wit of M. d'Aubigné never forsook him; and one day when his sister, after her marriage, was complaining of the wretchedness of her destiny, and declaring that she wished she were dead, he answered, sarcastically, "In that case you must have been promised the hand of the monarch of the universe."

This was precisely the description of person calculated to harass and alarm Madame de Maintenon; for his profligacy was unconcealed and his intemperance notorious, while, despite his public income, which was very considerable, and his frequent drafts upon the treasury, he was always in want of money; and she, ere long, came to the conclusion that he could only be reformed by starvation.

In consequence of this conviction, after having, for a score of times, confided in his promises of amend-

ment, and supplied his necessities on the faith of those promises which had all been successively falsified, she resolved to withhold all further assistance; and when he once more appeared before her she accordingly assumed a cold and reproachful demeanor, and informed him that the king was at last weary of his misconduct, which she had concealed from him as long as such a course had been possible, and that His Majesty now consented to pardon him only on condition that she would pledge herself that he should reform, or at least appear to do so, adding that she had given this pledge, and must consequently insist upon its fulfillment.

In reply, the count assured her that his reformation was impossible; but that, as regarded the affectation of amendment, he was quite ready to undertake it if she would point out the method: upon which Madame de Maintenon, affecting not to remark the sarcasm, suggested that he should withdraw from the court for three weeks or a month, when she would spread a report of his conversion, and that he should meanwhile take up his residence with a M. Doyen, who had formed an establishment at St. Sulpice, where gentlemen of the first families in France lived as a common family, and devoted themselves to a life of charity and devotion under the direction of certain distinguished ecclesiastics.

This proposal was by no means palatable to the pleasure-loving M. d'Aubigné, but his case was desperate; and, as Madame de Maintenon finally promised him the sum of twenty-five thousand livres at the close of the month's penance, he consented to assume the appearance of profound remorse, and retired to St. Sulpice, after signing the rules enforced by the society, fully resolved that when he was once in possession of the money he would throw off the shackles with which his necessities had encumbered him.

Nor did he fail in his determination. On the very

day which succeeded that in which he became the master of this new supply, he disappeared from the brotherhood of St. Sulpice; but this event had been foreseen; and M. Doyen had received an order, by virtue of which he again possessed himself of the person of the Count d'Aubigné, and placed him under the charge of a priest, who, whenever he left the house, followed him like his shadow. One day the count lost patience, and beat his keeper very severely, for which he was immediately condemned to close arrest for six weeks; and convinced at length that he should obtain nothing by violence, he found himself compelled to become more circumspect in his conduct, and thus relieved the harassed Madame de Maintenon from a great portion of her anxiety.

In the spring of 1695, M. de Lauzun, then sixty-three years of age, while assisting at the marriage of the Duke de St. Simon and the daughter of the Marshal de Lorges,* became enamored of the sister of the new duchess, a girl of fifteen; or at least endeavored to persuade himself that he had done so, believing that by an alliance which a general officer, not only at the head of a distinct force, but also high in favor with the king, he might be enabled to obtain the restoration of his former rank as captain of the guard. With this conviction he lost no time in proposing his hand to Madame de Lorges, who at once rejected his

* Guy Aldonce de Durfort, Duke de Lorges, was the younger son of Guy Aldonce de Durfort, Marquis de Duras, and of Elizabeth de la Tour. He made his first campaign under Turenne, who was his maternal uncle, and raised himself by his services to the rank of lieutenant-general. He served in this quality in the army of Turenne at the death of that great captain; and it was then that, on assuming the command, he effected the brilliant retreat which procured for him in the following year (1676) the dignity of Marshal of France. He afterward commanded in Germany, took Heidelberg, and drove the Imperialists into Alsace. He died at the age of seventy-two years, captain of the body-guard, chevalier of the Orders of the king, and governor of Lorraine. In 1700 the king raised the town of Quintin to a duchy, under the title of Lorges-Quintin.

suit, the known profligacy of the duke, and the great disparity of age which existed between the parties, sufficing to convince her that, by acceding to such a marriage, she should inevitably sacrifice the happiness of a child whom she loved ; but M. de Lauzun never permitted himself to be dismayed by any obstacles, however apparently insurmountable ; and he accordingly repeated his proposition to the marshal, offering to receive Mademoiselle de Quintin without any dower ; a consideration which commenced by making the father hesitate, and finally induced him to comply.

The poor duchess was in despair, but she was powerless against the will of her husband ; while the affianced bride, dazzled by the rank and riches of her new suitor, and, moreover, persecuted by a former one to whom she was still more averse, consented without a murmur to the alliance, believing, as she subsequently confessed, that the advanced age of the duke guaranteed to her married life only a brief interval of thralldom, at whose close she should find herself young, wealthy, and free to make a more consistent choice.

When the king was informed by M. de Lorges of the extraordinary son-in-law whom he had selected, should it be the pleasure of His Majesty to permit the marriage, Louis XIV. remarked coldly that the marshal was a bold man to receive the Duke de Lauzun into his family, and that he trusted he might never have cause to repent of so doing ; but that, although he was at liberty to act as he saw fit, and to confide his own secrets to whomsoever he might choose to trust, he was possessed of no such privilege as regarded those of his sovereign ; and that he would only sanction the marriage upon condition that he should pledge himself never to make the slightest communication to M. de Lauzun in which he was himself involved.

This somewhat ungracious sanction once obtained, the elderly duke, whose personal history was fated to be a romance even to the end, urged the celebration of his nup-

tials with such precipitancy that the bridal party were not permitted time even to furnish themselves with new dresses and equipages. He remembered the fatal effects of his procrastination on a former occasion, and would not subject himself to a second mortification of the same description.

If it were indeed ambition which prompted this marriage on both sides, each party was fated to disappointment; for to the period of his death Lauzun continued to be a mere hanger-on of that court of which he had formerly been one of the most salient personages; while the duchess was fated to wait until 1723 for the possession of that liberty to which she had aspired when she finally buried her husband at the age of ninety years.*

In compliance with the treaty of Nôtre-Dame de Lorette, by which the Duke of Savoy bound himself to send his daughter Mary Adelaide, at the age of eleven years, to France—in order to complete her education, and ultimately to become the wife of the Duke de Bourgoyne, the son of the dauphin, and consequently the probable heir to the French throne—that princess landed in her adopted country on the 16th October, 1696, and was conducted to the residence which had been prepared for her. Her new household had been awaiting her for six weeks at Lyons, when she arrived at the bridge of Beauvoisin, where she was to take leave of her Italian attendants; and on the second day after her landing she was accordingly separated from these familiar faces, with the exception of her physician and a solitary waiting-woman, and found herself in the midst of strangers; while even those two were only permitted to remain in her service until she was established at Versailles.

The general peace announced by the approaching arrival of the Princess of Savoy in France, had been signed three months previously at Riswick; and in the course of the following September, Louis XIV. had the mortification

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

of finding himself compelled to abandon the interest of James II., and to recognize William of Orange as King of England. To the exiled monarch, however, the usurpation of his son-in-law now personally brought little regret; for, as though he had only awaited the confirmation of the intelligence to depose his crown before he ceased to exist, he was shortly afterward stricken with paralysis, and, although he still retained his mental faculties, his physical powers were prostrated.

At this fearful crisis, Louis XIV., forgetting for a time his systematic egotism, and desirous to fulfill to the last all the duties of a host, was unceasing in his attentions to the royal sufferer, an example which was followed by all the court. An attempt was made, by removing him to Bourbon-Archambault, to relieve, even if it were impossible to restore, the royal sufferer; and he accordingly proceeded there, accompanied by the queen, and receiving throughout the journey all the honors due to his rank; but the result was unsuccessful; and, a few days after his return to St. Germain, he fell into a state of torpor which announced his approaching dissolution.

On the 13th of September, when Louis XIV. visited his sick-bed, he had scarcely power to open his eyes on hearing him announced; but the French king, nevertheless, approached his pillow, and there solemnly assured him, in the presence of all his court, that he might die in peace as regarded his son the Prince of Wales, whom he should immediately recognize as the sovereign of Great Britain; a declaration which caused all the English nobility present to bend the knee, and earnestly express their gratitude; and, this ceremony over, Louis XIV. proceeded to the apartment of the queen, where he repeated the engagement into which he had entered, not only to herself, but also a third time to the Prince of Wales.

On the 16th September, at three o'clock in the afternoon, James II. breathed his last; and on the evening of the

same day his body, almost unaccompanied, was conveyed to the convent of the English Benedictines at Paris; where, without any more ceremony than if it had been that of a private individual, it was placed in charge of the brotherhood, and consigned to a lateral chapel, until it could be transported to England.

The formation of the household of the future Duchess de Bourgoyne had been a matter of some difficulty. The court had long ceased to possess either queen or dauphiness, and all the ladies of high rank were anxious to seize so favorable an opportunity of securing office. Anonymous letters, slander, and false statements were rife; friendships were forgotten; rivalries were established, and Versailles awoke from its long trance into life and movement.

Louis XIV. had been, for some time, suffering very severely from a carbuncle in the neck, which had induced fever, and confined him to his bed; and during this attack Madame de Maintenon never quitted his side, save at the hours in which he persisted in transacting business, and thus had an admirable opportunity of privately arranging with the king all the details of the new establishment. She had at once resolved to be herself the principal instructress of the young princess, and to educate her entirely in accordance with her own peculiar principles; placing her sufficiently at her ease, however, to enable her to become an amusement to the monarch, but reserving the greater portion of her affection to herself, in order that when she emerged from girlhood, she might not rival her in influence. She had also a hope that, through her means, she might be enabled hereafter to acquire a hold upon the feelings of the Duke de Bourgoyne, and for this purpose she labored to induce Louis XIV. to appoint none save persons who were in her own interests, or from whose intellect and personal qualities she would have nothing to apprehend, in which attempt she entirely succeeded.*

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

At the very moment of the princess's landing, when her household were presented to her, and she had already began, according to the etiquette observed in the case of all merely foreign highnesses, to embrace the Duchess de Lude and the Count de Brienne, a courier arrived with an order from the king that the future duchess was to be received with all the honors due to a princess of the blood royal of France, and precisely as though she were already the wife of the Duke de Bourgoyne. The embraces in consequence terminated abruptly, and no other individual than those already named were admitted to this familiarity.

In all the cities through which she passed she was welcomed by the authorities, and during the halts exacted by these ceremonies, she dined in public, waited upon by the Duchess de Lude, her lady of honor; but in the small towns all the ladies of her suite ate at her table. On the 4th of November, the king, the dauphin, and *Monsieur*, went to Montargis in separate carriages to meet her; and at six in the evening when she arrived, she was received by Louis XIV., who himself assisted her to alight, and led her to her apartment, where he presented her to MONSEIGNEUR, *Monsieur*, and the Duke de Chartres.

The little princess, who was full of animation and intelligence, had been admirably tutored by her father, and was quite conversant with the character of the king, and the principal personages of his court, a knowledge of which she availed herself so skillfully, that she surprised and delighted all around her; while her high breeding, self-possession, innate dignity, and respectful deportment toward himself, at once secured the affections of the monarch, who, during the whole of the following day, overwhelmed her with caresses, and in the evening dispatched a courier to Madame de Maintenon to inform her how delighted he was with *their* granddaughter.

On the morrow the royal party left Montargis, and at five o'clock arrived at Fontainebleau, where all the nobility

were assembled on the horse-shoe stair-case to receive them, while the court was thronged by the populace. When the carriages had drawn up, the king conducted the little princess ("who looked," says St. Simon, "as though he had just taken her from his pocket") first to the tribune, and subsequently to the state apartments of the Queen-Mother, which had been appropriated to her, and where *Madame* and all the ladies of the court in full dress were awaiting her entrance. Louis XIV. himself introduced to her the principal among the princes and princesses of the blood, and then retired, after deputing *Monsieur* to present the other persons present, and to be careful that she embraced such among them as had a right to that honor.

This arrangement made, the dauphin also retired; and *Monsieur*, placing himself beside the princess, named to her in succession not only the other princes and princesses of the blood, dukes and duchesses, marshals of France and their wives, and such ladies as were entitled to the privilege of the *tabouret*, and whom he directed her to embrace, but also all the nobility, male and female, who were permitted to kiss the hem of her robe. This ceremony lasted two hours, after which the young stranger supped alone in her room, where she was subsequently visited by Madame de Maintenon and the Princess de Conti. The following day she, in her turn, paid her respects to *Monsieur* and *Madame* in their own apartments, and to the dauphin in those of Madame de Conti, from all of whom she received costly presents; while, in addition to these, the king sent all the crown jewels to Madame de Mailly, her mistress of the robes, with an order that they might be made available for the adornment of the princess.

Louis XIV. also ordained that she should be addressed only as "Princess;" that she should eat alone, waited upon as before by the Duchess de Lude; that she should receive only the ladies of her own household, and those expressly admitted by himself; that she should hold no court, and

that the Duke de Bourgoyne should only visit her once every fortnight, and his brothers once every month.

On the 8th of November the court returned to Versailles, where the princess took possession of the apartments of the late queen, and all such persons of rank as had not proceeded to Fontainebleau were presented in their turn, while in a very short time she became the idol of the king and Madame de Maintenon; whom, in default of any title of etiquette, she always addressed as "aunt," observing toward her, nevertheless, a respectful deference which added a new charm to her graceful and affectionate familiarity.

A letter written by Madame de Maintenon at this period to the Duchess of Savoy, inclosing that which she had herself received from the king when at Montargis, will suffice to prove the impression produced by the young princess upon both the one and the other. "The king," it said, "is enchanted with her; he expatiates on her deportment, her grace, her courtesy, her reserve, and her modesty; and Your Royal Highness is aware that he is not liberal of his praise. She has all the grace of girlhood, with the perfections of a more mature age. Her temper appears as perfect as her figure promises one day to become. She only requires to speak, in order to display the extent of her intellect. I dare not blend my own admiration with that which alone must be of value, but I can not resist thanking Your Royal Highness for giving us a child who, according to all appearance, will be the delight of the court, and the glory of the century."*

The establishment of St. Cyr was eminently serviceable to Madame de Maintenon in forming the mind and character of the princess; and she was fortunate enough to inspire a great affection for its inmates, among whom she selected such as she considered to be the most eligible companions for her new charge, with care and judgment.

* Lettres de Madame de Maintenon.

Here she accustomed the docile girl to visit the stores, where she became conversant with the details of the internal economy of the house; the novices' apartment, where she imbibed principles of devotion and humility, and the school-rooms, in which she pursued her studies, and appeared delighted to escape from the trammels of her rank; performing all her duties, assisting those of others, and unlearning the vanity and indolence of Versailles.

In order, however, not to discourage or disgust the princess, by depriving her entirely of the pleasures suited to her youth, the theatrical representations of St. Cyr were resumed; and Madame de Maintenon even carried her complaisance so far as to have a miniature stage erected in her own apartment, where the future duchess, and the Duke d'Orleans, performed in the company of such members of the court as possessed the talents of representation, under the direction of the famous actor Bâron.* Most of the tragedies of Duché,† the king's valet-de-chambre, were written for this little theater, while the Abbé Genêt,‡ the almoner of the Duchess de Chartres, wrote those

* Michel Bayron, otherwise Bâron, was a celebrated actor, and was alike the pupil and the friend of Molière. As an artist he appreciated himself most highly. "Every century," he was wont to say, "may produce a Cæsar, but it requires ten thousand to give birth to a Bâron." As an author he was less distinguished, although he wrote seven comedies, of which the best was *The Libertine*. He died in the year 1729, at the age of eighty-two.

† Joseph Francis Duché de Vancy was a prolific poet, who never permitted himself to indulge in any satirical compositions, and was admitted a member of the Academy of Inscriptions. He left behind him three tragedies, *Jonathan*, *Absalom*, and *Deborah*, besides two ballets and three operas, of which the music was composed by Desmarais.

‡ Charles Claudius Genêt, legal secretary of the Duke du Maine, and member of the French Academy. His principal works are *Principles of Philosophy, or Natural Proofs of the Existence of God, and the Immortality of the Soul*; *Poems*; and several *Tragedies*, of which that of *Penelope* was esteemed his best.

which were enacted by the Duchess du Maine and her court.*

As the princess advanced in age, and that the period of her marriage approached, Madame de Maintenon substituted for these girlish companions persons of more advanced age and refined minds, and thenceforth forbore all reprimands; but whenever she had failed in any of her duties, she was warned of the fact by the assumed gravity of those about her, while their evident satisfaction on every occasion upon which she had acquitted herself with credit excited her to renewed exertion. Absent or present, Madame de Maintenon always interposed her influence to protect her against the evil examples of the court, and was unceasingly occupied in endeavoring to strengthen the happy dispositions with which she had been endowed by nature.

Louis XIV., more and more infatuated by the grace and amiability of the young princess, became at length so impatient for the marriage, that he decided upon its taking place on the day upon which she attained her twelfth year; and a short time previously he expressed his desire that the festivities should be of the most splendid description, and the court appear in its greatest magnificence, declaring that he should himself, upon this occasion, discard his usual dress, and wear the most sumptuous apparel.

This intimation was sufficient for the courtiers; and forthwith all who were to attend the ceremony, or who were included in the invitations, began to raise money by every means in their power, in order to fulfill his wishes. Gold and silver embroideries were discarded to make room for wreaths and bouquets of precious stones; tissues and velvets were scarcely esteemed worthy of selection; every jeweler in Paris disposed of his diamonds and pearls at a price never before contemplated; and the profusion finally became so unmeasured, that the king himself was alarmed

* Le Siècle de Louis XIV.

by its excess, and declared that he could not understand how husbands were mad enough to suffer themselves to be ruined by the folly of their wives. It was, however, too late to counteract an evil of which he had been the original cause, and which had become so perfect an epidemic that workmen were at length wanting to execute the orders that poured in upon them. In this emergency the Duchess de Bourbon-Condé, who acknowledged no law save that of her own will, conceived the idea of carrying off eight individuals who were employed by the Duke de Rohan, in order that her own costume might be completed; but the king was no sooner informed of the circumstance than he caused them immediately to be restored.

The anticipation of this marriage aroused the court from its lethargy. The prospect of novelty was refreshing after a constant routine of amusements which had long become wearisome, and which had consisted of a monotonous succession of cards, drives, hunts, and concerts, and presented none of those agreeable varieties which excited the emulation of the courtiers and gratified the curiosity of the people.

The dauphin lived at Meudon in the same uniform manner as the king existed at Versailles; and Mademoiselle Choin, whom he had liberated from her convent despite the efforts which had been made to estrange his regard, enacted at his court the same personage as Madame de Maintenon presented at that of Louis XIV. Their marriage was, even after the death of the dauphin, never clearly substantiated; but it is asserted that on one occasion, when the prince was conversing with his father, he so far conquered his constitutional timidity as to enlarge upon the good qualities of Mademoiselle Choin, and on discovering that by so doing he excited neither surprise nor displeasure, terminated his eulogium by requesting permission to make her his wife; upon which the king, as he abruptly turned away and retired into his cabinet, desired him to

consider well what he was about to do, and never again to speak to him upon the subject.*

That the dauphin profited by this forbearance there can be little doubt; for some time subsequently Mademoiselle Choin occupied an arm-chair at Meudon in the presence of the prince himself, while the princesses were simply accommodated with folding seats; and it was remarked that she not only addressed the Duchess de Bourgoyne familiarly, but even harshly, occasionally contradicting her, and taking exception at her dress, her manner, or her conduct, with the same cool and caustic authority which Madame de Maintenon had previously exercised over the daughters of the king. The actual position of Mademoiselle Choin was, however, still more clearly defined during a dangerous illness which occurred to the dauphin, when she established herself by his bedside, with the full knowledge and concurrence of the king; who, far from condemning this public demonstration, and commanding her to leave the palace, as was usual upon such occasions, requested Madame de Maintenon to visit her during the progress of the indisposition.†

The Duke de Bourgoyne was at this period in his fifteenth year, and was the ward of the Duke de Beauvilliers, and the pupil of Fénelon, who had, in devoting themselves to his education, undertaken a task of no common difficulty, the young prince having been born with natural dispositions which caused all about him to tremble for the results. Passionate to a degree which induced him to destroy the clocks when they struck the hour that compelled him to some occupation to which he was averse, and to throw himself into the most violent paroxysms of rage if the rain chanced to interfere with his amusements, all opposition rendered him furious, and

* Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

† Mémoires de St. Simon.

only tended to increase his desire for whatever was interdicted. Earnest and eager in the pursuit of all that bore the name of pleasure, he equally loathed every thing which involved restraint or submission. With a keen perception of the ridiculous, he was merciless in his raillery, which wounded the more cruelly from the wit and spirit with which it was universally applied, while, impatient to impetuosity, he never, during his boyhood, succeeded in learning any thing singly, but endeavored, by attempting several studies at the same time, to master them all by one common exertion. His most dangerous quality was, however, the pride which he felt in the facility with which he was enabled to seize the weak point of an argument, and to embarrass his tutors by captious questions; but he had no sooner succeeded in so doing than, conscious of the want of generosity of which he had been guilty, he was the first to expatiate upon the unworthiness of his conduct, and to upbraid himself with a violence even more culpable than his original fault.

Nevertheless, despite all these imperfections, his keen and searching intellect, his perseverance against difficulty, and his ambition to become an accomplished gentleman, enabled him to complete his education with the most brilliant results, while religion and matured reason rendered him in after years the very reverse of what he had been in his boyhood, and made him as remarkable for his virtues as he had formerly been for his defects.*

The marriage of the young and royal pair took place on the 7th of December, and was celebrated with the greatest magnificence in the chapel of Versailles at six o'clock in the evening. The little princess already gave promise of the fascination which subsequently rendered her so eminently attractive, and possessed a figure which was rapidly becoming tall and majestic, large eyes of the most brilliant

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

black, an animated Italian physiognomy, and the charming complexion of early youth.

The personal appearance of the duke was less prepossessing; for he was plain, and moreover deformed. The Duke de Beauvilliers, his governor, accounted for this defect by imputing it to the use of an iron bar which he had been compelled to carry while a youth, in order to make him upright, but to avoid whose weight he had thrown himself on one side, and thus engendered a habit which had ultimately destroyed his figure.

The court festivals consequent upon this premature marriage exceeded in magnificence all that had been previously witnessed at Versailles; but the rejoicings did not extend beyond the gates of the palace. The people looked with a jealous and reproachful eye upon the lavish expenditure and reckless profusion of the aristocracy, and remembered, as they listened to the chiming of bells and the booming of cannon, that the peace which had so recently been concluded had somewhat shorn the glory of Louis XIV. of its beams; and thus, while the courtiers were intoxicating themselves with pleasure, the inhabitants of Paris remained serious and impassive.

Little, however, did the glittering tenants of Versailles care to remark a fact so unimportant; and during several weeks the long avenue conducting to the capital was alive by night as well as day with gilded equipages, prancing steeds, and blazing torches, while, within the palace, plays, concerts, operas, balls, and lotteries followed each other in quick succession. Three days after the marriage the king himself held an assembly, where the sumptuousness of the costumes was carried to an extreme hitherto unattempted. The courtiers as well as the ladies were covered with jewels, while, in order that the diamonds of the court dames might produce a more dazzling effect, it was decided that they should all appear in dresses of black velvet; and the result of this arrangement in the great gallery of Ver-

sailles, illuminated on that occasion by four thousand wax-lights, was of the most striking and magnificent description. The young Duchess de Bourgoyne, the heroine of the festival, wore jewels to the amount of ten thousand pistoles upon her apron alone.

The ball was succeeded by a collation of so costly a description as to prove that neither adverse seasons nor ungenial climates can withstand the power of gold. A number of tables, which were transported as if by magic into the gallery, presented to the delighted eyes of the wondering guests a variety of flower-beds redolent of the rarest and richest blossoms, while others supported trees covered with exotic fruits, whence escaped at intervals flights of singing birds. This ingenious representation of the two brightest seasons of the year, was followed by the apparition of a hundred movable sideboards, covered with every delicacy that could tempt the palate; and the attendants upon these accumulated dainties were already in full activity, when it was discovered that among the guests of majesty were comprised certain individuals who, more keenly alive to the delights of gain than to the indulgence of epicureanism, were possessing themselves of the jewels of their neighbors to an excess which threatened to create considerable consternation among the losing party.

The mortification of Louis XIV., upon being apprised of this disgraceful fact, was extreme; and he forthwith desired a number of the noblemen present to disperse themselves among the crowd, in order, if possible, to detect the delinquents; and shortly afterward the Chevalier de Sully, chancing to be attracted by the movements of a gorgeously-attired individual, who was, as he remarked, constantly endeavoring to force himself through the very center of the throng, determined to watch his proceedings; nor was it long ere he observed him in the act of cutting away a portion of the dress of the young princess,

in order to possess himself of a diamond clasp by which it was ornamented. M. de Sully lost no time in beckoning to his assistance a couple of his coadjutors; when, without troubling themselves to ascertain the identity of their captive, the three young men hurried their prisoner to the private closet of the king, according to their instructions, and immediately hastened to inform His Majesty of the result of their zeal; upon which Louis XIV. himself retired for an instant from the glittering crowd, and, upon entering his cabinet, was painfully startled to find himself confronted with one of the greatest nobles of his court.

The dialogue which ensued between the offended monarch and the dishonored courtier was cold and brief; and was at length terminated by Louis XIV., who said, contemptuously, "Enough, sir, more than enough; I perceive that you desired to wear the costly attire in which you now stand gratuitously. Leave the palace on the instant; I at once despise and pardon you."

Another instance also occurred during these marriage festivities which is too characteristic to be passed over in silence. Among the diversions of the time few were followed up with more zest than the gaming-table; and it chanced that on one occasion, in the royal apartments, MONSIEUR played with so extraordinary a run of good fortune that he at length turned laughingly to the Marquis d'Antin,* and desired him to seat himself at his side, and to hold his hat, in order that he might endeavor to fill it.

This arrangement was no sooner made in the same jesting spirit as it had been conceived, than the dauphin, whose luck appeared exhaustless, began to throw the gold by handfuls into his plumed beaver; but after he had passed about half an hour in this pleasant occupation, he was astonished to perceive that, despite all his exertions,

* The legitimate son of the Marquis de Montespan.

the improvised purse was not more than a quarter full. "I thought I had been richer," was his remark, as he resumed his cards. "However, we will continue our game."

Fortune still favored the dauphin, but the hoard did not visibly increase; and, finally, MONSEIGNEUR, having turned round somewhat suddenly, saw the marquis busy in transferring the glittering coins from the royal hat to his own pockets; he, however, made no observation on the circumstance, but shortly afterward rose from the table, exclaiming, "That will suffice for to-night; and now let me see what I have won."

So saying, he led M. d'Antin into the recess of a window, and striking upon the pockets of the delinquent with the back of his hand, he heard the pleasant sound of his own gold pieces; upon which he remarked, with somewhat ironical gayety, "Thank you, my good fellow; you were right to fill your pockets, for assuredly my hat could not have held all my gains."

The son of the discarded favorite profited by the forbearance of the good-natured prince, disgorged his ill-gotten hoard, and escaped without the additional mortification of a public exposure.

From the first moment in which the Duke de Bourgoync saw the princess, Marie-Adelaide, he became warmly attached to her, and subsequently carried this love almost to adoration. Some days after his marriage, during one of the visits which he was authorized by the king to make his bride, she confided to him the fact that a celebrated astrologer of Turin, who had drawn her horoscope, had foretold every thing that had since occurred to her, even that she should marry a French prince; and that he had concluded by predicting that she would die in her twenty-seventh year.

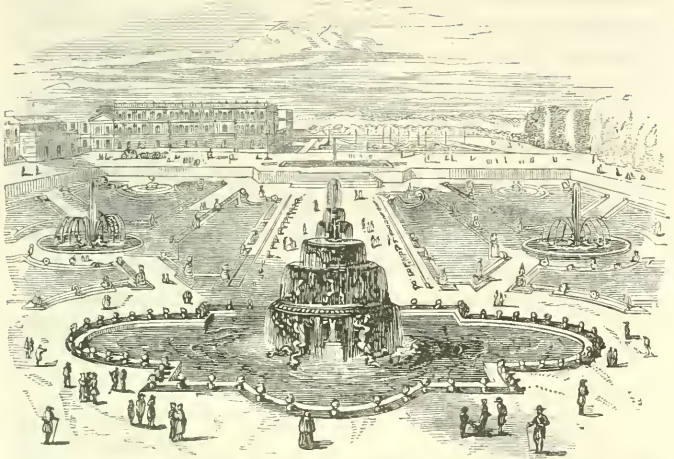
"And if I should indeed be so unfortunate," said the little princess, "who shall you next marry, sir?"

“It is a useless speculation,” answered the young duke; “for if you die before me I shall not survive you a week.”

He was as true a prophet as the Turinese astrologer.

The Duchess de Bourgoyne increased in personal graces and amiability of character as she advanced in years, and became, like the unfortunate Henrietta of England, at once the idol and the model of the court, while all the nation anticipated at a future period such a government under her husband as should realize the dreams of antiquity.

They were ignorant of the prophecy.



CHAPTER XXIII.

The Spanish Succession—Death of Leopold of Bavaria—The Duke d'Anjou called to the Throne of Spain—Declaration of Innocent XII.—Death of Charles II. of Spain—Reading of the Will—The Duke d'Abrantes—Presentation of the Duke d'Anjou to the French Court as King of Spain—Leave-Taking at Meudon—Madame de Montespan and the King—Literary Deaths at the Close of the 17th Century—Racine's last Mistake—Jean Baptiste Rousseau—Birth of Voltaire.

CHARLES II. of Spain, whose health was broken, and who was hopeless of an heir, had selected as his successor Leopold of Bavaria, a prince of five years of age; and his will was no sooner made, than the Cardinal Porto-Carrero secretly informed the Marquis d'Harcourt, the French ambassador, of the fact, who immediately dispatched a messenger to Louis XIV. with the intelligence. The king learned this decision without exhibiting any symptoms of annoyance; but the Emperor of Germany was less philo-

sophic. The court of Austria had already been accused of ridding itself, by poison, of the Queen of Spain, the daughter of *Monsieur*, and it was no sooner announced that the young prince of Bavaria had followed her to the grave than the same accusations were renewed.

At the death of the infant prince, Charles found himself more embarrassed than before, when Porto-Carrero suggested to him the substitution of Philip d'Anjou, the brother of the Duke de Bourgoyne, and grandson of the King of France; but the monarch feared to take upon himself the responsibility of bequeathing his kingdom to the descendant of a sovereign who had publicly renounced his claims to the succession on his marriage with a Spanish princess, and resolved to consult the Pope before he ventured such a measure.

Innocent XII., who was at that period in a dying state, replied upon the instant, stating that being, like His Catholic Majesty, suffering from a mortal illness, he had an interest as great and as imperative as his own, in giving him such advice as should exempt him from all reproach at the awful tribunal before which he must soon appear, and considered that, to the exclusion of the house of Austria, the children of the Dauphin of France were the true, only, and legitimate heirs to his monarchy; that they superseded all others; and that so long as they or any of their posterity were in existence, no Austrian had any claim to the Spanish throne, while the more considerable the inheritance, the more he was bound not to commit the crime of alienating it from the legitimate heir, and that he consequently entreated him not to omit any precaution to insure justice to those to whom it was due; but to secure, in so far as it was possible, the undivided succession of his monarchy to one of the French princes.

This negotiation was conducted with so much secrecy that it was only after the accession of Philip V. that the interference of the Pope became public.

On the receipt of so positive a reply, all the scruples of Charles II. were removed. His previous will was immediately burned in the presence of his confessor, and a new one was drawn up, wherein Philip d'Anjou was declared absolute heir to the crown and kingdom of Spain; which, in the event of his demise, were to devolve to the Duke de Berri, the third son of the dauphin; and, he failing, to the Archduke Charles; with the reservation as regarded the first two that they should not unite in their own persons the sovereignties of France and Spain; and in that of the third, that he should renounce all claim to the empire of Germany if he ever became heir to the Spanish throne; while it was, moreover, finally decreed, that if, by any extraordinary concatenation of events, neither of these three princes should be enabled to claim the bequest of Charles II., it should devolve upon the Duke of Savoy without any restriction whatever.

The precaution was well timed; for shortly afterward Charles lost the use of his faculties, and the Duke d'Harcourt received orders to depart from Madrid, leaving M. de Blécourt as chargé d'affaires to defend the French interests at that court, and to proceed to Barcelona, where a body of troops had already been stationed, ready at the first signal to march into Spain.

On the 1st of November Charles II. expired, and he was no sooner ascertained to be dead than his will was opened. The secret of the succession had been so scrupulously kept, that the mystery and importance of the event which was about to occur had attracted all the inhabitants of the city to the palace and its neighborhood. Every foreign minister had exerted his interest to be admitted to the council; all the doors, both public and private, were besieged alike by ambassadors and courtiers; and every one was anxious to be the foremost to proclaim the important tidings.

The first person who left the apartment in which the will

had been opened was the Duke d'Abrantes, who, after having looked around him for an instant on the anxious faces by which the anterooms were thronged, said, gravely, "Gentlemen, the Duke d'Anjou is now King of Spain. Long live Philip V.!"

And then making his way through the astonished crowd, he disappeared.

On the morning of the 9th of November the dispatch of M. de Blécourt was delivered to the Marquis de Barbesieux, who immediately proceeded to communicate its contents to Louis XIV. The king, who was preparing for a shooting excursion, countermanded his orders, and, without making any remark, retired to his cabinet, after which he dined alone as usual, simply announcing, during the repast, that he had received intelligence of the death of the King of Spain, in consequence of which there would be neither drawing-rooms, theatrical representations, nor any other amusement at court throughout the winter; but he had no sooner concluded his repast than he sent to desire that the minister would wait upon him at three o'clock in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, while a second summons was forwarded to the dauphin.

The council sat till seven o'clock; after which the king transacted business for three hours with two of the ministers.

On the following day two more councils were held in the same apartment, and even habituated as the court had become to the favor of Madame de Maintenon, it was not without surprise that they saw her thus almost publicly assist at a deliberation upon the most important subject which, throughout the extended reign of Louis XIV., had been submitted to a council of state.

All, however, remained in mystery and doubt until the morning of the 14th, when the ambassador of Spain was summoned to an audience at Versailles on the following day, where the king presented his grandson to him in his

cabinet, saying, "This, sir, is the Duke d'Anjou, whom you may salute as your king."

At this announcement the ambassador flung himself upon his knees, and made a long harangue to the young prince in his native tongue, at the conclusion of which Louis XIV. remarked, courteously, "My grandson, sir, does not yet understand your language, which will so soon become his own; I must therefore reply to you in his name;" and as he ceased speaking, contrary to his usual custom, he ordered that both the battants of the door should be thrown back, and permitted all who were in the saloon to enter his cabinet. The crowd was consequently great, for the whole court was in a state of excitement and curiosity; and order was no sooner restored than the monarch, throwing his left arm about the neck of the young prince, and pointing toward him with his right hand, said, in a tone of emotion:—

"Gentlemen, this is the King of Spain. His birth called him to a crown; the late king has recognized this right by his will; all the nation desires his succession, and has entreated it at my hands. It is the will of Heaven, to which I conform with satisfaction."

Then turning toward his grandson, he addressed him emphatically with the words—"Be a good Spaniard; but nevertheless, although this will henceforth be your first duty, never forget that you were born a Frenchman, in order to maintain the union of the two nations. It is the only means whereby you will render them happy and maintain the peace of Europe."

This done, the two younger princes* were introduced, when they embraced each other several times with tears in their eyes, and every evidence of sincere affection.

Their grief was, however, of short duration; for the Duke d'Anjou, delighted to be liberated at the age of seventeen from the restraints to which he had been previous-

* The Duke de Bourgoyne and the Duke de Berri.

ly subjected, no sooner found himself once more alone with his brothers than he abandoned himself to the most exuberant gayety, and expressed his delight at the prospect which had opened before him. "So I am King of Spain!" he exclaimed, joyously, "and my brother Burgundy will be one day King of France. You are the only one, my poor Berri, who must live and die a subject."

"That fact will not grieve me," replied the little prince; "I shall have less trouble and more pleasure than either of you, with the right of hunting both in France and Spain, and following a wolf from Paris to Madrid."

A few days subsequently the Spanish ambassador received a letter, which he communicated to a select number of his friends, and which contained the intelligence that a month before his death Charles II. had conceived a melancholy desire to see once more the remains of his father, his mother, and his first wife, the unfortunate Maria Louisa of Orleans. In vain did the court physicians expostulate, and represent to the monarch the fatal effects which might be consequent upon such a spectacle in his impaired state of health; the influence of this morbid longing was too powerful to be controlled, and the tombs of the three illustrious personages whom he indicated were accordingly opened—a fact which was no sooner announced to Charles than, leaning upon the arm of the Cardinal Porto-Carrero, supported on the other side by the Count de Monterey, and followed by his confessor, he slowly proceeded toward the gloomy vault tenanted by his ancestors.

The way wound down an almost imperceptible slope, arched overhead, and along this highroad to the faded glories of the past, the monarch, who was so soon to lay down his own among them, passed slowly and feebly forward, with trembling knees and laboring breath, sinking beneath a vague sense of terror which numbed the slight remains of his already failing strength; but at length the pilgrimage was ended, and he stood among the shadows of spent

centuries—among shivered scepters and broken shields. A score of enameled lamps, suspended above the long line of monuments, surmounted by their kneeling or reclining effigies, cast a pale and sepulchral gleam over the sculptured marble; and a close and fetid odor—that savor of death which not even the gums of Arabia or the spices of the East can wholly counteract, and which breathes into the nostrils of the living the atmosphere of mortality—appeared to float about the pendent lights, and to cling in vapory clouds around the lofty tombs.

Charles II., panting, pale, and awe-struck, ultimately paused before a sarcophagus indicated by his confessor, who said, in a hoarse whisper, “Sire, you desired to look once more upon Philip IV. He lies before you.”

The dying king bent for an instant over the withered body of his father ere he gasped out, “May your rest be indeed as deep as it appears. Perchance I may have irritated your spirit by bequeathing inconsiderately the kingdom which I inherited from your hand. Speak, Philip! are you satisfied with me?”

“Charles!” exclaimed the stern monk at his side, “beware of sacrilege. Ask no questions of the dead. Silence is the privilege of the tomb, which must speak only to the eyes and to the soul. Its best lesson is that example of the nothingness of human vanity which you now see before you. Profit by it, and pray.”

“I humble myself before God,” replied the king submissively; and then, after having embraced the remains of his father, he murmured, “Now lead me to my mother.”

“She sleeps beneath this arch,” said the confessor.

Again Charles bent down to gaze upon a dead parent; but this time he started back appalled, and covering his eyes with his hands, gasped out, “Merciful heavens! she yet scowls upon me! Her face still bears the impress of the anger with which she first heard me aver that I was about to transfer the scepter of Spain to her own family,

unhappily become her enemies. Mother, forgive me! I had indeed obeyed your will; but the Prince of Bavaria is now, like yourself, the tenant of a tomb. Farewell, mother! may your troubled spirit be appeased." And the unfortunate prince pressed his pale lips to the fleshless cheek of the skeleton, ere he turned toward the next tomb before which his confessor paused.

It was that of the ill-fated Maria Louisa of Orleans, who had been cut off in her youth, her beauty, and her tenderness, by the hand of a secret assassin, and who now lay wasted and ghastly in her shroud. "And this, then," said Charles, as he lifted from the livid brow a portion of its velvet covering, "this, then, is all that is left of the loveliness by which I was once thrall'd!—of the wife who was once my idol!" As he continued to gaze earnestly upon the moldering remains, a convulsive shudder passed over his frame; and raising himself suddenly, he asked, in a hoarse whisper, "Who talked of poison?"

"No one, decidedly, sire," eagerly answered the cardinal with a blanched lip. "In the name of Heaven let me entreat Your Majesty to leave this place, and return to the palace."

"No, no," said Charles, whose agitation visibly increased, "I heard the word distinctly; a fearful reproach was murmured from the coffin of my wife. Leave me to tell her how I loved her—how I mourned for her—let me embalm her cold remains with my tears, and yield up my own spirit by her side."

"Forget not that, although a monarch, you are still a Christian," said his confessor, in a cold, hard accent which formed a strange contrast with the impassioned anguish of the unhappy king; "profane not the dwelling of the dead with the thoughts and the words of sin;" and he grasped the arm of his penitent to lead him away.

"Close the tomb of my mother!" exclaimed Charles, as he shook off the clasp, and raised himself to his full

height; "I will look on her no more. Maria Louisa! victim of hate—of poison. Ah, close my mother's tomb!" And as he repeated these words in a faint scream, exhausted by sickness, fatigue, and emotion, he fell senseless over an empty sarcophagus which yawned cold and void beside him.

"It is his own," said the monk, unmoved by the melancholy spectacle; while the cardinal, raising the insensible monarch in his arms, desired the attendants to bear him carefully from the vault; and a few moments subsequently the melancholy procession retrod the gloomy passage even more silently than it had been previously traversed, and conveyed Charles to the chamber which he was never again to leave with life. In another month he lay in the narrow tomb which had before received him for an instant in mimic death.*

This letter created considerable sensation in the circle to which it was confided, but it was soon forgotten amid newer and gayer interests; for ere long the court was in movement, preparing for the departure of Philip V. to assume his new throne, which it was determined by Louis XIV. should take place early in December, under the escort of his brothers, who had requested and obtained permission to accompany him to the frontier; while he was to be, moreover, attended by the Duke de Beauvilliers and the Marshal de Noailles, together with the greater portion of the young nobility, who all claimed the privilege of rendering him this last honor.†

It was, however, previously arranged that on the second of the month the boy-king should proceed to Meudon to take a formal leave of his father, a ceremony at which all the court of the dauphin were commanded to be present.

The Duchess du Maine, the natural sister of MON-

* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

† Mémoires de St. Simon.

SEIGNEUR, who possessed great influence over his mind, entreated him to invite Madame de Montespan to join the circle on this occasion, and to take leave of the King of Spain with the rest of the court, a request which the dauphin readily conceded, as it enabled him to effect two measures that were equally agreeable to his feelings: to oblige the duchess, and to annoy Madame de Maintenon, whom he had not only never received as his guest, but into whose apartment he had never entered, save on the solitary occasion when he was compelled to attend the council.

Madame de Montespan had for several years entirely disappeared from the court, where her apparition had become a reproach, and, consequently, an annoyance to the king, and where she had never received any encouragement to present herself; but her curiosity was so much excited by all that she heard of the Duchess de Bourgoyne, and she was so anxious to be brought into immediate contact with her, that she at once accepted the invitation, and prepared to attend the ceremony.

In compliance with the established etiquette, a list of the persons who were present at Meudon was delivered to the monarch on his arrival, which he read attentively throughout, after which he folded the paper with a look of perfect indifference, and thrust it into his pocket.

As the guards, by whom he was always preceded, announced him at the door of the apartment, Madame de Montespan tottered, and was anxious to withdraw; but she was restrained by one of her friends, and at that precise moment the young Duchess de Bourgoyne, who was probably anxious to observe the effect which the sight of his old favorite would produce upon the king, approached the Duchess du Maine, who was seated beside her mother, and entered into conversation with her.

In the next instant Louis XIV. entered the room. He first addressed himself to the Spanish minister, who was in attendance upon his new sovereign, and having so done he

made the tour of the apartment, and requested the ladies to resume their seats ; then, pausing before the Duchess de Bourgoyne, he conversed with her for a moment, subsequently addressed a few words to the Duchess du Maine, and ultimately found himself opposite Madame de Montespan, who, pale and trembling, had great trouble to prevent herself from fainting. The king looked at her steadfastly for a moment, and then, with a courteous gesture, calmly said, "I congratulate you, madam : you are still as handsome and as attractive as ever, but that is not all ; I hope that you are also happy,"

"At this moment, sire," replied the discarded favorite, "I am very happy, since I have the honor of presenting my respectful homage to Your Majesty."

As she ceased speaking, the king took her hand and pressed it to his lips ; after which he continued his progress round the circle.

This was the last time that Madame de Montespan ever saw Louis XIV.*

Meanwhile all the European powers, with the exception of Austria, had recognized the Duke d'Anjou as King of Spain, and he had been proclaimed at Madrid amid the acclamations of the people.

At the close of the seventeenth century, France found herself shorn of much of her intellectual splendor. In 1662 she had lost Boisrobert, in 1666 Mansard, in 1684 Corneille, in 1688 Quinault, in 1695 La Fontaine, in 1696 La Bruyère, in 1699 Racine, and in 1700 Le Nôtre. Of these celebrated men, many had, however, already outlived their favor. Boisrobert, the favorite of Richelieu, a sensualist to the last, passed out of the world almost unnoticed ; Mansard, of whose pretensions the king had long been weary, was not only unregretted, but afforded a welcome relief to the whole court by his decease ; Corneille, whose fine powers had become extinguished by extreme old age,

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

had for years ceased to appear in the world ; Quinault, who had been the originator of the lyrical drama in France, died in peace, richly pensioned, and a member of the Academy ; La Fontaine, after having by his improvidence rendered himself dependent on his friends for the space of more than twenty years, put forth a public protest against his *Fables*, and other immoral productions, expired in a state of intellectual childishness, and was discovered to have worn a shirt of hair-cloth under his linen ; La Bruyère, the celebrated moralist, who had been historical tutor to Louis de Bourbon, the grandson of the great Condé, in whose household he remained until his death, and where he published his celebrated "*Characters*," was received into the Academy in 1693, and when at Paris in 1696, suddenly discovered, while surrounded by an assemblage of learned men, that he had totally lost his hearing, upon which he returned instantly to Versailles ; but he had not been a quarter of an hour in his apartment when apoplexy supervened, and he became a corpse.*

Three years subsequently, La Bruyère was followed to the tomb by Racine, whose death is asserted to have been hastened by an imprudence, through which he forfeited forever the joint favor of the monarch and Madame de Maintenon, at a period when he had become so utterly dependent upon court popularity that he could not survive its loss—an incident which is thus related by cotemporaneous chroniclers.

The office of historiographer to the king, which he held conjointly with Despraux, and the facilities which it afforded him of securing the friendship of all the most distinguished of the nobility, had acquired for Racine what were then designated great *privacies* at court, so much so indeed, that (as we have elsewhere recorded) when he had no public business to transact, Louis XIV., during the long evenings of winter, frequently desired the attendance of the

* Œuvres de l'Abbé d'Olivet.

dramatist in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, in order that he might report to him the progress of the work upon which he was then engaged, and amuse him by his conversation.

Unfortunately for the courtier poet, he was, like many others of his craft, subject to occasional fits of absence; and it chanced that in one of these confidential discourses, the king, after having questioned him upon the state of the opera until the topic was exhausted, turned to that of the general drama, and inquired if he could assign any cause for its visible decline in Paris. Racine, who did not dare to confess that the fact of His Majesty having himself abandoned the theaters had destroyed much of the emulation which had previously existed, cited several reasons for the defalcation; and among others the paucity of living dramatists, which, he wound up his argument by declaring, had compelled the managers to fall back upon exhausted pieces, and particularly upon the farces of Scarron, which were good for nothing, and disgusted all their audiences.

As the words escaped his lips, the blood mounted to the brow of Madame de Maintenon, before whom the name of her late husband had not been pronounced during the last fifteen years; while the king was so startled, and remained silent for so long a period, that the unfortunate poet, on looking up, and perceiving the consternation which was visible upon both countenances, suddenly became conscious of his indiscretion, and dropped his eyes in the most painful confusion.

After a few seconds passed in this mental torture, he was, however, released by the monarch himself, who coldly remarked that M. Racine was at liberty to withdraw, as he had some business to transact, and wished to be alone, an order which was no sooner given than the dramatist, so bewildered that he scarcely retained sufficient self-possession to make his parting obeisances, hurriedly left the

apartment, to reflect in solitude upon the probable consequences of his ill-timed abstraction.

There was, however, no remedy for such an imprudence, and thenceforward the king not only excluded Racine from his confidence and favor, but to the day of his death neither himself nor Madame de Maintenon ever again honored him by a word or even a look; while from that moment the poet, to whom court favor had been for many years the very key-stone of existence, fell into a state of melancholy which ultimately brought him to the grave.

The next man of celebrity who "shuffled off the mortal coil" was Le Nôtre, while Boileau, Jean Baptiste Rousseau, and Fénelon alone remained, of all the bright galaxy which had illuminated the intellectual horizon during the youth of Louis XIV.; and even of these, Boileau was only destined to survive until the year 1711, while Jean Baptiste Rousseau, although he lived forty years longer, was yet dead to France.

The life of this unfortunate poet was one long and melancholy romance. Gifted with poetical powers of a high order, he had scarcely emerged from college when he acquired a great reputation, which was, however, counter-balanced by a host of enemies, some of whom finally accused him as the writer of some libelous verses; of which he, however, affirmed that Saurin was the actual author. It would appear, nevertheless, that he failed in procuring proofs of the fact; for, on the trial which ensued, he was convicted of having suborned his witnesses, and for this crime was banished for life in 1712.

Pursued by misfortune, he for a time dragged on a miserable existence, first in Switzerland, where his only friend was the Count de Luc, the French ambassador; then at Vienna, under the protection of Prince Eugène, and finally at Brussels, where he died in extreme poverty, declaring in his last moments that he was innocent of the libel which had been attributed to him.

The author of *Telemachus* had, meanwhile, long preceded him to the grave, having died in 1712 at his diocese, full of years and virtues, regretted alike for his high talent and his universal charity; and to replace all these great names, only one star of magnitude had arisen on the intellectual horizon; but it was that of Voltaire, whose birth took place in the year 1694.



CHAPTER XXIV.

Political Position of France—Illness of the Dauphin—Les Dames de la Halle—A new Campaign—Affront to the Duke de Chartres—His increased Libertinage—Regal Retorts—Quarrel of the King and Monsieur—Indisposition of Monsieur; his Death—Terror of Madame—Interview between Louis XIV. and the Duke de Chartres—Want of Feeling of the King—Grief of the Duchess de Bourgoyne—The Brellan Table—Novel Position of the Duke de Chartres—Late Court of Monsieur—Madame, and Madame de Maintenon.

THE accession of the Duke d'Anjou to the throne of Spain had, meanwhile, destroyed the equilibrium of Europe, and William III., then recently dead, but even beyond the grave the most resolute enemy of Louis XIV., had bequeathed to him the new league which bore the name of the Great Alliance, and which had for its aim to place the Spanish crown upon the head of the Archduke Charles, the son of the Emperor of Germany; or, in default of dispossessing Philip V. of his kingdom, to trace round the two nations of France and Spain a limit which should never be overpassed by the ambition of either.

Menaced on all sides, Louis XIV. accordingly found himself once more compelled to sustain a war against the European powers, and preparations for hostilities had already commenced when Versailles was again convulsed by new terrors.

On the night of the 19th of March, 1701, the king, while at prayers at Marly, previously to retiring to rest, was startled by hearing a confusion in his cabinet, accompanied by inquiries for his physician and surgeon. The dauphin had suddenly been attacked by severe indisposition. He had passed the day at Meudon, where he had partaken only of a slight luncheon, but at the royal supper had eaten

immensely of fish, and immediately retired to his apartment, after having taken leave of the king in his closet. He had, however, scarcely terminated his prayer, and seated himself in an arm-chair, in order that his valets might undress him, when he fainted; and his attendants, and such of the courtiers as were in his apartments, had hastened in their terror to those of the king to summon assistance. Louis XIV., half disrobed as he was, lost not a moment in hastening by a dark, narrow, and inconvenient stair-case to the chamber of his son, whither he was accompanied by the Duchess de Bourgoyne, who had also been alarmed by the outcry. They found MONSEIGNEUR in a state of extreme suffering, contending against Felix, who persisted in bleeding him, in which attempt he at length fortunately succeeded; and efficient remedies being subsequently applied, the royal invalid was in a few hours declared convalescent, although the attack proved sufficiently violent to confine him during several days to his bed.

The dauphin was very popular in Paris, where he frequently appeared at the opera, and also conciliated the populace by the affability of his deportment: and on this occasion the *Dames de la Halle*,* being anxious to testify their attachment to his person, deputed four of their principal members to proceed to the palace, to inquire in person into the progress of His Royal Highness's convalescence. When they arrived the dauphin ordered them to be admitted to his chamber, upon which the most enthusiastic of the deputation rushed to his bedside, threw their arms about his neck, and kissed him on both cheeks; while the others, more moderate in their demonstrations, contented themselves by kissing his hand. They were warmly welcomed, conducted over the palace, and ultimately entertained to dinner; while MONSEIGNEUR presented them, on their departure, with a sum of money, to which another was added by the king; and they were so

* Fishwomen of Paris.

much gratified with the honors which had been lavished upon them, that they commanded a *Te Deum* at St. Eustache, and afterward gave a grand entertainment in commemoration of the event.

Meanwhile the organization of the troops had been completed, and the command of those destined for Flanders given to the Marshal de Boufflers, while those against Germany were to serve under the Marshal de Villeroy. The Duke de Bourgoyne had been originally named to the command of the latter, but the appointment was subsequently canceled, in consequence of the undisguised annoyance of *Monsieur* that the offer of his son to serve in this campaign had been rejected.

The king had, indeed, consented to the suggestion merely in the hope of what actually ensued, feeling convinced that *Monsieur*, piqued that no command had been given to the Duke de Chartres, would not accede to such an arrangement, and, therefore, made it dependent upon his approval; but both *Monsieur* and the Duke de Chartres at once felt that if they consented to accept a less distinguished position in this campaign, it would not be possible to refuse the latter, at his age, the command of an army in the following year, and they consequently decided that they would overlook the slight. Louis XIV., who, for this very reason, had been averse to accepting the services of his nephew, was accordingly both astonished and embarrassed when he found that *Monsieur*, as well as his son, agreed to such a sacrifice; but his will proved stronger than his vexation, and once more he positively refused to permit the Duke de Chartres to join the army. He did not, however, by these means escape the mortifications from which he shrunk; for the young duke, at once indignant and exasperated at a pertinacity which destroyed all his hopes of military renown, abandoned himself to an open career of libertinage, which angered and perplexed the monarch in a greater degree than ever.

The position was one of considerable embarrassment, even to Louis XIV., who was at some loss how to act toward a nephew whom he had compelled to become his son-in-law; and toward whom, save in the writings of the bond, he had falsified every promise; while, as regarded *Monsieur*, this new affront aroused the old grievance of the government of Brittany, which was one of the pledges of the marriage contract, and which had never been redeemed, while *Madame*, justly incensed that her son had not even reaped the pecuniary advantages consequent upon what she persisted in designating as his disgraceful alliance, visited upon *Monsieur* all the violence of her indignation—a demonstration rendered the less necessary by the fact that the prince himself had already bitterly regretted his weakness.

Thus were things situated when it was reported to the monarch that the Duke de Chartres had become the father of a son,* whose mother was Mademoiselle Séry de la Boissière, one of the maids of honor of *Madame*; and his anger was so great, that he took an opportunity of reproaching *Monsieur* with a want of authority over his own child, which was, as he declared, entailing disgrace upon all the royal family of France.

The temper of the prince, already soured by his disappointment, placid as it generally was, gave way before this attack, and he demanded, with a haughty asperity which startled the king, what he could expect from a young man of that age, who was weary of pacing the galleries of Versailles and of wearing away the pavement of its courts, of being married against his will, and of remaining unprovided for, while he saw his brothers-in-law inundated with governments, establishments, and honors, without reason, policy, or precedent; alledging, moreover, that his son was placed in a worse position than the more youthful nobility

* Known as the Chevalier d'Orleans, and subsequently grand-prior of France.

of France, who were allowed to join the army, and upon whom military rank was conferred ungrudgingly.

Louis XIV., anxious to terminate this unexpected ebullition, endeavored to turn the conversation once more upon the extreme libertinage of the duke ; but *Monsieur* had now passed the Rubicon, and, for the first time in his life, was not to be awed into silence and submission by the frown of his august brother. He consequently retorted that idleness was the mother of all vice, and that no one could see with more regret than himself, the increasing imprudence and recklessness of the Duke de Chartres ; but that he nevertheless witnessed them without surprise, and could not be guilty of the cruelty of reproaching him with faults and follies into which he had been precipitated by the mortifications entailed upon him by the king himself.

Conscious that he could advance no argument sufficiently feasible to controvert this assertion, and wearied by a conflict in which he felt aware that he was by far the weaker party, Louis XIV. was sufficiently master of himself to reply only by a fraternal smile ; and embracing *Monsieur*, who lent himself very unwillingly to this sudden burst of tenderness, he assured him that he felt no displeasure at the heat with which he had expressed himself, as he was convinced that he had forgotten the prince in the parent, and that their interview should have no effect upon his affection.

Thenceforward, however, although the duke scrupulously observed all necessary etiquette, and even behaved toward the king in public as though no coolness existed between them, all the blandishments of his royal brother could not efface his resentment ; but, nevertheless, perceiving that no consideration for his feelings would induce the monarch to forego his determination, and to allow the Duke de Chartres to serve in the approaching campaign, he was at length prevailed upon by his favorites to abate

somewhat of his hostility, and to endeavor to compel his son to pursue his pleasures less openly.

Despite this precaution, however, when some days subsequently *Monsieur* proceeded from St. Cloud to Marly, in order to dine with the monarch, and entered his cabinet according to his habit at the close of his council, Louis XIV. once more reverted to the dissolute habits of the young prince, and became so harsh in his accusations, that the duke, unable to endure further annoyance upon the subject, replied, bitterly, that fathers whose lives had not been without reproach could possess little authority over the morals of their children. The blow told, and the king made an evasive answer, merely expatiating upon the patience of his daughter, and the necessity there existed of at least concealing from her eyes the results of her husband's folly; upon which a sarcastic smile passed over the features of the duke, as he remarked that His Majesty appeared to have forgotten the period when he had compelled the queen, his wife, not only to associate with his mistresses, but even to be seen publicly with them in her carriage.

Driven beyond his patience by this direct attack, Louis XIV. burst into a fury of rage, which was met with equal violence by *Monsieur*, and the altercation became so vehement, that all the courtiers who were awaiting the appearance of the king, when he should pass to the dining-hall, in an adjoining saloon, separated from the royal cabinet merely by a screen of tapestry, were innocently rendered auditors of the whole of this stormy dialogue, which was only terminated by the appearance of an usher upon the threshold, to announce that His Majesty's dinner was served; upon which the king immediately left the cabinet, remarking to *Monsieur* that the forthcoming war would oblige him to make retrenchments, which he should commence on the property of those who had shown themselves careless of his pleasure.

He had scarcely entered the saloon when he was followed by *Monsieur*, who was in so great a state of excitement that it was generally remarked, should he neglect the precaution of losing blood, he would, inevitably, expose himself to severe illness. At table the duke ate immensely, as was his usual habit, although he was evidently suffering, as was evinced by the extreme dilation of his eyes and the heightened color of his complexion. He however completed his repast without authorizing any remark or offer of assistance; and, on rising from table, accompanied the Duchess de Chartres to St. Germain, where she paid a visit to the Queen of England, and afterward returned with her to St. Cloud.

In the evening, *Monsieur*, still without uttering a complaint, joined the supper party, and again ate largely; but during the meal, as he was pouring out a glass of liqueur for the Duchess de Bouillon, it was remarked that he stammered, and made a gesture with his hand. As he was occasionally in the habit of expressing himself in Spanish, it was at first believed that he had done so on this occasion, and one of the guests requested him to repeat the phrase; but as the words escaped the speaker, the decanter dropped from the hand of the prince, and he fell into the arms of the Duke de Chartres, who was seated near him. The consternation was universal, for it was at once perceived that he had been stricken with apoplexy, and he was hastily conveyed to his chamber, where he was bled at intervals, and every means vainly employed to restore him to consciousness.

A courier was immediately dispatched to Marly with the melancholy tidings; but the king, who habitually hastened to the bed-side of his brother, however slight might be the indisposition from which he was suffering, contented himself, on this occasion, by commanding that his equipages might be in readiness should they be required, and by sending the Marquis de Gesvres to St. Cloud to ascer-

tain the real condition of the sufferer ; after which he proceeded to the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, where he remained for a quarter of an hour, and then retired to bed, persuading himself that this sudden assumption of illness was a subterfuge on the part of *Monsieur* to induce a reconciliation, for which his own visit might serve as the pretext.

Only an hour and a half had, however, elapsed, when a messenger arrived from the Duke de Chartres, with the intelligence that every remedy had proved unavailing, and that *Monsieur* was rapidly sinking. Upon this announcement the king left his bed, and as the carriages were still in waiting, departed without further delay for St. Cloud. The courtiers, who had followed the example of the monarch, and already retired to their beds, immediately rose in their turn, summoned their attendants, and in twenty minutes all the inmates of Marly were on the road to the palace of the dying prince ; while the dauphin, who was accompanied by the Duchess de Bourgoyne, was so overcome by the recollection of his recent escape, and the anticipation of the scene of which he was about to become a witness, that it was with great difficulty he was supported to his carriage by an equerry.

At three o'clock in the morning the king arrived at St. Cloud ; but it was already too late. Not a symptom of consciousness had been detected in the sufferer since the first moment of the attack. The emotion of the monarch was violent, and he had not been many instants in the chamber ere he was drowned in tears. Until within the last two months no cloud had ever passed between himself and the affectionate and submissive brother, who had been the playmate of his infancy, and the friend of his manhood. The scene of the morning was also fresh in his memory, and its fearful results were now before him. *Monsieur* was, moreover, his junior by two years, and had, throughout his life, enjoyed health more robust than his

own; and it is therefore probable that all the tears shed by Louis XIV. in that crowded sick-room did not fall for his dying brother.

The king attended mass at St. Cloud, and at eight o'clock, the condition of *Monsieur* rendering all amendment hopeless, the Duchess de Bourgoyne and Madame de Maintenon suggested his return to Marly, whither they accompanied him in his carriage. As he was about to retire, and was condoling with M. de Chartres, the young duke exclaimed, mournfully, "Ah! sire, what will now become of me? I am about to lose *Monsieur*, and I am aware that you do not love me."

The king, surprised and affected by this heartfelt appeal, embraced him tenderly, assured him that he might rely upon his affection, and then departed from the house of death.

When the monarch reached Marly he proceeded to the apartments of Madame de Maintenon, still accompanied by the Duchess de Bourgoyne; and three hours afterward, his physician, whom he had commanded to remain beside *Monsieur* so long as he should continue to breathe, appeared upon the threshold of the chamber.

"My brother is, then, dead!" exclaimed the king, as he recognized the intruder.

"He is, sire," was the reply; "no remedies would produce any effect."

As Louis XIV. was thus made aware that all was indeed over, he buried his face in his hands, and for a time again wept bitterly; but when he was urged by the duchess to take some refreshment in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, and to spare himself the tedium and restraint of a public dinner, he resolutely refused to be guilty of so serious an infraction of etiquette, and declared his determination to dine as usual with the ladies of the court. To this resolution he adhered; but the repast was not prolonged, and at its termination he gave audience to the ministers

and the master of the ceremonies, with whom he arranged all the detail of the royal funeral; received a visit of condolence from the Queen of England; and, finally, made a tour of the gardens before he retired to rest.

The king had no sooner passed the gates of St. Cloud than the crowd which had thronged the apartments gradually dispersed, until at length the body of *Monsieur* was surrounded only by the menial servants of his household; who, some from affection and others from interest, were his most sincere mourners. *Madame* was in her own apartment; but, as we have already stated, never having felt either affection or esteem for her dying husband, she was weeping over herself and her own prospects, and exclaiming, at intervals, "Not a convent! They must not speak to me of a convent! I will not be sent to a convent!" And it was no sooner ascertained that *Monsieur* had at length expired than she got into her carriage, accompanied by the Duke and Duchess de Chartres, and followed by all their attendants, and proceeded to Versailles.

On the following morning M. de Chartres was admitted to the bedside of the king, who had not yet risen, and who received him with great tenderness, desiring him thenceforth to look upon him as a father, who would be careful of his interests, and forget all the subjects of annoyance which had arisen between them, which he trusted that he would also cease to remember, and replace by a mutual affection.

The young duke answered this address only with his tears and stifled ejaculations of gratitude.

After a scene of so much terror and affliction, and the emotion which Louis XIV. had evinced at the loss of his only brother, it was anticipated that the period which still remained to pass at Marly would be one of gloom and melancholy; but, to the astonishment of the ladies of the palace, who at mid-day entered the anteroom of Madame de Maintenon, which adjoined her apartment, and where

the king and the Duchess de Bourgoyne had borne her company for the last hour, they were greeted by the sound of his voice, singing an air from one of the new operas; and a few moments afterward they were summoned to enter and assist in amusing the duchess, who was, as the monarch expressed it, overcome by some *unaccountable* fit of low spirits.

In fact, the poor young duchess, lost in terror at the remembrance of the first death-bed that she had ever witnessed, could not shake off the impression which it had made upon her mind, and was unable to exert herself, as she was accustomed to do, for the entertainment of the king, who, having himself recovered from the fatal event of the preceding evening, was unable to understand that the sensibilities of another might be less flexible than his own. Nor was this all; for, on leaving the dinner-table at two o'clock, about six-and-twenty hours after the death of *Monsieur*, the Duke de Bourgoyne challenged the Duke de Montfort to a party at *brehan*—a game of chance then greatly in vogue at the French court. The astonishment of the courtier was excessive, and he ventured to reply by the remark that His Royal Highness must for a moment have forgotten that the remains of *Monsieur* were not yet cold.

“Pardon me,” answered the prince, “I am well aware of it; but the king will not consent to see any one dull at Marly, and has commanded me to form the tables, with an express order that I am to set the example.”

All further objection was, of course, impossible. The *brehan* party was formed, and the saloons soon became a scene of universal play.

Such was the mourning of Louis XIV.; while, as regarded Madame de Maintenon, who had always disliked the deceased duke, and apprehended that he might eventually exercise an influence over the mind of the monarch, which could not fail to prejudice her own interests, she had so much difficulty in concealing her satisfaction at his

demise, that she was delighted when the egotism of the king afforded her a legitimate opportunity of throwing off all outward semblance of sorrow, and of recurring to her usual mode of life.

The dauphin, who had amused himself by the antics of a learned pony while his own mother was on her way to the grave, could not reasonably be expected to feel deeply for his uncle, although that uncle had perpetually entertained him with balls and ballets, and all the pleasures to which he was the most partial; and accordingly, on the day succeeding his death, having spent his morning in wolf-hunting, and on his arrival at Marly found the gaming-tables in full operation, he conformed to the fashion of the hour, and wound up the evening with cards. The dukes de Bourgoyne and Berri, as they seldom saw *Monsieur*, save on state occasions, felt his death only as that of a relation of whom they knew little, and did not profess a grief which they were not called upon to experience; but such was far from being the case with the young duchess, whose sorrow was sincere, as from the period of her marriage *Monsieur* had treated her with the utmost tenderness and indulgence; but she was compelled to reserve her tears for the solitude of her chamber, prohibited as they were in the circle of the king.

The deepest mourner was, however, the Duke de Chartres. *Monsieur* had been to him a kind, a fond, and a forgiving father, from whom he had never experienced either severity or restraint, while he had also protected him from the displeasure of the monarch, to which he was now exposed. The latter source of regret was, however, silenced for a time by the magnificence with which the king fulfilled to the young prince the pledge that he had given over the dead body of his brother; for, in addition to the personal pensions that he had previously possessed, Louis XIV. secured to him those also which had been enjoyed by *Monsieur*—a liberality by which, when the dower and

other claims of *Madame* were paid, the Duke de Chartres found himself in possession of eighteen hundred thousand annual livres, including his appanage, besides the Palais Royal, St. Cloud, and his other residences. He was, moreover, allowed Swiss and body-guards—an arrangement hitherto without precedent, no princes of the blood having previously been so attended, save the sons and grandsons of sovereigns—his own guard-room in the interior of the palace of Versailles; a chancellor and an attorney-general, in whose joint names he could plead without appearing by his own; and the right of nomination to all the offices of his appanage, with the exception of the bishoprics. He, moreover, assumed the title of Duke of Orleans; and retained, not only the regiments, both of cavalry and infantry, which had belonged to *Monsieur*, but also his own troops of gendarmes and light-horsemen.

The king wore mourning for six months, and defrayed all the expenses of the funeral, which took place with great magnificence.

By the death of *Monsieur* the court lost much of its attraction; for he alone had, for the last few years, relieved its monotony by a succession of splendid amusements, which had afforded a reflection of past times; and, despite his prejudice in favor of high rank and noble blood, his affability and courtesy had insured him universal popularity. As a host he was unequalled, sacrificing both his time and his convenience to the gratification of those around him, while nothing afforded him so much pleasure as to see his court numerous and brilliantly attended. At St. Cloud, where all his household were accustomed to assemble, many ladies were admitted who were not to be met with elsewhere; but they were all of high rank, and addicted to high play. The pleasures provided within the palace, and the extreme beauty of its situation—where carriages almost innumerable were provided for the accommodation of those who were too indolent to walk—the

delicious concerts, and the splendid fare, rendered it an abode of luxury and comfort, without, however, detracting from its magnificence and grandeur; for the innate dignity of the prince commanded respect, even in his moments of familiarity.

Madame, meanwhile, had rather endured than assisted in these regal hospitalities; for, although she dined and supped with the court, and even occasionally drove out with some of her ladies, she frequently became sullen, and occasionally discourteous, uttering sarcasms which were the terror of the whole circle; and it was consequently a relief when she retired to her cabinet, in which she passed the remainder of her time gazing upon the family portraits with which she had lined the walls, and writing whole volumes of letters to her absent relatives, of which she afterward made copies with her own hand.

On the 11th of June the court returned to Versailles, where the king had no sooner arrived than he visited *Madame* and the Duke and Duchess de Chartres in their private apartments.

The widowed princess, when apprised of this gracious intention, became, however, so much alarmed at the prospect of receiving him, that she requested the Duchess de Ventadour to see Madame de Maintenon, and to inquire what was the probable motive of His Majesty in according to her so great a favor, when she had reason to be aware that he believed himself aggrieved by her conduct. The answer was by no means calculated to allay her fears; for it was reserved even to caution; and the duchess returned only with the information that Madame de Maintenon would pay a visit to *Madame* when the king had dined, and that she had, moreover, expressed her wish that the duchess herself should be present at the interview.

At the appointed time, accordingly, Madame de Maintenon was announced, when *Madame*, having caused all her ladies to retire save Madame de Ventadour, desired that

a chair might be placed for her visitor—an attention which sufficed at once to convince the favorite that the princess was conscious of her dependence on her good offices.

This courtesy was no sooner offered and accepted than *Madame* opened the conversation by complaining of the indifference evinced by the monarch during a temporary indisposition from which she had suffered since the death of her husband; and Madame de Maintenon permitted her to expatiate upon her disappointment and mortification until the subject was exhausted, when she informed her that she was authorized by His Majesty to assure Her Royal Highness that their common loss had effaced all that was past from his memory, provided her future deportment were more consonant to his wishes, not only as regarded himself, and all that had taken place on the subject of the Duke de Chartres, but also on other points, which had in reality induced the neglect of which she complained.

Madame, who, save as regarded her son, and her want of respect for court etiquette, believed herself safe, vehemently insisted that she had not, upon any other point, afforded the least pretext for a displeasure which had been so heavily and so conspicuously visited upon her, and became even indignant in her own justification; whereupon Madame de Maintenon drew a letter from her pocket, and inquired if she recognized the handwriting.

As the princess received it, she with difficulty retained her self-possession, for she instantly recognized it as one that she had addressed to her aunt, the Duchess of Hanover, to whom she was in the constant habit of writing by every post, and in which, after having detailed the current news of the court, she had declared that she could no longer determine whether Madame de Maintenon were the wife of the king or only his mistress, and thence digressed to the state of the kingdom, both within and without, giving it as her decided opinion that it was at that moment reduced to a state of depression from which it could never hope to re-

suscitate. This unhappy and ill-judged epistle had been opened by the authorities of the post-office, as was common at the time ; but, instead of furnishing an extract for the information of the monarch, and then being suffered to proceed to its destination, it had been detained, and submitted to his perusal in its original shape.

Madame had, accordingly, no sooner affected to read its contents, in order to obtain time to recover a portion of her composure, than she burst into tears ; upon which *Madame de Maintenon*, in her most measured tones, passed the letter in review, expatiating upon the enormity of its several and separate contents, and the effect which they were calculated to produce in a foreign country. In vain did the unhappy princess assert that her words were merely the echo of what passed around her, and that she had written jestingly, and without an idea of malice : the cold and impassible countenance of her auditor convinced her that she would depart with no such reply, and she was finally condemned to descend to apologies, to supplications, and to promises.

When a perfect understanding was established on the subject of the letter, *Madame de Maintenon*, who still pertinaciously retained her seat, informed the princess that she should esteem it a favor if, now that she had executed the commission with which she had been intrusted by the king, she would permit her, before she took her leave, to trouble her upon a subject in which she was herself more particularly interested, and to inquire why, after the honor which Her Royal Highness had originally done her, of accepting her friendship, and even of volunteering her own in return, she had withdrawn entirely from her circle ?

As this inquiry was made, *Madame* recovered her presence of mind, and hastened to reply that she congratulated herself upon the opportunity which it afforded to her of retorting upon *Madame de Maintenon* herself the accusation of a change as causeless as it was uncourteous ; for,

that while she had for a time exerted herself to maintain an intimacy which she would gladly have continued to the end of her life, she had been met only with coldness, neglect, and even an absence of that respect which was due to her rank.

This was the very admission which Madame de Maintenon had been anxious to educe from the lips of the haughty Bavarian; and it was, therefore, no sooner made than she answered, coldly and proudly, that Her Royal Highness did her no more than justice; for that she was aware it had only depended upon herself to continue the intimacy which had once existed between them; but that circumstances which had come to her knowledge had rendered all further professions of friendship toward Her Royal Highness inconsistent with her own sense of dignity and self-respect, and she had, in consequence, considered it necessary to withdraw from all such demonstrations.

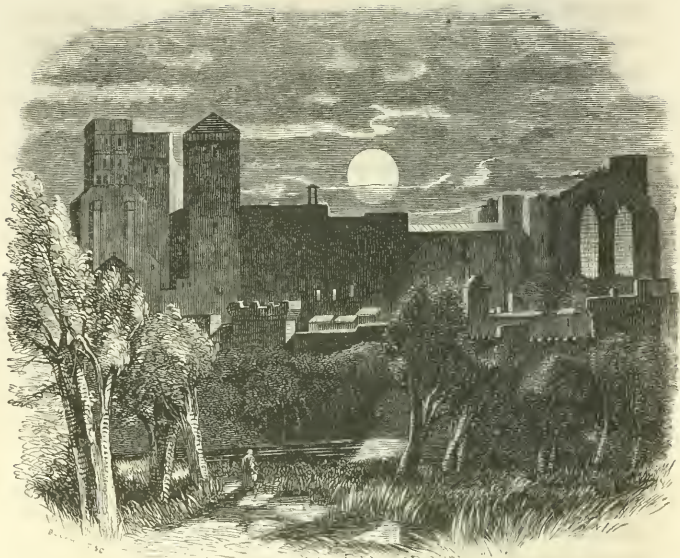
The princess impatiently demanded her reasons, affirming that she had a right to learn of what she was accused, and who were her accusers; nor was she destined long to remain in ignorance of either. Madame de Maintenon had listened unmoved to her disclaimers, and the defiance which she boldly threw out, declaring that no one would dare to assert that she had injured the marchioness in any way; and when they were at length brought to a close, she replied, with one of those cold and ambiguous smiles which were rapidly becoming the terror of Louis XIV., that she should not hesitate to satisfy the duchess upon both these points, although she had for ten years confined the secret to her own bosom; but that, as the dauphiness had now been in her grave for that period, she considered herself at liberty to inform Her Royal Highness that during the last hours of that lamented princess, who had done her the honor before her death to recognize the affectionate attachment which she bore to her person, and to accept her services during

her final illness, she had learned from her own lips the unsparing manner in which *Madame* had sported alike with her happiness and with her reputation. And then, in order to enforce upon the bewildered princess the extent of her information, she repeated, with a steady voice and blanched lips, a multitude of sarcasms and accusations, each in itself a deadly affront, with which Charlotte Elizabeth of Bavaria was only too well acquainted.

This second blow was too much even for the haughty spirit of *Madame*, who saw all her future hopes of peace and consideration dependent on the mercy of a woman whom she both hated and despised, but to whom she found herself compelled to sue for pardon. She had consequently no alternative save to weep more bitterly than before—to exclaim against the treachery of the dauphiness, who had repeated conversations idly and thoughtlessly carried on, and understood to be purely confidential, and to be forgotten as soon as uttered; and then she took the hand of Madame de Maintenon, and pressed it between her own, which were humid with her tears.

After having for a time coldly triumphed in the abasement of her enemy, the visitor at length suffered herself to be appeased, as she had previously determined to do, and even consoled the terrified princess by promising, in the king's name, that the reconciliation which had now taken place should involve his own, and that he would never on any occasion mention either of the subjects under discussion to *Madame*, but entirely dismiss them from his memory—an assurance which, more than any other, tended in some degree to console the princess for the degradation to which she had been subjected.*

* Mémoires de St. Simon.



CHAPTER XXV.

Marriage of Philip V.—The young Sovereigns—The Princess des Ursins—The Cardinal d'Estrées—Court Flatteries—Death of the Iron Mask—Progress of the Persecutions in the Cevennes—The Marshal de Villars—John Cavalier—Meeting of Louis XIV. and the Calvinist Leader—Flight of Cavalier from France—Decline of the Military Glory of the French Armies—Accusation against the Duchess de Bourgoyne; her Position at Court; her Errors—Death of Madame de Montespan; her last Hope; Occupation of her closing Years; Fate of her Remains.

ON the 11th of September of the same year an alliance was formed between the young King of Spain and Maria Louisa of Savoy, the sister of the Duchess de Bourgoyne. This princess, although short in stature, was beautifully formed, with a fine complexion, and eyes of singular brilliancy. Full of talent and good sense, graceful, amiable,

but withal possessed of considerable pride, she bore about her all the evidence of high birth and innate dignity, and eventually distinguished herself by a courage and firmness which were remarkable in her sex and at her early age; while they were, moreover, eminently advantageous to her husband, who, although by no means deficient either in sound judgment or powers of mind, was nevertheless the victim of an extreme indolence, augmented by the perpetual restraint to which he was subjected and encouraged by the cold and reserved nature of his character.

The young sovereigns, alike strangers to each other and to the country which they were called upon to govern, were placed in a position of so much peril and difficulty, that Louis XIV. considered it expedient to provide them with a prudent and intelligent friend, who might serve at once as their companion and adviser; and his selection ultimately fell upon the Princess des Ursins,* who, having passed a great portion of her life at foreign courts, was familiar with the habits of that of Spain, and was, moreover, a woman of powerful talent and high breeding. Possessed of these advantages, which were no sooner made known to him by Madame de Maintenon than he fully appreciated their value, this princess had appeared to the monarch the most eligible person upon whom he could confer so important a charge as that of initiating a queen, yet in her girlhood, into the difficult art of maintaining her court with befitting dignity, while, although Madame des Ursins could not be considered by the Spaniards as a stranger, he still hoped that she would be sufficiently estranged from them as a nation not to involve herself in the intrigues and cabals of the court of Madrid.

During the widowhood of Madame Scarron, the princess

* Anna Maria de la Tremouille de Noirmoutier was the widow of Talleyrand, Prince de Chalais, and wife of the Duke de Bracciano, a grandee of Spain, and representative of the Ursins family.

had expressed considerable sympathy with her misfortunes and interest in her fate, although she had never carried either so far as to prove an active friend; but she had no sooner ascertained that the Spanish appointment was to take place than, profiting by their former acquaintance, she had immediate recourse to the influence of Madame de Maintenon, who had, as she did not scruple then to express herself, "the goodness to speak of her to the king;" and it was doubtlessly through that very influence that this haughty, rich, and independent woman obtained, with the title of *Camerera Major*, the right to receive the dressing-gown of the King of Spain from his own hands when he was about to get into bed, to present both his dressing-gown and slippers when he was preparing to rise, the pleasure of snatching her repasts whenever she could find a moment in which to do so, of rising at a particular hour, however greatly she might need rest, of fulfilling the most menial offices about the young queen, and, finally, as she herself boasted, of emulating half a dozen hired attendants. "I feel sure," she wrote to her sister-in-law, "that the Piedmontese waiting-women of the queen will not wash her feet or draw off her shoes and stockings so expeditiously as I have done."

But the princess was resolved, at whatever cost of comfort or condescension, to acquire the confidence and regard of the royal pair—an attempt in which she perfectly succeeded.

Madame des Ursins was associated in her office of friend and counselor with the Cardinal d'Estrées,* who

* Cæsar d'Estrées, Cardinal Abbé of St. Germain-des-Prés, was born in 1628, and was the son of Francis Annibal d'Estrées, duke, peer, and marshal of France. He was raised to the bishopric of Laon in 1653. The king selected him as mediator between the Pope's nuncio and the partisans of the bishops of Aleth, Beauvais, Pamiers, and Angers, in which office he secured a reconciliation, which, for a time, restored peace to the French church. Admitted to the conclave in 1674, he was sent to Bavaria in 1680 to arrange the marriage treaty

was instructed to maintain a perfect intelligence between the cabinets of Versailles and Madrid, and to reconcile their common interests. For this purpose Louis XIV. commanded his recall from Vienna, where he was at the moment on a diplomatic mission, believing him to be, as he declared, "the most able man in his dominions;" but the French king had forgotten that they were cotemporaries, and that the cardinal, like himself, was beginning, both physically and morally, to experience the united effects of unceasing labor and increasing years; and this want of memory was the more excusable as the high breeding, the ready wit, and even the person of the courtly cardinal, were still the wonder of all who remembered how long they had been exposed to the cares of office and the vicissitudes of climate.*

As a proof of this fact, St. Simon relates of him that he had to the last preserved his teeth, which were extremely fine, almost in their original integrity—a circumstance the more fortunate as, from his having an unusually large mouth, they were more than commonly conspicuous; and that on one occasion when he was dining with Louis XIV., who was much attached to him, and always unbent in his society, upon the monarch complaining of the inconvenience to which he was subjected by his want of teeth, "Oh! sire," replied His Eminence, with one of his broadest smiles, "who on earth has teeth in the present day?"

It would appear, however, that the cardinals drew on flattery as smoothly as their scarlet stockings, and were not always scrupulous as to its quality or extent; for the same writer relates an anecdote of another Eminence, to whom Louis XIV. was, as a mark of especial favor, doing

of the dauphin, and, after upholding at Rome the interests of France, he was ultimately appointed to follow Philip V. to Madrid to assist him in his ministry. He returned to France in 1703, and died in 1714.

* *Mémoires Politiques et Militaires*, par Adrian Maurice, Duc de Noailles.

the honors of the gardens at Marly, when at a considerable distance from the palace they were overtaken by a slight shower, which induced the monarch to express his regret that his guest should be exposed to the rain in so light a dress. "Sire," was the courtly but vapid reply of the Cardinal de Polignac, "the rain of Marly can not wet any one."

On the 19th of November, 1703, the curate of the church of St. Paul in Paris incribed upon his register this brief record of a decease within his jurisdiction :

"This 19th of November, 1703, Marchialy, aged about forty-five years, died in the Bastille, and his body was interred in the cemetery of St. Paul, his parish, on the 20th of the said month, in the presence of M. Rosarges, major, and M. Reilhe, surgeon-major of the Bastille, whose signatures follow."

And this was all—though a long, a fearful, and a mysterious history might have been appended to the registry ; for this Marchialy, who died a prisoner, and was put into an obscure grave, unwept and unnoticed, was, as it is asserted, no other than the enigma which all Europe has as yet endeavored in vain to solve—the Man with the Iron Mask.

Meanwhile, the war to which we have already alluded, and which was destined to secure to that Prince Eugène, whose pretensions had been the jest of Louis XIV. and his generals, an undying reputation, was convulsing all the European nations ; but as it affords a prominent page in the world's history, we shall not pause to record its vicissitudes, but rather turn our attention to that intestine struggle which was still deluging the fairest provinces of France with misery and blood.

After the assassination of the Abbé de Chayla, the Calvinists, conscious that the reprisals of their enemies would be deadly, retired to the rocks and forests, where their numbers rapidly increased ; and from these wild fastnesses

they made occasional sallies into the adjacent country, carrying ruin in their path. A great proportion of the peasantry secretly favored their cause, for their war-cry was "No taxes, and liberty of conscience," and the appeal came home to the heart of every man, while their hopes of ultimate success were sustained by the occasional aid which they received from both Holland, Savoy, and Geneva; the two former supplying them, whenever they were enabled to do so secretly, with arms, men, and money, and the latter with preachers or prophets of both sexes, by whose assumed inspirations they were guided in all their enterprises.

The suppression of this revolt (for such was the name that it originally bore) had been intrusted to the Marquis de Bâville, the intendant of Languedoc, who had only succeeded by his bigotry and oppression in swelling the revolt into a rebellion; while the second general who was sent against them was the Marshal de Montrevel, who carried on the conflict rather like an executioner than a soldier. Under his auspices the wheel and the fagot did the work of the sword and the pike; and the excesses committed by his dragoons were so unparalleled, that the contest assumed the name of the *Dragonade*; while the rebels on their side, driven to exasperation, repaid every cruelty in kind.

The king, embarrassed by a foreign war, could not send against them a sufficient body of troops to overpower or disperse their numbers, and it was difficult to take them by surprise, distributed as they were among almost inaccessible rocks which they had been the first to climb, in caverns hitherto inhabited only by the wild denizens of the forest, and in the depths of tangled woods where no pathway could be distinguished, but from whence they emerged at intervals, armed to the teeth, and uttering yells of defiance. They had little, moreover, to apprehend from the treachery of the natives of the province; not only the

peasantry affording them help and shelter, but the owners of many of the châteaux readily granting them refuge when they were pursued, and supplying them with food, with which they returned laden to their hiding-places; while even the city of Nismes and other minor towns were detected in making sundry efforts to uphold their cause.

Once they met their enemies *en masse*, when the royal troops were so signally defeated that the result, happily for both Christendom and humanity, was the recall of M. de Montrevel, and the substitution of the Marshal de Villars.*

As the new general soon ascertained that it was as difficult to track the rebels as to vanquish them, he had no sooner made himself feared, than he proposed an amnesty, to which some among their leaders, weary of a life of perpetual hardship and bloodshed, at length consented.

Of these, the most remarkable was John Cavalier, who had been one of the principal chiefs of the Cévenols, and who consented, not only to lay down his own arms, but

* Louis Hector, Marquis and subsequently Duke de Villars, was born in 1653, entered the army at an early age, and soon distinguished himself by his intrepidity. Appointed adjutant-general in 1690, he gained the victory of Friedlingen, where he was opposed to the Prince of Baden, in 1702, and the following year that of Hochstet. Appointed marshal of France, he was intrusted with the pacification of Languedoc, and succeeded in his mission. Recalled to Germany, he arrested the progress of Marlborough, and beat the enemy at Stolhoffen (1707), after which he passed into Dauphiny, where he defeated the plans of Prince Eugène. In 1709 he returned to Flanders, where he fought the unfortunate battle of Malplaquet, in which he was both worsted and wounded; but he revenged his defeat by the victory of Denain, which, while it insured the safety of the nation, also induced the treaty of peace in 1714, at Rastadt. Appointed president of the council of war, and admitted to the council of the regency after the death of Louis XIV., he became at one and the same time duke and peer, governor of Provence, a grandee of Spain, and a member of the French Academy. On the recurrence of the war in 1733, he took the command in Italy, with the title of general of the camps and armies of the king. He returned to France, and died in 1734, leaving behind him the *Memoirs* which bear his name.

also to induce his followers to do the same, on condition that the marshal would guaranty to him the title of colonel, and the command of a regiment which he undertook to raise. To these terms M. de Villars readily consented, for at the period when the proposition was made, Cavalier was at the head of eight hundred men, and was the more formidable from the fact that he was especially protected by their most powerful prophetess, who had declared him to be appointed to the post which he then occupied by the direct influence of the Holy Spirit.

Barely three-and-twenty years of age, small in person, and with a physiognomy singularly gentle and attractive, Cavalier had rather the appearance of a priest than a soldier; but his extraordinary courage and intrepidity, the perseverance with which he overcame every difficulty, and the skill with which he conducted all his enterprises, rendered him the most dangerous enemy against whom the royal forces were called upon to contend.

When his proposal had been received by the marshal, and that Cavalier was summoned to present himself at Nismes, in order that the ratification of the amnesty might be finally arranged, his usual caution did not forsake him; for previously to placing himself in the power of the royalist general, he demanded hostages, which were unhesitatingly granted, and ultimately insisted that he should be attended during the interview by the same number of armed men as formed the guard of M. de Villars himself; this condition also was conceded, and thus escorted, and accompanied by a brother chief named Roland, the Cévenol leader signed the terms of the capitulation, during which ceremony the natural dignity and perfect good breeding of Cavalier excited the astonishment of the marshal, who had ascertained that, previously to the revolt, the quick-witted and courageous soldier before him, whose sole word had sufficed to control a numerous and undisciplined army, was merely an apprentice to a baker, obscure in birth as

in station, and betraying no symptoms of the fiery and resolute spirit which he afterward evinced.

As M. de Villars, upon the pacification of the Cevennes, was reappointed to the army in Flanders, he determined, on his return to Versailles, to present the new colonel himself to the ministers; and both he and his proselyte endeavored to induce Roland, who had long been the friend and comrade of Cavalier, also to accept service under the king. The young chief, however, resolutely refused to abandon his party, declaring that he should never believe Cavalier himself to be sincere in his defalcation until he saw him bend his steps toward Paris in company of the enemies of his province and of his faith; which he had no sooner done than he once more rallied the dispersed Calvinists—who, disheartened by the desertion of their most influential leader, had begun to disband themselves, and to attempt an escape across the frontier in separate bands—and renewed, although with less activity and success, the struggle which had been momentarily suspended.

As he proceeded toward the capital, the young Cévenol chief was met by strong demonstrations of respect and affection; and at Mâcon, during a temporary halt, he received an order from the controller-general to proceed at once to Versailles, where his welcome from the minister was so marked and courteous, that, at the termination of the interview, he felt secure of the realization of all his brightest visions for the future. Cavalier knew nothing of the court, nor of court diplomacy: he was in a new world; the wild child of the mountains was breathing the close and scented atmosphere of a ministerial apartment; and when the great personage to whom he had been admitted informed him, with a bland smile, that he was at that moment the one topic of the courtly circle, promised him his own protection, and assured him that half the nobility, both male and female, were prepared to do the same, no wonder that the heart of the young and ardent soldier beat

high with pride and gratified ambition. But the climax of his triumph was yet to come ; for before he left the cabinet of the minister it was confided to him that the king himself desired to see him, and that he must in consequence be in readiness for his presentation on the day after the morrow, when he would have a place assigned to him on the great stair-case, near which His Majesty must pass.

Cavalier attired himself magnificently ; his graceful figure, handsome face, and martial demeanor, had never before been so conspicuous ; and his whole appearance, when he took up the station appropriated to him with a calm and dignified but modest self-possession, which silenced even those who had already begun to make merry on the subject of his origin, and then shook back the redundant masses of long fair hair which fell in glossy curls about his brow and shoulders, as he swept the circle with a keen and rapid glance, excited universal comment and admiration ; but as no one was yet assured of the reception which awaited him from the king, and that none were anxious to compromise themselves by any premature demonstration, the young soldier was not greeted by a single courtesy, and stood leaning against the gilded balustrade of the stair-case, with his legs crossed negligently, and waving the light plume of his hat to and fro, in complete and somewhat disdainful silence.

Suddenly a loud murmur of voices was heard, and as Cavalier turned to ascertain its cause, he found himself in the presence of the king. He had never before seen Louis XIV., and the blood instinctively mounted to his brow as he assumed a more respectful attitude.

When he reached the landing upon which Cavalier was stationed, the king paused, affecting to direct the attention of one of his ministers to a new ceiling which Lebrun had just completed, but actually that he might be enabled to contemplate at his ease the singular young man who had contended for so long a time against two marshals of France,

and had finally made a treaty with a third; and when he had at length satisfied his curiosity, he inquired, as he indicated by a gesture that he spoke of the Cévenol chief, the name of this young noble whom he now saw for the first time.

On being informed by the minister, who made one step forward to present him, that it was Colonel John Cavalier, "Oh, true," was the contemptuous reply, "the baker's boy of Anduze;" and, with a disdainful shrug of the shoulders, the monarch moved on. On his side Cavalier had advanced a pace, believing that Louis XIV. would address him, when this insulting rejoinder fell upon his ear, and for an instant he stood as though he had been petrified to stone; but in the next he convulsively grasped the hilt of his sword, and, feeling that he was lost if he ventured to remain among the crowd who were watching his every motion, he sprung down the steps under the vestibule, rushed into the garden, which he traversed at a rapid pace, and returned to his hôtel, cursing the hour in which, confiding in the promises of the Marshal de Villars, he had abandoned his native mountains, amid which he had been as truly a monarch as Louis XIV. in the gilded galleries of Versailles.

In the course of the same evening he received an order to leave Paris, and to rejoin his regiment, which he immediately obeyed; and at Mâcon he found himself once more among those of his companions who had resolved to share his fortunes, and who were, consequently, included in the treaty. To these, without making the mortifying confession of his reception by the king, he at once hinted that he had not only lost all faith in the redemption of the promises which he had received through M. de Villars, but that he even apprehended personal danger should he remain in France; and ended by suggesting that they should all gain the frontier without delay, and seek their fortunes in another country.

The word of Cavalier was a law to his adherents; and consequently these men, without murmur or discussion,

forthwith commenced their march, alike ignorant and careless as to its termination.

At Dinan they performed their devotions, and then deserting in a body the inhospitable nation which had given them birth, they traversed Mont Belliard, threw themselves into Porentruy, and took the road to Lausanne.

Aware that all was at an end as regarded his faction in France, Cavalier first proceeded to Holland, and thence to England, where he was graciously received by the queen, and was appointed to the command of a regiment of foreign emigrants, at the head of which, at the battle of Almanza, he found himself opposed to a corps of French infantry; when the old enemies had no sooner recognized each other than, yelling out their hate, as if by one common impulse, they rushed forward, regardless alike of discipline and order, and a perfect butchery ensued, scarcely any survivors being left on either side. Cavalier was, however, one of the few who escaped; and, in recompense of the courage which he had displayed, he was raised to the rank of a general officer, and appointed governor of the Isle of Wight.

He survived until 1740 in his adopted country, and finally died in Chelsea Hospital, at the age of sixty years.

The military fame of Louis XIV. and his army had, in 1702, reached its culminating point, and thenceforward it began to decline. Three great defeats ruined the strength of the united kingdoms of France and Spain: that of Vigo, where a French fleet which was escorting some Spanish galleons was compelled to self-destruction by fire, in order to prevent its capture by the enemy in the year named; the defeat of Hochstet, where twenty-seven battalions of infantry and four regiments of dragoons were forced to surrender without striking a blow, in 1704; and, finally, the retreat of Ramillies, where, in 1706, the army lost all its camp-equipage and ammunition while hotly pursued, and was compelled to disband itself.

The French had been so unaccustomed to reverses under Louis XIV. that they could not induce themselves to believe that this successive ill-fortune arose from ordinary causes, such as the exhaustion of their forces or the error of their generals, but attributed it to treason; and it was ere long broadly asserted that information of all the measures decided at Versailles was sent from Meudon, where the dauphin held his court, to the Prince de Vaudemont, governor of Milan, who was devoted to the interests of the archduke—not, indeed, by the prince himself, but by some women of rank who were in his confidence. This report, however, gradually lost credit, as it was remembered that no rational motive could be assigned for so foul, so dangerous, and so unprofitable a treachery.*

The next suggestion was still more mischievous. The young Duchess de Bourgoyne had, it was said, witnessed the progress of the war in Piedmont with as much tranquillity as though she had been born a princess of France, but no sooner saw the army approach Turin than she apprehended the total ruin of her father, and, anxious to spare him so bitter a mortification, exerted herself strenuously to affect the raising of the siege; in which attempt she secured the coöperation of Madame de Maintenon, who, seeing the rapidity with which age was gaining upon the king, and believing that she might, upon some future day, require the support of the duchess, lent her all the assistance in her power.

To this circumstance were accordingly attributed the restrictions under which the Duke d'Orleans assumed the command of the army in Italy, and the authority confided to the Marshal de Marsin,† without whose sanction the

* Louis XIV., sa Cour, et le Regent.

† The Count de Marsin was the descendant of a noble family of Liége, who passed into France at the age of seventeen years; and, having been appointed major of cavalry, served in Flanders in 1690, and was wounded at Fleurus. In 1693 he was present at the battle of

prince was forbidden to undertake any movement of importance, as well as the abandonment of the siege of Turin, after a desperate engagement, in which Marsin was killed, and the Duke d'Orleans himself grievously wounded.

This accusation against the young duchess was based upon the assertion that the Duke of Savoy, menaced even in his capital, neglected every measure of defense, and that when he eventually became uneasy at the approach of the French troops to his very walls, and wrote to the Queen of England soliciting her assistance, he received from the Duke of Marlborough, in the name of his royal mistress, a reply to the effect that he need not be alarmed by the success of the French forces, as they had already flattered themselves wrongfully more than once on their advantages, and that upon this occasion they would do so again; while he, moreover, spoke so positively of their failure in the attack upon Turin, although it was undertaken by so strong an army, and under circumstances which appeared to render its capture inevitable, that it was impossible to read the letter without feeling convinced his assurance was based upon solid grounds.*

To those, however, who were not blinded by party spirit or mortified vanity, these circumstances were considered capable of perfect refutation; nor was it probable that the Duchess de Bourgoyne would commit an act of treachery against the country of which she might in a short period become the queen, in favor of her father, who, by allying

Nerwinde, and at the taking of Charleroi, after which he joined the army in Italy. In 1701 he was sent to Spain as ambassador from the court of Louis XIV. to that of Philip V. In 1703 he was created marshal of France, and in 1704 he commanded the retreat at the battle of Hochstet. Ordered once more to Italy, he was so mortified at having caused the defeat before Turin in 1706, that he exposed himself imprudently during the engagement, and lost his life. He was the last male representative of his family.

* Histoire du Règne de Louis XIV., par *Reboulet*.

himself with its enemies, was weakening its resources, rendering the court at which she resided a scene of anxiety, and separating her from a husband to whom she was attached, and whose life was constantly endangered throughout the whole of the campaign. It is the less feasible, moreover, from the fact that not even the indignation excited by the defalcation of the Duke of Savoy in the mind of Louis XIV. even for an instant influenced his feelings toward his beloved granddaughter.

Admitting her freely into his confidence, he transacted business with his ministers in her presence, and had the delicacy never to allow any discussion on the subject of her father to reach her ears. In private he permitted her to hang upon his neck, or to seat herself upon his knee, to torment him with her unceasing playfulness, to open and read his letters in his presence, and to take an equal liberty with those of Madame de Maintenon. She was, in short, the joy and the light of his old age—the only being who had ever compelled him to forget the monarch in the parent, and to acknowledge to himself that he had the feelings and the affections common to his kind; while she became doubtlessly the more endeared to him by the fact that even while she was conscious that her wishes were all-powerful, she exerted her influence only to serve those who required her aid; and that never, on any single occasion, did she utter a word which might tend to injure the humblest individual in his estimation; but affable to every one, courteous and considerate to those about her, and living with the ladies of her household in perfect harmony and friendship, she was at once the idol of the court and the beloved of the people.

Unfortunately, amid this general homage, the duchess distinguished with more than common favor the Marquis de Nangis, a young and gallant soldier who had attached himself to the court of the Duke de Bourgoyne.

The prince, passionately devoted to his wife, was, as

we have elsewhere stated, although possessed of moral qualities of a high order, by no means calculated personally to excite the attachment of such a nature as that of Adelaide of Savoy, while M. de Nangis, young, handsome, and graceful, at once captivated her fancy, and subjugated her reason so thoroughly, that ere long this unhappy passion was known to every one save her husband.

At the commencement of 1707 intelligence of the death of Madame de Montespan reached the court. Another link between the present and the past was broken. For the last few years she had placed her conscience under the direction of the Père de la Tour, the General of the Oratory, and had devoted herself entirely to her religious duties, while the first act of penance to which he compelled her was so bitter that all those by which it was succeeded became comparatively easy. This penance was no less than to address a letter to her husband, couched in the most submissive terms, in which she offered to return to him if he would condescend to receive her, or to take up her residence at whatever place he should think proper to assign. The diplomacy of her confessor was most admirable; for, when once the haughty spirit of his penitent had been bent to such a depth as this, he felt that his task would be light indeed.

It was long, however, ere Madame de Montespan could sufficiently conquer her pride and resentment to consent to such a humiliation; but the reverend father of the Oratory was no cowed courtier, ready to compromise with the conscience of his penitent, and he was at length obeyed. Humbly as the letter was dictated did she write it; but the terror of her suspense was quickly terminated; for the marquis had no sooner received the self-abnegatory missive of his guilty wife than he caused her to be informed that he would neither admit her into his house, prescribe any rule for her future conduct, nor suffer her name to be again mentioned in his presence; and in

this resolution he some time afterward expired, without having ever overcome either his mortification at her desertion or the passion which he had never ceased to feel for her.

The death of the marquis tended, however, to increase the difficulties of the confessor; for Madame de Montespan no sooner found herself a widow than a new hope sprung up in her heart. Still beautiful, and convinced that the king had only been induced to discard her from conscientious motives, she could not contemplate the fact that she was at length free, and couple it with the recollection that she was the junior of Madame de Maintenon by five or six years, without believing that the weak health of her rival would soon liberate the monarch also, whose affections, excited anew by the tenderness of their children, might again be restored to her, although the single fact should have sufficed to prove the hollowness of such an anticipation, that Louis XIV. never, even in his most indulgent moments, spoke to them of their mother, or consulted her wishes upon any subject connected with their welfare.

Her principal hope lay in the influence of her daughters and the Count de Toulouse, whom she loved more tenderly than any of her other children, and who repaid her affection in kind. From the Duke du Maine she anticipated no support, nor did she seek it; but in the respectful attachment of the young count she imagined that she saw the pledge of her success. The prince did not possess, like his brother, "the wit of the Mortemars," but he was the impersonation of honor, principle, and uprightness, with a deportment as affable as was consistent with a reserved and even cold expression. His rank as high-admiral of France had induced him to make a study of his profession, and to do honor to the confidence which had been placed in him by the king. He had already given repeated proofs both of his personal cour-

age and of his matured judgment; and, although the monarch preferred the society of the Duke du Maine, he nevertheless did justice to the good sense, the truthfulness, and the other sterling qualities of the Count de Toulouse.

Thus the world had once more opposed its barrier between the penitent and her spiritual director; but it was, after a time, overthrown by the resolute firmness of the latter; and the unhappy woman, after this last struggle, perceiving that the constant presence of her children, whom it had long been her only happiness to overwhelm with presents and caresses, tended to maintain in her breast an ambition which she had pledged herself to abandon, at length resolved to permit their visits only at long intervals, and to confine her liberality to the poor, while, not satisfied by bestowing upon them the riches which had become comparatively useless to her, she worked for several hours each day upon the coarsest and most ungainly materials, alike for the sick in the hospitals and for the needy in their squalid homes. Her table, which had hitherto been splendid and profuse, was reduced to mere frugal comfort; and she ultimately adopted the penances of which she had formerly made a disdainful jest, and not only wore haircloth next her skin, but also an iron girdle armed with points, which at every movement lacerated her body.

Morbidly alarmed at the bare idea of death, she was accustomed, during a thunder-storm, to seat an infant upon her knees, in order that she might find protection in its innocence; she also constantly slept with all her curtains thrown back, a number of tapers burning in her room, and several women to watch throughout the night; and, when restless, she listened jealously to ascertain that they were either talking, gambling, or eating, in order to keep themselves awake.

Nevertheless, although subjecting herself to bodily suf-

fering and to moral subjection, there was one darling weakness to which Madame de Montespan adhered to the last, and over which even the Père de la Tour himself had no power. The princely etiquet which she had established in her hôtel endured to the period of her death; and, by a strange caprice, the whole of the court submitted to the ostentatious and almost insolent regulations she had adopted, and visited her zealously, she meanwhile addressing all her guests, whatever might be their rank, like a queen receiving the homage of a circle to whose respect and deference she had a claim.*

Always imagining herself to be in weak health, or making this idea a pretext for constant movement, Madame de Montespan was continually on the road from Paris to Bourbon-l'Archambault, thence to her estate at Antin, and thence again to Fontevault, of which magnificent house her sister was the abbess.

On quitting Paris for the last time for Bourbon, although, as she was even herself compelled to admit, in admirable health, she had a presentiment that she should never return, and, before her departure, paid all her pensioners—who were principally impoverished members of the nobility—a sufficient sum to enable them to exist until they could secure some other means of subsistence, declaring that she should not live to supply their further wants. Her friends smiled at her prediction; but, by a singular coincidence, she had only arrived at Bourbon a few days when, during the night of the 26th of May, her women were alarmed by seeing her struggling against suffocation, and, with considerable difficulty, extorted her consent that they should summon her confessor and her son, the Marquis d'Antin. The priest was soon at her side; but even at that moment of peril the dying woman persisted, despite the discouraging comments of her physician, to maintain that she already felt better, and should ultimately recover.

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

Amid these protestations, however, her strength was rapidly ebbing away, and before M. d'Antin arrived she had become insensible; but this was not the circumstance which engaged the attention of her visitor; for the door of his traveling-chaise was no sooner opened than he desired a weeping attendant, who presented herself to receive him, to bring his mother's casket to the carriage, as he should not alight. The woman only replied by sobbing out that her mistress was at that moment in the death-agony.

"That is not what I asked," said the marquis, coldly; "I inquired for her casket."

The *femme-de-chambre* disappeared, and a few minutes subsequently returned, carrying a small ebony box, clamped with silver.

"Where is the key?" inquired M. d'Antin.

"The marchioness never intrusts it to any one; she wears it about her neck."

"Shall I, then, be compelled to enter the house and seek it myself?" he asked impatiently.

"I fear so, Monsieur; for no attendant of the marquise could be induced to perform such an office at such a moment."

Without further comment, the marquis sprung from the chaise, rapidly ascended the stairs, and entered the death-room, where his once beautiful mother lay gasping in the last struggle of dissolution. With a steady hand he drew back the costly lace which veiled her bosom, seized the small key that rested on it, opened the casket, thrust all its contents into the pockets of his *haut-de-chausses*, and regained his carriage, without the utterance of one word unconnected with the absolute purpose of his visit.

An hour afterward Madame de Montespan expired; and it was ascertained that she had bequeathed her body to the tomb of her family, situated at Poitiers, her heart to the convent of La Flèche, and her entrails to the priory of St. Menoux, near Bourbon. When this arrangement be-

came public, a courtier before whom it was related exclaimed, with affected surprise, "The entrails of Madame de Montespan! Did she really possess any?"*

A village surgeon performed the necessary duties, and separated those portions of the remains which were destined to be conveyed elsewhere from the body; after which the corpse remained a considerable time at the door of the house, while the canons of the holy chapel and the priests of the parish contended for a point of precedence. The heart, inclosed in a leaden case, was forwarded to Le Flèche, and, finally, the intestines were deposited in a small trunk, and committed to the care of a peasant, who was instructed to convey them to St. Menoux. But, as though the guilty and haughty woman, who had just looked her last upon that world which had throughout her life been the object of her adoration, was destined to convey a moral to her kind, even beyond the grave, it chanced that the porter, having seated himself midway of his journey to rest, and placed the box beside him, was suddenly seized with a desire to ascertain its contents, which he had no sooner done than, believing that he was merely the jest of some comrade who desired to make merry at his expense, he emptied the trunk into the ditch beside which he sat, and had scarcely done so, when a lad who was herding swine drove them toward him, and, as they groveled in the mire at the foot of the bank, they came upon the burden with which he had been intrusted, and in a few instants the most filthy animals in the creation had devoured a portion of the remains of one of the haughtiest women who ever trod the earth!†

Thus perished, at the age of sixty-six, Madame de Montespan, who, after spending sixteen years in achieving an infamous celebrity, passed the succeeding twenty-two in expiating at once her folly and her guilt; nor could any

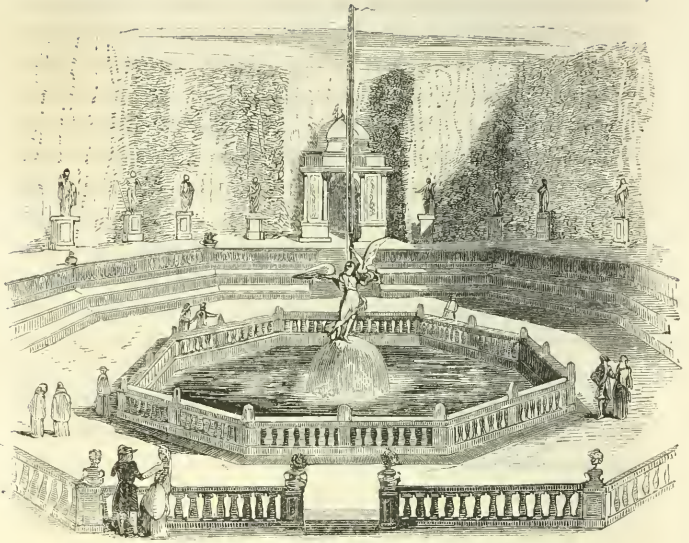
* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf

† Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

thing exceed the indifference with which Paris and Versailles received the intelligence of her demise, save the disgraceful want of feeling which it betrayed in her children. The Marquis d'Antin alone assumed even the outward semblance of mourning: neither the Duke du Maine, the Count de Toulouse, the Duchess de Bourbon, nor *Madame*, evinced the slightest respect to the memory of their erring, but not the less affectionate mother; while, as regarded the king, to whom her will had once been a law, the news reached him as he was about to start on a shooting excursion; and the precaution with which it was communicated by the messenger was at once rendered supererogatory by the manner in which it was received.

“Ah, indeed,” said Louis XIV; “so the marchioness is dead! I should have thought she would have lasted longer. Are you ready, M. de la Rochefoucauld? I have no doubt that after this last shower the scent will lie well for the dogs. Let us be off at once.”*

* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.



CHAPTER XXVI.

Anticipations of the Dauphin—The female Cabal—Prejudices of the Dauphin—Death of Père la Chaise—The new Confessor, Michel le Tellier; his Portrait—Famine of 1709—Royal Plate once more sent to the Mint—Military Reverses—Egotism of Louis XIV.—The Duke de Fronsac—Children of the Duchess de Bourgoyne—Death of the Duke de Bourbon-Condé—Marriage of the Duke de Berri; his Portrait—Character of his Bride—The Union an unhappy one—The Children of the Duke du Maine created Princes of the Blood—An unpleasant Interview—Murmurs of the Courtiers—Victory of Villa Viciosa—Death of the Emperor Joseph—Public Joy—Illness and Death of the Dauphin—A Prince and his Mistress—Dispersion of the Meudon Cabal—The Duke de Bourgoyne Dauphin of France—Isolation of the Duchess de Bourbon.

DESPITE the attachment which the dauphin had always evinced toward Louis XIV., he had at this period attained his forty-eighth year, and was suspected of looking anx-

iously toward the throne which he was one day to inherit. The extreme jealousy with which the king had excluded him from all participation in public affairs, long after his age had rendered him eligible to assume the position to which he was entitled by his birth, and the unconquerable timidity which rendered him almost powerless in his presence, had become alike irksome and mortifying; while there were several about him who did not scruple to murmur openly at the long duration of a reign whose glory had for many years grown dim.

That the prince listened at least complaisantly to these regrets is evident, from the fact that the Duchess de Bourgoyne on one of her visits to Meudon, found him, in company with Mademoiselle Choin, the ladies Lillebonne, and the Duchess de Chartres, seated before a table on which lay a folio volume of engravings, representing the details of a coronation, which they were examining with so much earnestness that even her entrance did not cause them to abandon their occupation; and the heart of the young duchess swelled as she listened to the comments of the ladies by whom he was surrounded, and by which he was evidently both amused and gratified, as they identified him with the several ceremonies.

The imprudence of this proceeding was manifest and dangerous; and had the princess desired to revenge the slight and contumely to which both herself and her husband were exposed at the court of Meudon, they had placed an efficient weapon in her hands; for although possessed of talents and virtues of which a father might justly have been proud, the Duke de Bourgoyne experienced neither confidence nor affection from the dauphin, who had been taught by those about him to look with distrust and suspicion on a son toward whom Louis XIV. had latterly evinced an affection too long withheld.

The prejudices which had been infused into the mind of MONSEIGNEUR, and the satisfaction which he derived

from the mortification of his son, were, indeed, rendered painfully obvious during the Flemish campaign in 1708, where M. de Bourgoyne commanded the army, having as his lieutenant-general the Duke de Vendôme, one of the supporters of the cabal of Meudon, and where he experienced the greatest affronts to which a prince of the blood was ever exposed by a subject.

On the 20th of January, 1709, Père la Chaise expired, at the age of eighty years, during thirty-two of which he had been the director of the royal conscience. Upon several occasions, even while both his health and his intellect continued unimpaired, he had requested permission of the king to resign so responsible an office; but his petition was rejected, and thus he was compelled to pursue his arduous task with the increasing anxiety attendant upon a consciousness that he should become each year less equal to perform it efficiently. Naturally mild and conciliating, as well as just and generous, he rarely overstepped the limits of his actual position, and even then, never, save in one fatal instance, in other than a rightful cause; while it is matter of historical record that in this solitary case he was compelled by the society of Jesuits, of which he was a member, and who exercised over him at once a watchful jealousy and a stringent control, to urge a measure against which his heart and his conscience alike revolted.

We allude, of course, to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, that awful atrocity which deluged the French provinces in blood, and cast an eternal stigma on the name and reign of Louis XIV.

Armed as he was by his moral authority over the monarch, Père la Chaise betrayed neither avarice, ambition, nor revenge; and although firmly Jesuitical in principle, proved an inefficient instrument in the hands of the society, from his aversion to violence and aggression, while he was, moreover, so wanting in energy, that his indulgence was frequently inimical to the rigid performance

of his religious functions. The king, on one occasion, related a reply made to him by the venerable ecclesiastic, which would amply suffice to prove this fact, were it not gratifying to believe that it was induced by the memorable persecution of the Calvinists.

“I reproached him one day,” said Louis XIV., “with being too supine, when he answered, ‘It is not I who am supine, but you who are too harsh.’”

His charities were, moreover, unbounded, and his disinterestedness the proverb of the court. Party spirit has sought to injure him in the opinion of posterity; but its voice is now silenced, and justice is at length done to the memory of the good but weak old man. He was for a considerable period intrusted with the distribution of the church livings, and displayed considerable judgment in his task; but at length the Jesuits, wearied of his gentleness and forbearance, by which their more ambitious aims were frustrated, intimated to him that it was time he should retire from office. Père la Chaise, thus supported in his own views, consequently preferred his request even more urgently than ever to the monarch: he pleaded his increasing years, his failing intellect, his physical prostration, and implored His Majesty to leave him time to prepare himself for another world, and to suffer him to lay down a responsibility to which he was no longer equal.

Louis XIV. was, however, resolute; and neither the trembling limbs, the failing memory, nor the lethargic habits of the superannuated confessor could induce him to supply his place; and thus, on the specified days and hours he continued to shut himself up with this living corpse, and to regulate with him all the affairs of his conscience. At length, however, on the morrow of one of these periodical journeys to Versailles, Père la Chaise became so seriously indisposed that the sacraments were administered, and he had no sooner partaken of them than he requested that writing materials should be brought to his bedside, when,

with much difficulty, he addressed a somewhat lengthy letter to the king, which was immediately answered by the monarch with his own hand, and thenceforward the octagenarian confessor devoted himself entirely to God.

Two brother Jesuits watched beside his pillow, the Père le Tellier, provincial of the order, and the Père Daniel, director of the seminary. During the intervals of prayer these officials put two questions to the dying man, the first of which was, whether he had fulfilled all the requirements of his conscience? and the second, if, during his last hours of influence over the king, he had secured the welfare and honor of the society? To their inquiries he answered that his conscience was at peace, and that it would soon be seen that he had done his duty to the brotherhood. After having given this double assurance to his companions, the exhausted old man was permitted to expire in peace; and a few hours subsequently he breathed his last.

At the *lever* of Louis XIV. two other Jesuits presented themselves, and delivered to the king the keys of his late confessor's cabinet, in which he had left a number of papers, supposed to be confidential. They were courteously received; and in the presence of the assembled attendants the monarch moreover uttered an earnest panegyric on the virtues of the deceased ecclesiastic.

For several years Père la Chaise had strongly urged his royal penitent to select his successor from the Society of Jesus, earnestly impressing upon him both the avowed and covert power to which its members had attained, and the danger to which he would inevitably expose himself by choosing his confessor from any other brotherhood; and this was a suggestion which was not likely to be disregarded. The king was anxious to enjoy the remnant of his existence in peace; and he accordingly dispatched the dukes de Chevreuse and de Beauvilliers to ascertain which individual of the society was, in every point of

view, the most worthy of the honor he was about to confer, when their selection fell upon Père le Tellier.*

To Louis XIV. this Jesuit was personally unknown, nor had he even been aware of his existence until, a short time previous to his death, when Père la Chaise had included his name in a list which he delivered to the king, and in which he had particularized the individuals whom he considered the most eligible to succeed to the high office that must so soon become vacant.

Michel le Tellier was heart and soul a Jesuit, having passed through all the degrees of the society, and been in turn professor, theologian, rector, provincial, and controversialist. Jealous of the honor and advancement of his own order, he was merciless toward every other religious sect; an able and zealous proselytist, he was unscrupulous as to the means by which he insured his object; and self-centered and cold, he had no sympathy with his fellow-men, not even with those of his own confraternity, save as they advocated his principles and facilitated his measures.

His intellect, at once concentrated, determined, and indefatigable, was incessantly applied to questions of importance; and he disdained, or rather could not comprehend, the cultivation of those more refined and elegant accomplishments by which it would have been at once relieved and embellished. A resolute enemy of amusement and relaxation of every description, he exacted from others the same perpetual labor to which he was himself devoted; and, gifted with a frame of iron, and a power of mental endurance almost unparalleled, would never admit the necessity of rest. In disposition he was deceitful, treacherous, and cunning; ever misleading those who con-

* Michel le Tellier was a native of Vère in Normandy, was born in 1643, the son of a poor peasant, and in 1661 entered the Society of Jesuits. He pursued his studies in the college of Louis le Grand, and ultimately died in exile at La Flèche in 1719. He was a member of the French Academy.

fided in his sincerity, and then sneering at the dupes whom he had made.

Rapacious and exacting, his hand was extended only to receive; egotistical and avaricious, his heart was closed against every appeal; prompt to promise, and equally ready to falsify his pledge when it interfered with closer interests, he was unrelenting in his vengeance upon those who reproached him with his perfidy; ignorant of the most common courtesies of civilized society, and retaining all the original coarseness of his birth, he was nevertheless insolent and overbearing. In fine, he was a man to shun, and an enemy to deprecate, for his whole nature was absorbed in the single idea of self-aggrandizement and personal revenge. At once hard and impetuous, his heart resembled a volcano, whose lava, when it has ceased to burn, turns into stone.

On the occasion of his first presentation, Louis XIV. saw himself approached by a man of repulsive exterior, with a gloomy physiognomy, a ferocious squint, and a dogged but still ill-assured demeanor. As soon as he was announced, and had advanced into the cabinet, the monarch inquired, with a smile, if he were a relative as well as a namesake of his former minister.

“I, sire!” exclaimed the Jesuit, with a reverence so profound that it seemed as though he sought to humble himself to the very earth—“I a kinsman of the minister! I am, indeed, far from advancing such a claim, being merely the son of a poor peasant of Lower Normandy.”

Such was the advent of Michel le Tellier at court, where his name was soon to become the watchword of terror and persecution.*

In the same year France was visited by a fearful famine. The olive-trees of the south proved barren, the fruit-trees remained leafless, and brought forth no produce, while the corn perished on the ground before the seed had formed.

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

The storehouses throughout the kingdom being exhausted, an effort was made to import grain from the Levant, but the merchant-ships were captured by the vessels of the enemy; and while the French army was daily perishing from hunger, the Dutch were vending to the hostile forces, without increase of price, every description of provision.

Once more Louis XIV. sent his plate to the mint, but he did so in direct opposition to the advice of the chancellor and the controller-general, who represented in vain that, while such a measure was inefficient to supply the wants of the people, it betrayed the extent of their distress to the enemy. Famine rendered the populace desperate; and, for the first time, Louis the Great was condemned to see himself placarded ignominiously, not only in the public thoroughfares, but even upon the pedestals of the statues which had been erected in his honor. The dauphin, whose popularity had never failed, dared no longer be seen in the streets of the capital, for his carriage was no sooner recognized than it was surrounded by famishing crowds, who cried aloud to him for bread, and he was unable to comply with their demands. In this extremity a new tax was proposed, which was named the *tax of the tenths*, from its involving a tenth of the revenue—a burden so excessive that it was for a considerable time resisted by the monarch, who felt that, however it might be justified by the necessities of the crisis, the imposition was so heavy as to leave upon his mind considerable doubt as to his right to levy so extreme a contribution. This scruple was, however, removed by his confessor, and a week subsequently the edict was promulgated.

The conscience of the king was tranquillized by the recollection that his own sacrifice had produced the sum of four hundred thousand livres, that most of the principal nobles had followed his example, and that Madame de Maintenon no longer ate any but oaten bread; and under

these circumstances he did not even hesitate to propose a peace with Holland.

Well, indeed, might Louis XIV. sigh for peace, when he was compelled to witness the fearful exigencies which had been the result of his headlong and uncompromising ambition. He had lost, successively, the four great battles of Blenheim, Ramillies, Turin, and Malplaquet. By the first defeat he had been deprived not only of a formidable army, but also of all the country situated between the Danube and the Rhine, while the same engagement had cost the hereditary possessions of his ally, the Prince of Bavaria; Ramillies had involved the loss of the whole of Flanders, and a retreat which had only been arrested at the gates of Lille; Turin had wrested from him the possession of Italy, with the exception of a few fortified towns, and even these were ready to be surrendered to the Emperor of Germany in consideration of his permitting a free passage to the fifteen thousand men by whom they were then garrisoned; and, finally, the battle of Malplaquet had driven back the French arms from the banks of the Sambre to Valenciennes.

Nothing could exceed the gloom which hung over the court. For the first time it did not pause upon the royal threshold, but made its scowl visible even in the sculptured galleries of Versailles, and in the gilded saloons of Marly, where, instead of the heaps of gold which had so lately cumbered the tables and changed owners on the fortune of a card, the great and the haughty were to be seen testing the oats, and barley, and pulse, which had been fashioned into bread, in order to decide which would suffice the best, if not to satisfy, at least to cheat, the hunger of an exhausted populace.

The only resource of the king in this time of trouble he found in the affection and the fascinations of the Duchess de Bourgoyne, whose power over his heart continued unabated. She was, however, long ere she recovered her

spirits after the death of *Monsieur*; and she had scarcely done so, when, having imprudently bathed after eating a quantity of fruit, she became seriously indisposed; and as this illness occurred during the month of August, at which period the king was accustomed to visit Marly, and as his affection even for herself was not sufficiently disinterested to induce him either to defer his own removal, or to leave her to terminate her recovery at Versailles, she was compelled to bear him company—a fatigue which so greatly exasperated the worst symptoms of her disorder, that she was soon declared to be at the point of death, and this was no sooner the case than the monarch, Madame de Maintenon, and the Duke de Bourgoyne were in despair, believing that the prediction of the astrologer was about to be verified.

Youth and a happy constitution, however, ultimately triumphed, and she was no sooner declared convalescent than Louis XIV., anxious to return to Versailles, was about to destroy all the new-born hopes to which this amendment had given birth, by once more dragging her from her bed to perform a second journey; nor was it without much difficulty that the entreaties of Madame de Maintenon, and the declaration of the physicians that this new exertion must inevitably prove fatal, prevailed with him to delay his departure for another week, at the termination of which interval the invalid was transported from her bed at Meudon, to that at Versailles, where she was compelled to remain a prisoner for a considerable period.

The convalescence of the duchess was still progressing when a new courtier made his appearance in the royal circle, who at once attracted universal attention. Francis Armand, Duke de Fronsac, subsequently so famous under the reign of Louis XV. as the Duke de Richelieu, was then barely fifteen years of age, and had already become the husband of Mademoiselle de Noailles, in virtue of a compact made between their mutual parents three years

before his birth. The resolute estrangement of the boy-duke from his enforced bride, combined with his extraordinary personal beauty and fearless disposition, at once made him the idol of the court, where he had no sooner arrived than he became passionately attached to the Duchess de Bourgoyne, who, on her side, received his homage with an imprudence which soon rendered their mutual preference a matter of so much publicity that the king, indignant alike at the presumption of De Fronsac and the levity of his granddaughter, condemned the young duke to the Bastille, where, for fourteen months, he remained a close prisoner, little suspecting that he was then merely serving his apprenticeship to captivity, and that he was fated to find himself, on four different occasions, an inmate of the same royal and gloomy fortress.

Amid all these intrigues the duchess had, meanwhile, become the mother of two sons, one of whom was already dead, while the other was not long destined to survive, and who had each received at its birth the appellation of Duke de Bretagne.*

Three important events took place in the family of Louis XIV. during the year 1710: the death of the Duke de Bourbon-Condé, his son-in-law; the marriage of his grandson, the Duke de Berri; and the rank conceded to the offspring of the Duke du Maine.

M. de Bourbon survived his father, the prince Henri Jules de Condé, only eleven months; and thus passed his whole life in a state of mental and moral vassalage to a stern and capricious father. He was brave, passionate, generous, and satirical, sparing neither friend nor foe in his moments of anger or in his intervals of bitterness, and at once a fond, a jealous, and an imperious husband. By his death a second of the daughters of the king became a widow.

After speaking of a prince who at once destroyed his

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

own happiness and that of those about him, turn we to another, whose amiable qualities, estimable virtues, and winning disposition, secured to him the hearts of all around him, save, unfortunately, that over which he the most strenuously sought to obtain an empire. The Duke de Berri, the third son of the dauphin, was at once good-looking and graceful, fond of society and social pleasures, accessible and courteous, utterly devoid of personal vanity, but by no means deficient in dignity. Full of good sense and manliness, an accomplished listener, and of sound judgment, he was truthful, just, and pious, but without either asceticism or gloom. Possessed of considerable firmness, he could not endure restraint—a fact which induced apprehensions that, as he attained to manhood, he would not prove so amenable as might be desired in a younger branch of the royal family—and, in consequence, he received so many and such violent checks, that he became timid and embarrassed in all affairs of business. His governors and preceptors, while endeavoring to suppress his moral energies, had labored to fix his attention upon literature and science, but they only succeeded in disgusting him with both; and like the dauphin, of whom he was the favorite child, this disgust endured throughout his life. He also resembled his father in his dread of Louis XIV., and trembled when he addressed him on any subject more serious than a game of hazard or the details of a hunt.

Two princesses aspired to his hand for their daughters—the Duchess de Bourbon and the Duchess d'Orleans. The first was high in the favor of the dauphin, and the second in that of Madame de Maintenon, with whom she cultivated a close friendship, and of whose influence she had the greatest need, in order to secure the success of her hopes. Mademoiselle d'Orleans, even at an early age, was dissipated, vain of her personal charms, and initiated into all the vices of a court life. Slander had already been busy with her name; but she was no sooner made aware of the pos-

sibility which there existed of her one day becoming the wife of the Duke de Berri, than she conducted herself with so much art, and cast so impervious a veil over her natural propensities, that for two years previously to her marriage Madame de Maintenon heard constant encomiums upon her modesty and retiring habits.

Convinced that her fortune depended upon her deportment, Mademoiselle d'Orleans at Versailles was at once so graceful and so exemplary that no suspicion was entertained of her real disposition; and the constraint to which she thus voluntarily subjected herself was the less extraordinary, as at the age of twelve years, some time before she appeared at court, on discovering that she was likely to increase in size, and thus to mar her beauty, she had resolutely condemned herself to abstinence and exercise, although naturally both sensual and indolent.*

The marriage proved unfortunate. The extreme affection of the prince, and the readiness with which he acceded to the caprices of his beautiful young wife, might have produced a happy effect upon a less faulty disposition, but could have no such result as regarded the new duchess, who, from the very day succeeding their union, revenged herself upon the restraint of the last two years, and showed herself in all her haughtiness and impropriety. For her husband she disdained even to affect attachment, openly ridiculing his intellect, and making a jest of what she termed his bigotry. Her egotism and irregularity were a constant misery to the duke, who, thrall'd as he was by her extreme loveliness, could not remain blind to her vices; while the Duchess de Bourgoyne, who had strenuously exerted herself to forward the marriage, and who had believed that it would prove a new source of happiness to herself, was compelled to feel that she had only raised up another and a formidable enemy, who, jealous of her influence over the king, and of the increasing favor of her hus-

* Lettres de Madame de Caylus.

band, was covertly exerting every stratagem to separate the brothers, in which attempt she was, however, frustrated by their mutual affection.

While zealously employed in securing advantageous establishments to his daughters, Louis XIV. had, however, by no means been unmindful of the interests of his legitimated sons ; and a feeling of compunction made him look with different eyes upon the children who had been born to the throne and those who could advance their claim only through himself. He regarded the first as the offspring of the nation, great in themselves, and requiring no extraneous privileges ; while he looked upon the last as blameless but unfortunate beings, separated by law from the crown, and depending solely upon his own power.

Pride and affection alike urged their cause ; and to withdraw them from their position of enforced inferiority, was a resolution which flattered his vanity as much as it gratified his heart. In 1694 Louis XIV. had given, both to the Duke du Maine and to the Count de Toulouse, the precedence over all the other peers ; but this distinction was merely personal, and the children of the Duke du Maine were without tangible rank. The reflection was painful to him ; and, accordingly, on the evening of the 15th of March, 1710, when he had risen from supper, and given the order of the day according to his usual habit, he walked with even more than his accustomed gravity to the outer cabinet, where he was followed by the court ; and placing himself before his *fauteuil*, but still remaining seated, he glanced slowly round the circle, and then, without addressing any particular individual, he declared that from that hour he gave to the children of the Duke du Maine the same rank and the same honors held by their father.

A deep silence followed this announcement, and before it ceased the monarch passed on into his private closet, desiring the dauphin and the Duke de Bourgoyne to follow. The princes obeyed ; and then, for the first time in his life,

the proud and absolute sovereign humbled himself before his son and his grandson, and entreated them, when they should reign in their turn, to secure to the offspring of the Duke du Maine the privileges which he had just accorded to them, from affection for himself, and in consideration of his attachments for their parents; adding that he was then old, and that he asked this favor of them out of the respect which they would bear to his memory.

The princes remained silent; and, at length, hopeless of receiving an answer, the king summoned to the conference the Duke du Maine, who was pacing the outer cabinet, where no word had yet been spoken; and, leaning heavily upon his shoulder in order to compel him to bend before the princes, he again reiterated his request, to which they replied only by a few inaudible words. The Duke du Maine, becoming alarmed lest they should resist the appeal, then voluntarily moved a step forward, and prepared to throw himself at their feet, when Louis XIV., with tears streaming from his eyes, implored the dauphin and his son to embrace the duke in his presence, as an earnest of their consent. The princes, more and more bewildered, merely, however, stammered a few more inarticulate and unmeaning words, and the king walked back to his chair.

All was still silent; and after the pause of a moment he again glanced round the assembly, observing that it would afford him pleasure that the court should offer their congratulations to the Duke du Maine—a command which was complied with on the instant; and while the discomfited courtiers were engaged in this ungenial duty, an order was given by the monarch to the grand master of the ceremonies to record the event in his register.

The crowd had, however, no sooner quitted the state apartments than a general murmur rose on all sides. The feelings of the dauphin and the Duke de Bourgoyne had been sufficiently visible throughout the whole ceremony to assure the assistants that by them at least the common dis-

content would be appreciated; nor was it long ere the king, whose spies were dispersed throughout the palace, was informed of the universal clamor raised against the measure which he had just adopted; and, wounded and alarmed, he was on the point of retracting his given promise, when Madame de Maintenon, by whom he had been urged to this unpopular demonstration, called to her aid the Duke and Duchess du Maine, who, assisted by their partisans, surrounded the wavering monarch with flatteries and encomiums, expatiating on his power, his justice, and his generosity, and assuring him that the promptitude with which his wishes had been obeyed by the whole court sufficiently testified the ardor with which they entered into his views, while the citizens were, on their side, unanimous in their applause.

Louis XIV. was old: in his most palmy days he had been gratified by the servility of those about him; and now, when he was bowed by years, and that his laurels had been rudely rent, he clung more tenaciously than ever to his power of compelling obedience. For a while he hesitated; but the blandishments of his daughter-in-law, the arguments of Madame de Maintenon, and the entreaties of the Duke du Maine proved irresistible, and the decision was not revoked.*

The famous victory of Villa Viciosa, gained by the Duke de Vendôme, together with the death of the Emperor Joseph about this period, infused new life into the desponding kingdom of France. The league formerly formed against Louis XIV. had for its object to prevent his possessing at once France, Spain, America, Lombardy, and the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily; and it was now immediately felt that the succession of Charles VI. to the crown of Austria, the empire of Germany, and the pretensions of his father to Spain and America, would, if ratified by the other powers, become as fatal an imprudence as that

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

which they had previously labored to prevent, and render the Emperor of Germany as powerful as they had dreaded to behold the King of France.

Paris was in a turmoil of delight; Versailles teemed with joy and gratulation. The glories of past years appeared to live again; but the old age of Louis XIV. was fated to expiate the errors of his youth. In April, 1711, the dauphin, when on his way to Meudon, encountered at Chaville a priest who was carrying the holy viaticum to a dying man. He immediately stopped his carriage, alighted, and with the Duchess de Bourgoyne, by whom he was accompanied, knelt until the priest had passed, when, on inquiring of what malady the sufferer was dying, he was informed that it was small-pox. This disorder was the perpetual terror of the dauphin, who had been only slightly affected by it in his youth, and he shuddered at the reply, although at the moment he made no remark; but on the same evening, when conversing with his physician, he observed that he should be by no means surprised if, in a few days, he were attacked by the disease.

On the following day he rose at his usual hour, in order to attend a wolf hunt, but, while dressing, he became faint, and fell back in his chair. His physician immediately compelled him to return to bed; and he had scarcely complied ere he was seized with fever. An hour subsequently the king was informed of his indisposition; but he attached no importance to the circumstance, believing it to be merely one of those temporary ailments to which the prince was subject. The Duke and Duchess de Bourgoyne, however, although far from apprehending the extent of the danger, hurried to his bedside, and lavished upon him all the care and watchfulness which must otherwise have devolved upon his attendants; nor did they quit him for an instant until they were compelled to attend the supper of the king, whom they assured of the gravity of the dauphin's attack.

On the ensuing morning Louis XIV. was assured, on his awaking, that the life of the prince was in extreme peril, when he instantly declared that he should hasten to Meudon, and remain there, whatever might be the nature of the disease, until the recovery of his son, forbidding at the same time that any one should follow him who had not previously had the small-pox, particularly any member of the royal family.

The disease in due time declared itself, and the prince rallied so perceptibly that he was believed to be out of danger—an announcement which so thoroughly tranquilized the king that he presided at the council, and worked with his ministers as usual, paying two and sometimes three visits a-day to the invalid, and on every occasion approaching his bedside. As the convalescence progressed, the Dames de la Halle, the faithful adherents of the dauphin, once more appeared to tender their congratulations; and the prince, grateful for this unswerving attachment, caused them once more to be admitted to his chamber—an indulgence which they repaid with such enthusiasm that they rushed toward his bed, and kissed his feet through the coverlet; after which they retired again to sing a *Te Deum*, and to rejoice the capital with the intelligence of the recovery.

Thus did things progress until the 14th, when MONSIEUR complained of increased suffering; his face became frightfully swelled, his fever augmented, and he fell into delirium. The Princess de Conti approached his bed, and spoke to him, but he did not recognize her.

At four in the afternoon he had sunk so perceptibly that his physician proposed additional advice; but Fagon, who was present, positively refused to admit any further aid, and peremptorily forbade that the monarch should be informed of this relapse until he had supped; and, accordingly, the king was actually at table while the august invalid continued to sink in so rapid a manner that all those about him were at once terrified and bewildered.

Fagon himself, alarmed at the responsibility which he had assumed, applied one remedy upon another, but all were without effect, while the curate of Meudon, who went every evening to the palace to ascertain the health of the prince, on reaching the stair-case, finding the doors open and the attendants absent, entered at once into the sick-chamber, and rushing toward the dying man, flung himself upon his knees, and began to talk to him of another world.

The dauphin was still conscious, but he had nearly lost the power of articulation. The priest, however, wrung from him a few disjointed words, intended as a confession, dictated to him a few prayers, which the expiring dauphin attempted to follow, as he beat his breast feebly with his nerveless hand, and the curate was repaid for his pious zeal by the gentle pressure of the sick man's fingers.

The king had just risen from table when Fagon met him with a look of terror, exclaiming that there was no longer any hope, for that the dauphin was then dying.

Louis XIV. staggered, and had nearly fallen; but rallying on the instant, he hurried toward the chamber of his son, and was about to enter, when the Princess de Conti thrust him back, exclaiming that he must henceforward think only of himself. The blow was too sudden, and the aged monarch fainted upon a sofa, which he afterward refused to quit, demanding of every one who left the chamber if his son were indeed beyond help. Madame de Maintenon endeavored in vain to induce him to retire; he persisted in his determination to remain upon the spot until the dauphin was no longer in life.

The last agony endured throughout an hour, and for the whole of that period Louis XIV. sat near the door of the death-room, until at length Fagon announced that all was over; when he tottered toward his chamber, supported by Madame de Maintenon, the Duchess de Bourgoyne, and the Princess de Conti; and the king had no sooner

left Meudon than all the courtiers who were in the palace hurried, as usual, to escape in their turn, taking possession of the first carriages which drew up, without waiting to ascertain the names of their owners. In half an hour Meudon was deserted.

The Feuillants,* who, according to the privilege of their order, claimed the right of praying beside the body of the prince, were not permitted to perform this sacred duty; and the remains of the dauphin were left during forty-eight hours in the chapel, perfectly deserted, until Dumont, the faithful attendant of MONSEIGNEUR, indignant at so indecent a disregard of the common usages of civilized society, summoned from their cloister six Capuchin monks of the convent of Meudon, who, in default of the privileged Feuillants, repeated the service for the dead, and performed the customary duties toward the body of the prince.

These preparatory rites were, however, very inefficiently concluded; for the corpse was deposited unembalmed in a plain coffin, standing upon tressels, which was not even covered by the royal pall sprinkled with *fleurs-de-lis*, habitually used for members of the royal family, but simply by that of the parish church of Meudon, while the funeral procession was equally undignified and squalid. The body was placed in a bright-colored carriage, which, being too short, permitted a portion of the coffin to appear

* A religious fraternity which originated at Feuillants, a village near Rieux (Upper Garonne) in 1575, and was founded by John de la Barrière. The monks went barefooted and bareheaded, slept on planks, used only earthen vessels, and ate upon their knees; but a general chapter of the order held in 1595 ameliorated in some degree the severity of these rules. The order was divided into two congregations—that of France being known as Our Lady of the Feuillants, and that of Italy as the Reformed Brothers of St. Bernard. The costume was a white robe without a scapulary, a hood of the same color, round in the front, and terminating in a point behind. The Feuillants possessed in France eighty communities and an hospital.

beyond it; and not a single mourning-coach followed to the grave the son of Louis XIV. and the heir to the throne of France.

The indignation of the populace, as this strange procession made its way to the royal vaults of St. Denis, was loudly and fearlessly expressed. "Why did they not demand a subscription?" was asked by several in the crowd; "the citizens of Paris would gladly have contributed a million of livres to have saved the court so deep a degradation as this!" "Where," demanded others, "are the dukes of Bourgoyne and Berri? Where are the sons of the dead prince?" but they asked in vain: those who followed the dauphin to his last resting place were knit to him by no ties of blood.*

The hands of strangers stretched him in his tomb.

The king regretted in the dead prince a respectful son, whose docility and obedience had never failed; while the nation saw the hope which it had entertained from the known goodness of his character frustrated forever. To the courtiers, however, his death was a relief; for they had begun to feel their position difficult, between a monarch whose robust old age gave promise of a prolonged life, and a prince who, in his fiftieth year, had begun to weary of his dependence.

The actual blank left by his death was merely that occasioned by his high station; for as regarded his individuality he was almost *nul*. Obstinate beyond measure, his life had been a mere tissue of puerilities, to which he had attached all the importance that others would have reserved for great and striking events. Mild from indolence rather than from temperament, he was fearful of yielding to anger from the disagreeable effect which it invariably produced upon his system; while, familiar to excess with his attendants, he entered into the most minute details of their several duties and expenditure, and ques-

* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

tioned them in a manner which occasionally produced the most extraordinary impression.

Utterly insensible to the sorrows or sufferings of others, and reserved to a degree which closed his lips upon every subject save those in which he chanced to be immediately interested, he never, throughout the whole of their acquaintance, made a single communication even to Mademoiselle Choin on politics, or any other topic of public interest; and the only occasion upon which he ever evinced any anxiety as to her own fate in the event of his death, was when he departed for the army, and on taking leave placed a paper in her hand which he desired her to read. This was a will, in which he had bequeathed to her an income of a hundred thousand livres; but Mademoiselle Choin had no sooner cast her eyes over the document than she tore it into fragments, remarking that while he lived she could desire no such sacrifice, and that, should she have the misfortune to survive him, a thousand crowns annually would suffice for her subsistence in a convent, which amount she had already inherited from her family.

At the death of the prince Mademoiselle Choin redeemed her word. She had never received from her royal lover (or husband) more than sixteen hundred louis each year, which he paid her every quarter, placing the money in her hand on the appointed day, without the subtraction or addition of a livre. Nor was he less matter-of-fact at the period of his death, having taken Mademoiselle Choin strictly at her word, and never once mentioned her name in any one of the multitudinous papers which he left behind him. The monarch was, however, more generous; for upon the demise of the dauphin he conferred upon her, unsolicited, a pension of ten thousand livres, when she immediately withdrew from the court, and, establishing herself at Paris, lived to an advanced age in perfect retirement.

With the dauphin expired the cabal of Meudon, which had long been tottering to its fall. The Prince de Vaude-

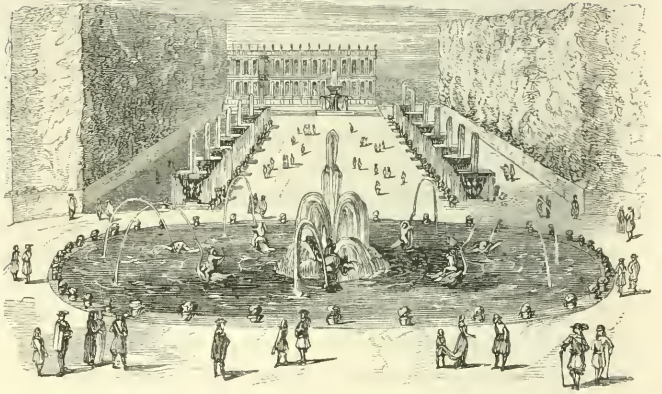
mont,* who had been its chief support, had lost his favor in consequence of the defection of the princes of Lorraine, who were his cousins, and whose conduct he was suspected to have sanctioned, and had consequently no hold upon the court save through his nieces, the ladies Lillebonne; while even this was broken by the marriage of Elizabeth with Louis de Melun, prince of Epinoi, who, once secure herself, cultivated the friendship of Madame de Maintenon, to whom she revealed the secrets of her party, in order to insure her reception by the court; while her sister, who could not brook mere toleration where she had so long reigned through the favor of the dauphin, and was moreover conscious that she had, by her ill offices, irritated the Duchess de Bourgoyne, departed for Lorraine with her uncle, where she proposed to reside for a few months, until she had determined her future plans.

During that period, the small-pox having carried off several of the children of the Duchess de Lorraine, and among others a daughter of eight years of age, whom she had recently caused to be elected Abbess of Remiremont, the abbey was offered to the acceptance of Mademoiselle de Lillebonne, and she succeeded to the dignity with an income of forty thousand livres.

After this event the remainder of the circle dispersed. The two daughters of the king, who had been sincerely attached to the dauphin, were very differently affected by his loss. The Princess de Conti withdrew into comparative retirement, and found consolation in the society of a few chosen friends, by whom she was continually surrounded; while the grief of the Duchess de Bourbon-Condé, which was at first immoderate, was not lessened by the position in which she found herself when deprived of his support. Disliked by Madame de Maintenon, in open rupture not

* The Prince de Vaudemont was celebrated for his famous retreat before the Marshal de Villeroy, after the battle of Namur, when he was about to be attacked by an army of 24,000 men.

only with the Duchess de Bourgoyne, but also with the Duke du Maine, and with the Duchess d'Orleans, her sister, she was, moreover, at law with her husband's family, destitute of one powerful friend, and the mother of a son barely eighteen years of age, two daughters approaching to womanhood, over whom she had already lost all control, and several children yet infants. In this position she found herself compelled to regret even her husband and her father-in-law, for whose loss she had never previously mourned; but as hers was a nature by no means adapted to despondency, she shortly shook off her grief, and, plunging into a vortex of pleasure and dissipation, became once more the haughty and unprincipled woman of former days.



CHAPTER XXVII.

Increasing Confidence of Louis XIV. in the Duke de Bourgoyne; its Effect upon his Character; his Court; his Mode of Life; his Political Liberality—Heedlessness and ready Wit of the Dauphiness—The fatal Present—The Dauphiness poisoned; her Death—Regrets of the Nation—Sickness and Death of the Dauphin—Despair of Louis XIV.—The Duke de Bretagne declared Dauphin; his Death—The treble Interment—The Duchess de Ventadour—Narrow Escape of the Duke d'Anjou—Death of the Duke de Berri—Accusation against the Duke d'Orleans—Popular Tumult—Court Factions—The Duke d'Orleans applies to be put on his Trial; is refused—Mediation of M. de Pontchartrain—Departure of the Duke from Paris—Unpopularity of Louis XIV.—Profligacy of the Duchess de Berri—Private Sorrows of the King.

LOUIS XIV., after the death of his son, became more unreserved with the Duke de Bourgoyne, who, on the demise of his father, assumed in his turn the title of dauphin.

He forthwith began to confide to him the national diplomacy, and to invest him with an importance to which he had never hitherto attained; and the result of this policy was immediately perceptible. The prince, who had until this period been timid, self-centered, constrained, and cold, become affable, accessible, and less disposed to render inconveniently conspicuous his extraordinary erudition; by which (perhaps involuntary) habit he had estranged the late dauphin—who, conscious of his own mental deficiency, could not brook the superiority of his son—and occasionally humbled the king, who was the more inclined to take offense upon the slightest pretext, that Madame de Maintenon spared no exertion to injure the duke in the estimation of the monarch, in order that he should not obtain credit in the event of his complaining of the levity of his wife.*

Hitherto M. de Bourgoyne had appeared, when in the court circle, like a man who felt that he was wasting time which might have been more worthily employed; shrinking before the mortifications to which he was exposed from the Meudon cabal, and spending entire days in his study, where he divided his hours between works of devotion and books of science. The surprise was consequently great and general when he was seen to unbend, and to show himself frequently in public; to do the honors of Marly with a face beaming in smiles, and gradually to substitute for the puerilities which had heretofore composed the conversation of the circle, subjects combining interest with amusement; which, from their very novelty, enchained the attention of the courtiers, who felt that they were obtaining information even while the time passed more speedily than it had ever previously done, either at the gaming-table or in the idle gossip of the court.

It is, however, by no means doubtful that, blended with

* Letters de Madame Charlotte-Elizabeth de Bavière, Duchesse d'Orleans.

this new faculty of enjoyment, the noble guests of Meudon found an added charm in the eloquence and intellect of their new idol, when they remembered that he was now the heir to the French throne, and contemplated the promise which he gave of filling it with a dignity and ability far superior to those which had been possessed by his father. Nothing could exceed the rapidity with which he won the admiration, the esteem, and the attachment of those with whom he came into contact, and the vehemence with which they disclaimed their former estimate of his character. The Duke de Beauvilliers was besieged with exclamations of wonder, but he admitted no change in the actual disposition of his pupil; such as he now appeared in public, as he declared, such he had always been in private, while it was merely circumstances which had developed his natural qualities, and not those qualities which had been the growth of circumstances.

Madame de Maintenon, enchanted by the popularity of the Duke de Bourgoyne, because it reflected upon the dauphiness, and delighted to see the grandson of the king give promise of a future fraught with honor, also abdicated all her ill will, and, by embracing his interests and forwarding his views, materially augmented the tardy attachment of the king himself. She initiated the prince into the demeanor most agreeable to the jealous self-worship of Louis XIV., and taught him at once to adopt a more marked expression of respect and submission to his will than he had hitherto done, and to assume a more courtier-like assiduity about his person, while these attentions, strengthened by the tenderness felt by the king for the young duchess, soon produced a marked alteration in his deportment to the dauphin. Louis XIV. had never ceased to enact the sovereign toward his son, but he became a father, and an indulgent one, to his grandson.

The dauphin was at this period nearly thirty years of age, and although his career was destined to be short, it

was eminently useful to the nation, for he applied himself with vigor to the studies necessary to enable him to perform the duties to which he was apparently about to be called at no very distant period ; while, in order efficiently to master this new science, he abandoned all minor pursuits, and spent his time between his religious exercises, which he somewhat abridged, and the public business, to which he paid a zealous and unwearied attention. The more he found himself agreeable and necessary to the monarch, the more submissive and self-abnegating he became, nor did he once betray a symptom of impatience to ascend the throne, upon whose step he already stood.

In his own immediate circle he showed himself anxious to be surrounded only by men of character and probity ; rejected personal pomp as a mere accessory, wearisome in its action, and injurious to the interests of the people, and carried his respect for the public privileges so far as to declare that sovereigns were made for their people, and not the people for their sovereigns—a great but hitherto unacknowledged truth, which he boldly uttered unchidden in the very presence of Louis XIV. himself.

Nor was the dauphiness more constrained in the expression of her sentiments. She had now attained her twenty-seventh year, and although the graces of her girlhood had vanished, she had retained the fascinations which were originally its greatest charm, and had superadded to these the more matured dignity of graceful womanhood. At once playful and strong-minded, the king appreciated her judgment while he was soothed by her tenderness, and not even her faults had been able to alienate for a moment the affection which he had vowed to her from their first meeting.

A ready wit, which repaired the imprudence of a thoughtless disposition, was conspicuous throughout her life, and was evinced on one occasion when the conversation had turned upon the policy of Aune of England. “Aunt,”

she exclaimed heedlessly to Madame de Maintenon, "it must be confessed that in England the queens govern their kingdom more judiciously than the kings;" but immediately conscious of a mistake, perhaps more calculated than any other to wound and anger Louis XIV., she continued, in the same breath, "Do you know why? Because it is generally women who are influential under a king, and men who influence the decisions of a queen."*

On the 3d of February, 1712, the Duke de Noailles presented to the dauphiness a box of Spanish snuff, with which she was delighted; and the rather perhaps that it was a habit in which she indulged unknown to the king, whose abhorrence of tobacco in every shape we have elsewhere noticed. After having profited by this present, the duchess placed the box upon a table in her study, where she could recur to it at pleasure, while no one had access to the apartment without her special permission. On the 5th she spent a considerable part of the day with the monarch, in continual exertions to interest and amuse him, and at five o'clock retired to her apartments, where she several times had recourse to the forbidden luxury. Two hours subsequently she was attacked by shivering fits which menaced fever, and threw herself upon her bed, in order to recover sufficient strength to enable her to attend the supper of the king; but she soon found herself so much worse that she had neither energy nor courage to undertake such a fatigue.

On the following morning, however, after having suffered severely from fever throughout the night, she made an effort to rise, and although sick and stupefied, still contrived to perform her usual duties; but after sunset had a relapse which deprived her of rest, and on the morrow she complained of a sharp and settled pain above one of her temples, which was so excruciating that when the visit of the king was announced to her, she sent to implore him

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

not to enter her chamber. A few hours subsequently she became delirious, and continued so until the following day, the disease resisting every remedy, although she was copiously bled, and that opium was administered in large doses.

So sudden and extraordinary an indisposition deluged the court with dark and indignant rumors, and as at that period few sudden deaths had occurred which were not traced to other than natural causes, all the immediate attendants of the dauphiness began to question each other upon the several incidents which had preceded the attack; when it was suddenly remembered, that on the evening of the 5th, when the princess was compelled to retire to bed, she had expressed a desire to relieve her head by having recourse to the powerful snuff of the Duke de Noailles, and directed one of her ladies of honor to bring the box. The Duchess de Lude had obeyed; but she sought throughout the closet in vain—the box had disappeared; another and another lady pursued the search, but with the same result; and ultimately the dauphiness, after expressing her disappointment, desired that no further notice should be taken of the circumstance, lest it should reach the ears of the king. Now, however, it flashed terrible conviction upon the minds of her attendants. The donor himself was above suspicion, for his ardent affection for the dauphiness was well known; but there no longer existed a doubt among those who were in the secret, that, by whomsoever introduced, the poison under whose effects their beloved dauphiness was now suffering had been conveyed in that fatal snuff. Still, however, they remained silent, lest by avowing the fact they should excite the displeasure of the monarch against their mistress.

During the night of the 9th the princess fell into a stupor, despite the fever which still continued to increase in violence, and only partially recovered her consciousness at short and infrequent intervals. Certain appearances

upon her skin for a time indicated an attack of measles, but this hope vanished within four-and-twenty hours; and on the following day her condition was considered to be so hopeless, that it was intimated to her that it would be desirable to summon her confessor. This advice agitated and alarmed the dauphiness, who had not apprehended danger, although she at once consented to the proposition; but as she deferred commanding his presence, he at length entered her chamber unbidden, and proceeded to prepare her for confession. As she heard his voice, she looked toward him, to signify that she understood his exhortation, but afterward, to his great surprise, remained resolutely silent.

As it was evident that she was rapidly sinking, and equally apparent that from some inexplicable cause she felt unwilling to unburden her conscience to himself, the anxious ecclesiastic suggested to her that this was no moment for ceremony, and that, should his conjecture be a correct one, he implored her to name the individual whom she desired to see; when she immediately indicated M. Bailly, a priest of the Versailles mission. He was, however, absent; and the princess ultimately consented to receive a monk of the Order of St. Francis, named Noël, who was immediately summoned.

The repugnance evinced by Madame de Bourgoyne to confer her last confidence upon her own confessor, to whom she had ever appeared greatly attached, produced an unpleasant impression on the minds of those about her, and created unfavorable surmises as to the nature of the secrets which she had shrunk from divulging, save to a stranger. Her wishes were, however, held sacred, and on the arrival of the new functionary, the dauphin, who had never quitted her bedside since the moment in which he ascertained her danger, left the room in a state of mental agony, which, superadded to the fatigue that he had undergone, had prostrated his strength.

The confession occupied a considerable time, and at its close the monk forthwith administered extreme unction to his penitent, which he had scarcely done when the holy viaticum was announced, and the king hastened to meet it at the foot of the great stair-case. When she had communicated, the dauphiness requested that the service for the dying might be read ; but she was informed that her case was not yet altogether hopeless, and was advised to make an effort to sleep.

During this time a medical consultation had been held, and it was decided that the princess should be bled in the foot, and in the event of the failure of this remedy, that an emetic should be subsequently administered—the whole science of medicine under Louis XIV. being comprised in these two operations, which, on this occasion, however, utterly failed in producing any amendment ; while on the succeeding day the disorder increased so rapidly that those around the invalid became thoroughly bewildered, and permitted every one who chose to enter her chamber, although the king was still seated near her bed. Toward the evening Louis XIV. was with difficulty prevailed upon to retire, and he had not reached the door of the palace when she expired. At the foot of the great stair-case he was assisted into his carriage, drowned in tears, and so crushed by grief that he returned immediately to Marly with Madame de Maintenon, whose anguish was equal to his own ; while neither the one nor the other had courage to see the dauphin before they left the house of death.

The decease of the young and amiable princess involved universal mourning, but none suffered so bitterly as her husband. Her apartment had been immediately above that of the dauphin, who, when banished from the dying bed of the sufferer by the express command of the king, had passed hours of agony, listening to every sound ; but as those which were now to succeed would necessarily prove even more unendurable, he was at length prevailed

upon to leave the palace, and at seven in the morning of the 13th he threw himself into his traveling-carriage and was conveyed to Marly, where he had scarcely strength to totter to his room. The king, who was immediately apprised of his arrival, hastened to weep with him over their mutual loss; but he had no sooner looked attentively into his countenance, than he was startled at the change that the last two days, during which they had not met, had produced in his whole appearance, for his eyes were dilated and flamed with an unnatural brilliancy, while his face was covered with livid stains. Louis XIV., alarmed by these fatal symptoms, with which he had unfortunately become too familiar, instantly summoned his physicians, who declared the dauphin to be seriously indisposed, and advised him to lose no time in retiring to his bed. Their advice was followed, and once more the poor old king found himself surrounded by the terrors of another death-scene.

On the morrow the mysterious disease had made alarming progress, and the prince announced his conviction that he was not destined to survive many days; but this was so frightful an anticipation that his physicians refused to admit the possibility of such a result. On the 17th, however, his agony became so intense that he declared his entrails were on fire, and during the ensuing night sent to request that the king would permit him to receive the holy communion in his chamber. This was conceded; and at half-past seven he partook of the sacrament, which he survived only one hour.

When the fatal truth was conveyed to the aged and heart-stricken monarch, who sat on his velvet cushions in the apartment of Madame de Maintenon, with his head bent down upon his breast, and his fingers tightly clasped over the hand of the Duke de Berri, who was seated at his feet, he flung his arms passionately about the neck of the young prince, exclaiming in an accent of anguish which sounded

like the last cry of despair—"Alas, my son, you alone are now left to me!"

It was a terrible moment, and the heart of the monarch sunk under the sense of his bereavement. He dared not look back upon the past, and he shuddered at the contemplation of the future. Death was about him on every side, smiting down the young and the great, and making his gilded palace at once a marvel and a mockery. None talked of consolation, for none knew whence it could come, and the gloom had fastened alike upon the hearts of all.

On the death of the Duke de Bourgoyne, the title of dauphin descended to his elder son, the Duke de Bretagne, but the name was destined to be unfortunate. This was the third son of the unhappy prince who had borne the same designation. Two were already in their graves; and only sixteen days after the decease of their father, the new dauphin and his infant brother, the Duke d'Anjou, sickened in their turn. The king felt that the hand of God was outstretched against his house; and on the first announcement of this new misfortune, commanded that they should both be baptized upon the instant.

The Duke de Bretagne had just attained his fifth year, and the Duke d'Anjou his second; and for a short time hopes were entertained that the attack might prove merely to be one of those transitory indispositions to which children are frequently subject. This error, however, was of brief duration, for on the second day the Duke de Bretagne breathed his last, and the same funeral car conveyed to the vaults of St. Denis the father, the mother, and the child.

The Duke de Bretagne had no sooner expired than the Duchess de Ventadour* established herself at the bedside of his suffering brother, where, assisted by her women, she took the whole responsibility upon herself, resisted alike

* Mademoiselle d'Houdincourt, subsequently Duchess de Ventadour, and lady of honor to *Madame*.

entreaties and menaces, and refused to allow the infant-prince either to be bled or to swallow any drug prescribed by the physicians. Fearing, moreover, that the rumors of poison which were daily gaining ground were only too well founded, she procured from a friend an antidote, which she had received from the Duke of Savoy, and by which her own life had been some time before preserved; and to this antidote, which she immediately administered to the Duke d'Anjou, his escape from death was universally attributed.*

This opinion was the more feasible as the cry of poison had become general, and the unfortunate dauphin had been so fully convinced of the nature of his malady, that it was ascertained he had sent, while upon his bed of death, to entreat the monarch to be careful of his own life, and to avoid all contact with whatever did not reach him through sure and trustworthy hands. In this frightful conviction he had himself expired; and in this frightful conviction the sovereign of a great nation, already bowed beneath the infirmities of age and the pressure of moral suffering, was destined to live on, powerless against the evil which was mowing down all he loved, and haunted by the apprehension that he might, in his turn, become its victim.

Nor was the outstretched hand of destruction yet withdrawn. On the 4th of May, 1714, after an illness of four brief days, the Duke de Berri, to whom, in his hour of bitter bereavement Louis XIV. had clung, as to the last prop of his declining age, expired under an exhibition of the same symptoms which had destroyed his brother. He had just attained his twenty-eighth year, and was the handsomest and the most amiable of the three sons of MONSEIGNEUR, but also the most ignorant, his preceptors never having succeeded in enabling him to do more than read and write—a fact which had the effect, when he had reached manhood, of rendering him so diffident that he never ven-

* Louis XIV. et son Siècle.

tured to converse with any one save his most intimate friends, lest he should expose himself by the utterance of some absurdity.

Once more the fearful outcry which had already desolated France was heard ; and this time its echo penetrated not only throughout the capital, but even into the provinces and foreign nations, which witnessed with terror and indignation the determined progress of a crime that threatened to leave the throne of France shorn of all natural support, and the last years of an aged monarch isolated and hopeless.

Of the existence of poison in this case, also, no doubt could indeed remain ; and although the French people, guided to such a suspicion by some unacknowledged but powerful influence, still continued to fasten the crime upon the Duke d'Orleans, it is rendered probable by circumstances that in this instance it might have been justly traced to another hand. It is at least certain that a short period only before the death of the prince, he had been outraged by the insolence of his wife's chamberlain, to a degree which had induced him to complain with considerable bitterness to the Duke de St. Simon, his friend and confidant, of the indignities to which he was exposed through her irregularities, to which his eyes had been at length reluctantly opened. In reply, St. Simon declared that His Royal Highness was too forbearing, and would do well to complain to the king of the disgrace which the duchess was constantly entailing upon both herself and him ; and this advice he followed up by placing in the hands of the dishonored husband some letters of which he had become possessed, that had passed between Madame de Berri and her chamberlain, and among others, one in which she proposed to elope with him, together with his reply, wherein he declined to take a step that must inevitably ruin his fortunes.

The poor young duke had no sooner glanced over the cor-

respondence with a burning brow and a flashing eye, than he declared his determination forthwith to submit these documents to Louis XIV., and to demand an immediate separation from his guilty wife; but as the king was at the time at Rambouillet, and private business delayed M. de Berri's departure for a few hours, the duchess was informed in the interval of the animated conversation which he had held with his confidant—a fact which she had no sooner ascertained, and combined with his recent departure for Rambouillet, than she instantly suspected the motive of his sudden visit to the monarch, and ordering her carriage without the delay of a moment, she followed him with such speed that she arrived only a few minutes after him. These had, however, sufficed to afford the prince time to display the damning proofs of her guilt, upon which he was already expatiating when Madame de Berri appeared.

“How is this, sir?” asked the king as she approached: “you talk to me of an elopement, and the duchess is at Rambouillet!”

“What brings you here, madam?” demanded the duke, angrily.

“I come, sir,” replied the beautiful delinquent, so soon as she had calmly performed her salutations to the monarch and Madame de Maintenon, “to reproach you for the discourtesy of not having desired me to accompany you in so agreeable a visit.”

“You have lost all shame!” furiously exclaimed the outraged husband.

“Because I come alone?” asked the duchess, with an affectation of ingenuousness; “you know I am not timid.”

“Well might you be so, madam, nevertheless,” gasped out the prince, holding toward her the fatal letters which he still clutched in his trembling hand, “aware as you are that I here hold the proofs of your dishonor.”

“You surely jest!” retorted the duchess, with bitter irony; “or it may be that the memory of Your Royal Highness

is deficient upon certain points. I believe that two years ago we entered into an arrangement to which I have remained faithful, while you violate it; and yet you are the person who complain."

"Must I, then, shut my eyes to your disgraceful intrigues?"

"I have been indulgent on this point to Your Royal Highness."

"No more of this," interposed the king, indignantly; "such recriminations are unbecoming to your rank, and in my presence."

"I only request of Your Majesty to shut up my wife forthwith in a convent," cried the exasperated duke.

"And I merely beg to suggest to you, sire, the expediency of consigning my husband on the instant to a lunatic asylum," was the contemptuous retort of the duchess.

The words had, however, scarcely escaped her lips when she received a violent kick from the heavy traveling-boot of the prince, which flung her into the arms of Madame de Maintenon; and she had no sooner recovered the shock than, without one word of leave-taking even to the monarch, with a heightened color, and a haughty step, she regained her carriage, and returned with all speed to Versailles.

"I may have received no physical injury," she remarked coldly, to one of the ladies of her household, who was endeavoring to find consolation for the insult in her bodily escape; "that is indeed possible; but the mark will remain *here*"—and she placed her hand upon her heart.

Meanwhile, Louis XIV., outraged by the disrespect with which his presence had been forgotten or disregarded by his grandson, had, in the first impulse of his displeasure, raised his cane to strike him; but already alarmed at his own violence, and blushing at the unmanly action of which he had been guilty toward a woman, the Duke de Berri hastily withdrew.

Mutual error rendered mutual forgiveness, or at least its

semblance, essential both to M. and Madame de Berri; and, accordingly, the duchess professed herself satisfied with the apology offered by His Royal Highness; while the king, glad to be so easily rid of an affair which had originally threatened a more serious result, affected to forget his own share of the affront.

On the 4th of May Louis XIV. held a wolf-hunt in the forest of Marly, and among those who followed the chase were the Duke and Duchess de Berri, both of whom were in high health and spirits. The run was a long one; and the prince, with whom this was a favorite sport, having ridden hard, had become ultimately heated, and was perishing with thirst when he encountered the duchess, of whom he inquired whether she or some person of her suite could give him a draught of liquid of any description. The duchess replied in the affirmative, and handed to him from the pocket of her carriage a small bottle in a red morocco case, in which, as she affirmed, she always carried a small quantity of exquisite ratafia, in the event of overfatigue. The prince seized it with avidity, drained it to the last drop, declared it to be excellent, and returned the empty bottle to the duchess.

“I am glad to have met you so opportunely,” said Madame de Berri with a smile; and so they parted.

A few hours subsequently the grandson of Louis XIV. had breathed his last.*

This extraordinary adventure, however, never became public, and suspicion still pointed toward the Duke d'Orleans, who, when he proceeded to the palace to sprinkle the body of the Duke de Berri with holy water, was subjected, on his way, to the bitter insults of an exasperated populace, and heard, as he passed along, the most atrocious accusations heaped upon his head without restraint or measure. Many pointed toward him with outstretched fingers and dark threats, and the mob appeared to have

* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

difficulty in permitting him to pursue his journey without personal aggression. At the funeral these demonstrations were renewed with tenfold violence ; and, in lieu of accents of sorrow, nothing was heard save menaces of vengeance ; while so great was the public fury, that it was found necessary to take measures for his safety. In the neighborhood of the Palais-Royal, before which the procession passed, the tumult became at length so menacing, that for some moments a deed of violence was apprehended ; but the sensation ultimately exhaled itself in execrations and abuse ; and, meanwhile, the indignation of the courtiers, although more restrained, was not less marked. Few among them sought even to conceal the horror which they felt toward the prince, and when he attempted to address them, turned away gloomily, inquiring one of the other, if so atrocious a crime were, indeed, destined to remain unpunished, or if justice would yet be done.

The same dark suspicion had gained even the king and Madame de Maintenon. In default of direct heirs, the Duke d'Orleans became the rightful sovereign of France, and this fact, combined with the knowledge that the unfortunate prince was addicted to chemistry, and had even erected a laboratory, where, assisted by his chemist Homberg, he amused himself in experiments at that period at once extraordinary and, in the public estimation, closely allied to magic, sufficed to fasten upon him the accusation of the foulest murders.

Louis XIV. was sinking under the weight of years ; the poisoned chalice appeared forever at his own lips ; he was oppressed by the fearful mystery which enveloped him ; and any light, however horrible, thrown upon the fatal occurrences of the last few years, seemed to his shrinking spirit preferable to the darkness by which he had been hitherto surrounded. He had supported the death of the Duke de Berri with a firmness which astonished all about him, and had commanded that the body of his grandson

should not be opened, for he shuddered at a renewal of the horrors through which he had already passed; and the funeral was no sooner performed than he terminated the mourning at Versailles.

The court was at this juncture divided into two distinct parties. The one was composed of the princes of the blood, who were represented by the houses of Orleans, Condé, and Conti, and all those scions of pure and ancient race, who gloried in their ability to display, above the portals of their palaces and on the panels of their equipages, a shield unsullied by the bar of bastardy; and to these were attached the dukes and peers whose interests were involved in the same cause: while the opposite faction was that of the legitimated princes, and consisted of the Duke du Maine, the Count de Toulouse, and the other natural children of the king; strengthened, moreover, by the influence of Madame de Maintenon, to whom they had extended a hope that she should yet become the recognized and acknowledged queen of France. The first party based their claims upon their legal rights, and the second upon their acquired privileges.

The latter struck the first blow, and it was a heavy one. The Duke d'Orleans became branded as an assassin.

The principal motive of this heartless and miserable calumny was to deprive the prince of his right of regency during the minority of the Duke d'Anjou, which must, should the plot prove successful, necessarily revert to the Duke du Maine; and Le Tellier, the confessor of Louis XIV., conscious of the undisguised hatred of the prince toward the Jesuits, of whose order he was one of the most zealous representatives, lent himself without hesitation to the faction of the bastards; and thus, while the populace vented their invectives in the public streets against the Duke d'Orleans, Le Tellier labored, less audibly but even more effectively in the confessional; repeating without compunction to his august penitent, that the death of every

prince of the royal house advanced his nephew one step nearer to the throne; expatiating upon his hidden studies as a work of destruction rather than of improvement, and compelling the harassed and bewildered monarch to lend a quailing ear to the outcry of a bribed rabble, who, on seeing the prince leave the palace, yelled out their execrations within the very hearing of their sovereign.

The Duke d'Orleans was, meanwhile, a prey to the most violent mental anguish. The Marquis de Canillac, one of his fastest friends, made his way on one occasion through the excited mob, and entered his apartment, where he found him extended upon the floor in a state of the most gloomy despair, from which his remonstrances were, for a considerable time, unable to arouse him; but once awakened from his stupor of agony, he declared his resolution to justify himself to the king.

His entrance was not forbidden, though the reception which he met was stern and cold; but the prince had already suffered too much to be discouraged by a bent brow, and he hastened to inform the monarch that he came as a suppliant, to entreat that he might be arrested and conveyed to the Bastille, to be forthwith put upon his trial. A smile of disdainful distrust settled upon the lip of Louis XIV. as he replied that he would not suffer so foul a subject to be made the cause of further scandal to the public, and that the duke would do so at his peril; adding that if he presented himself at the fortress, he should allow him to remain there.

The prince then suggested that at least his chemist Homberg should be imprisoned, in order that by the evidence adduced upon his trial he might himself be justified; but the king, perplexed, uncertain, and irritated between the conflicting interests which he was called upon to judge, turned his back upon him before he had concluded his appeal, and left the apartment.

On his return to Paris the duke ascertained that Hom-

berg had surrendered himself, and was already a prisoner in the Bastille ; and he had scarcely informed his family of the reception which he had experienced from the king, when he received a message from the chancellor, Pontchartrain, entreating him not to risk another personal appeal to the sovereign, and pledging himself that he would immediately see the monarch in his behalf, and represent the disastrous consequences which must inevitably accrue to the state from a trial involving the life of a prince of the blood royal. The Duke d'Orleans, by the advice of his friends, accepted this mediation, and accompanied by all the princes and princesses of his party, departed for St. Cloud, there to await the result of the king's interview with M. de Pontchartrain.

The almost royal procession of the princes, as they left the city, was so numerous, so noble, and so magnificent, that for once the duke passed on unimpeded ; and he had not long established himself at St. Cloud ere he received the welcome intelligence that, after a long audience, in which the king had fully recognized his innocence, the minister had received an order to liberate Homberg from his captivity.

Nevertheless, Louis XIV. never overcame his distrust of his brother's son ; and although in private he passed hours in his chair, with clasped hands and bent head, evidently absorbed by the most bitter reflections, he still possessed sufficient self-control to devour his grief in public, and continued as accessible as before. All these domestic miseries had fallen upon him at the close of a long and disastrous war, and at a time when his kingdom was the prey of famine : but still he strove to carry his head erect before his subjects, and to enact the monarch to the last, however wretched might be his solitary moments. And they were wretched ; for he could not conceal from himself that at the very period in which he most needed support and consolation the affection of his people had

become alienated by the disorder of the public finances, to which he could apply no remedy; while his unbounded confidence in Père le Tellier, by whom it was abused, added to their discontent.

They had forgiven the errors of his manhood, but they could not pardon the weakness of his old age.

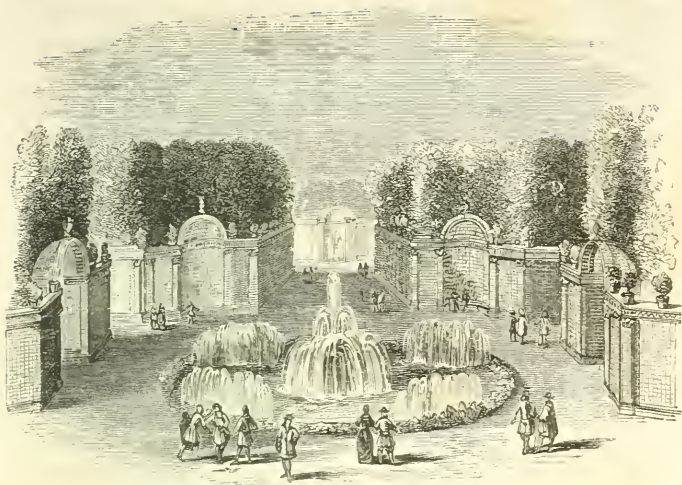
Meanwhile, the Duke du Maine exerted, in the name of the king, and through the influence of Madame de Maintenon, all the privileges of royalty; and had no longer a wish ungratified, save that the regency should be wrested from the Duke d'Orleans, and devolve upon himself.

It was far otherwise, however, with the monarch, whose cup of bitterness was not yet full. The Duchess de Berri, now a widow, was the only legitimate princess who remained of an age to preside over his court, and her conduct from the first period of her marriage had been, as we have already stated, of the most revolting description. Fascinating in her conversation, but perfidious from a mere love of falsehood, she possessed no one virtue to redeem her many and unblushing vices. The pride which caused her upon every opportunity to insult her mother with the stain upon her birth, by which she was disabled from competing with herself, and her arrogance in assuming precedence of her upon every state occasion; her contempt for her husband, whose mental deficiencies were daily the subject of her sarcasms, and the pertinacity with which she opposed his will, whenever he ventured to express it, were, unfortunately, only her minor defects; and thus the stately court of Anne of Austria, the punctilious circle of Maria Theresa, and the elegant society of the Duchess de Bourgoyne, were, at the very period of his life when Louis XIV., at length disenchanted of the greatness, and disgusted with the vices of this world, was seeking to purify his heart and to exalt his thoughts, that they might become more meet for heaven, superseded by the orgies of a wanton, who, with unabashed brow, and unshrink-

ing eye, carried her intrigues even into the very saloon of Marly.

The blood of Madame de Montespan had not belied itself.

Turn whithersoever he would, therefore, the unfortunate monarch was surrounded by mortification, gloom, and disappointment; and even his most intimate circle, his most cherished retirement, was invaded by remorse and regret. He could not look forward; for even Louis XIV., at seventy-two, could not speculate upon a future, while the most glorious portions of the past were tainted by error, injustice, and ambition; and these vanished, what had remained? He could not reflect upon the sinister events of his reign, particularly of those which were yet recent, without becoming the victim of the most fearful and harassing suspicions. Richard in his war-tent never contemplated a train of more appalling shadows than those evoked by the memory of Louis XIV., as he sat, supported by cushions and pillowed upon velvet, in his sumptuous apartment. Henrietta of England, the Queen of Spain her daughter, the dauphin, the fair and fond Duchess de Bourgoyne and her child, and last of all the Duke de Berri, the sole prop left to that throne which must soon be empty, save a frail infant—such were the shapes that haunted his last reveries; and well might the pale old man in his solitary moments bend down the proud head which had no longer strength to bear a crown, and eschewing the arrogance of those years in which he had assumed the bearing of a demi-god, confess to his own heart that he was human.



CHAPTER XXVIII.

Moral Lassitude of Louis XIV.—Indecision on the Question of the Regency—Persecutions of his Private Circle—The Duchess du Maine and her Children; they are declared eligible to succeed to the Crown—Retirement of M. de Pontchartrain; he is succeeded by M. Voisin—Party Arguments—Council of Regency—The Will concealed—Remorse of Louis XIV.—Reception of the Persian Ambassador—Illness of the King—Premature Dispatches—Review of the Household Troops—Anxiety of the King to conceal his Decay—Anxiety of the Duchess du Maine—A Marriage refused—A tardy Confidence—Last Hours of Louis XIV.—Was Louis XIV. a Jesuit?—Indifference of the Nation to his Death—A parting Scene—Louis XIV. and his Successor—Madame de Maintenon and the Captain of the Body-Guard—Madame de Maintenon's Departure for St. Cyr—The last Agony—Death of Louis XIV.—“The King is dead! Long live the King!”

In such a state of moral lassitude as that by which Louis XIV. was now oppressed, he was little able to contend against the intrigues of an uncompromising faction; and

thus, although not blind to the interested views of those by whom he was persecuted to effect a measure repugnant alike to his principles and to his feelings, he gradually suffered himself to be persuaded, even if he could not be convinced, by the specious sophistry of their arguments. It is true that he had declared himself convinced of the innocence of the Duke d'Orleans of the foul charges which had been made against him; but the mystery was yet unsolved—that innocence was but presumptive; while, on the other hand, the immoral habits, atheistical principles, and reckless disposition of the prince, were ill suited to the responsible position to which his birth had called him.

The Duke d'Anjou was yet an infant; it was an existence as yet unformed, a heart and a mind yet to be shaped and fashioned, and, above all, it was a life to be preserved; a king to be reared to manhood, alike for his own nation and for all Europe; and as these things were daily murmured into his aching ears, despite himself he shuddered and he doubted.

Nevertheless the measure was one of such vital importance that the king still hesitated; and assured that this hesitation must be concluded by other means than those of persuasion, Madame de Maintenon became convinced that a systematic neglect, and the deprivation of that support which had hitherto been afforded with officious zeal to the dependent monarch, would alone tend to make him conscious of his actual position. In accordance with this cruel policy, therefore, both the Duke du Maine and herself suddenly became silent, serious, and frequently even gloomy, never replying save when they were directly addressed, and then answering only in monosyllables. The great age of the king and his peculiar position not permitting him to seek amusement beyond his own immediate circle, he was consequently condemned to the monotonous routine of music and cards, which was now rendered doubly irksome by the want of that enlivening con-

versation to which it had hitherto been indebted for its greatest charm; and this privation was the more felt that he was now subjected to it for the first time. The ladies who habitually composed the society of Madame de Maintenon, and who were not in the secret of this new stratagem, strove for a time to raise her spirits, believing them to be depressed by some unacknowledged annoyance; but they soon discovered that their zeal was unwelcome, and, embarrassed by a mystery which they could not fathom, they became in their turn taciturn and ill at ease; and thus the monarch found himself surrounded by an atmosphere of melancholy and constraint, which unnerved his mind and destroyed his energies.

The Duchess du Maine wielded, moreover, another weapon. When the old king caressed her children, she wept over them, and when he would have made them the companions of his drive, she hurried them away, not daring, as she declared, to exhibit them in public while so dark a stain rested upon their birth. At other times she affected to shrink from collision with the Duchess d'Orleans, her sister, who, by her marriage with the nephew of the king, had effaced the stigma of her illegitimacy; and when the aged monarch, heart-wrung and weary, could bear no further pang, Madame de Maintenon soothed him by recalling to his recollection that he had but to will it, and these trials would be terminated forever.

Louis XIV. sighed for peace; his strength was sapped by the perpetual murmurs to which he was exposed, and it was at length extorted from him, in one of those moments of moral exhaustion, that the children of the Duke du Maine should be created princes of the blood, with all the prerogatives essential to that dignity, especially the privilege of succeeding to the crown in default of a direct and legitimate heir.*

But although he suffered this concession to be forced

* Louis XIV., sa Cour, et le Regent.

from him, and found the immediate recompense of his compliance in the renewed attentions and gayety of his little circle, the king was nevertheless dissatisfied with himself; and in reply to the self-gratulatory acknowledgments of the Duchess du Maine, and the equally earnest but more measured thanks of her husband, he answered sadly, and even sharply, "You would have it so; and, therefore, should you find that, after having become great during my lifetime, you are reduced to insignificance after my death, remember that it has been your own work; and profit by what I have done, should it be in your power."

The Chancellor Pontchartrain no sooner ascertained the aim of this last intrigue than, pretexting his advanced age and failing health, he requested his dismissal, which was, after some difficulty, conceded, and his place supplied by M. Voisin,* who was devoted to the interests of Madame de Maintenon and the Duke du Maine. To him had been intrusted the delicate task of bringing the mind of the king to dwell upon a future in which he could bear no part; but it is doubtful that he would have succeeded in his aim, had not the domestic persecutions to which we have alluded come in aid of his diplomacy.

Throughout the whole of the transaction the word WILL was never pronounced before Louis XIV.; he was entreated only to insure the observance of his *wishes*; nor was he fatigued even by the summary of these, for he had those about him who prompted every measure, reasoned upon its justice and validity, and combined the whole with a promptitude and sophistry which rendered all his objections of no avail. In vain did he declare that the birth of the Duke d'Orleans entitled him to the regency; he was answered by the suspicion of poison and the fact of profligacy: and when, with a return of his former pride, he declared that he could not brook that his last wishes should be disregarded, as those of his father had previously been,

* Son of a counselor of state.

he was reminded of the vast discrepancy which had existed between Louis XIII. and Louis XIV., and assured that no one would dare to controvert his own pleasure to the end of time.

This avarice of power was the weak point of the monarch; and at length, as we have stated, the victory was obtained. In the last document to which his signature was appended he established a council of regency, over which the Duke d'Orleans was to preside, to which the Duke de Bourbon was to be called when he should have attained the age of twenty-four, and whose other members were to be the Duke du Maine, the Count de Toulouse, the chancellor, four marshals, the like number of secretaries of state, and the controller-general.

In this council every measure was to be decided by a majority of voices; but that of the president was to have weight only when he had the casting vote, while the person of the infant monarch was to be placed under the government of the collective members.

Moreover, the Duke du Maine was intrusted, not only with the education, but also with the safe-keeping of the young king, with absolute control over the body-guard; and, in case of his decease, the same privileges were to descend to the Count de Toulouse; while the Duke-Marshal de Villeroy was appointed governor, under the authority of the Duke du Maine. This arrangement, as will be perceptible at the first glance, left to the Duke d'Orleans no power save what was secured to him by law, while even that was burdened with precautions well calculated to excite his indignation.*

The royal will was no sooner completed than it was concealed in a cavity opened in the wall of a tower behind the state apartment, where it was inclosed within an iron door protected by three different keys, one of which was deliv-

* Mémoires pour servir à l'Histoire Universelle de l'Europe, par le Père d'Avrigny.

ered to the first president of the chambers, a second to the attorney-general, and the third to the public registrar. It was, moreover, accompanied by an edict which forbade it to be opened before the death of the king, and then only in the presence of the assembled parliament, the princes, and the peers.

As Louis XIV. placed these documents in the hands of the president, he said, gloomily, "Here is my will. The example of the kings, my predecessors, and even that of the king, my father, will not allow me to remain in ignorance of what may happen to it; but it has been solicited; I have been tormented to frame it, and I have been allowed neither peace nor rest till I complied. I have, therefore, purchased comfort through its means. Take it away. Happen to it what may, at least I shall now be left quiet, and hear no more upon the subject."*

This incident will suffice to demonstrate the persecutions to which Louis XIV. was subjected during the later period of his existence; but, despite his private annoyances, he continued resolutely to hold the helm of government, and, the more deeply he became conscious of his physical weakness, the more determined and extraordinary were his efforts to preserve the interests of the state firm and intact.

The last occasion on which Louis XIV. appeared in all the pomp of his regality was at the reception of Mehemet-Riza-Beg, the *soi-disant* Persian ambassador. The most magnificent preparations were made for the ceremonial of the apocryphal envoy, and the dignified and venerable appearance of the gray-haired but still stately monarch excited universal comment and admiration. The departure of the ambassador was, however, the signal for renewed monotony; and this brief interval of splendor and representation past, the king resumed his usual habits, occupied himself in forming treaties and renewing alliances, ar-

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

ranged his papers with scrupulous exactness, burned such as he did not desire should be made public, and even dictated certain minute details connected with the ceremonial to be observed toward the dauphin.

On the 3d of May, 1715, Louis XIV. rose at an early hour in order to witness an eclipse of the sun, and having attentively observed it in all its phases, he complained, toward the evening, of extreme fatigue. Nevertheless he supped in the apartment of the Duchess de Berri; but, feeling weary and exhausted, left the table and immediately retired to bed. A rumor forthwith spread that the king was seriously indisposed, and the report gained ground so rapidly that the several foreign ambassadors dispatched couriers to their respective courts to announce the intelligence—a circumstance which soon reached the ears of the monarch, who, indignant at such indecent precipitancy, and resolving to prove that he was yet superior to the decay on which they based their faith, commanded that preparations should be forthwith commenced for a grand review of his household troops.

This magnificent exhibition consequently took place on the 20th of June, when, for the last time, the several troops of gendarmes and light-horse, in their state uniforms, defiled in front of the terrace of Marly, which they had no sooner done than the monarch appeared at the principal entrance of the palace, habited in the same costume which he had worn in his earlier years, and descending the marble steps, mounted his horse, and remained four hours in the saddle under the eyes of the foreign envoys, who had already announced his approaching death to their sovereigns.

This, however, was the expiring effort of his pride. A short time subsequently the court returned to Versailles; and on the eve of the festival of St. Louis the king dined in public; but his evident exhaustion, and the change which had taken place in his countenance, betrayed the violent

struggles to which he had subjected himself in order to conceal his rapidly approaching decay. The repast had scarcely concluded when he complained of indisposition, and in another hour he was attacked by fever.

During the whole of the last year it had been the study of Louis XIV. to deceive himself, and above all, to deceive others, as to the extent of the physical debility induced by his great age. He had risen at a late hour, in order to curtail the fatigues of the day; received his ministers, and even dined, in his bed; and once having prevailed upon himself to leave it, passed several hours in succession in his cushioned chair. It was in vain that his physician urged upon him the necessity of exercise, in order to counteract his tendency to revery and somnolency, and equally in vain that he reminded him of the swollen and discolored state of his feet and ankles; the invalid admitted the justice of his arguments, but the system which he so zealously advocated alarmed the increasing indolence of the monarch, who could not rise from his seat without pain, and would never attempt to do so until all his attendants had left the room, lest they should perceive the state of weakness to which he was reduced.

Great, therefore, had been the two efforts which we have described, where the monarch had for a time conquered the man, and where pride had supplied the place of strength. The only exercise which he ultimately consented to take was in the magnificent gardens of Versailles, where he was wheeled through the stately avenues which he had himself planted, in a bath-chair, a prey to pain, which was visibly depicted upon his countenance, but which he supported with cold and silent dignity, too haughty to complain. To the last he wore rouge, preserved the symmetry of his figure by artificial means, and even studied to observe the same style of walk and gesture which he had adopted during the elasticity of youth.*

* Versailles Ancien et Moderne.

Although, as we have shown, the faction of the legitimized princes had succeeded in wresting from Louis XIV. a will favorable to their interests, they were, nevertheless, not suffered to inform themselves of its precise contents, and had consequently only a general impression of its tendency; and so long as the monarch remained in health this imperfect knowledge had sufficed to satisfy them; but they had no sooner ascertained that he was, in all probability, upon his death-bed, than the Duchess du Maine urged her husband to explain to Madame de Maintenon the vital necessity of their comprehending, not only in its full but also in its most minute bearings, the whole bent and nature of the document, in order that they might adopt such measures as should appear the most prudent under the circumstances in which they were about to be placed.

This necessity was at once admitted by their counselor; but when the duke proceeded to entreat that she would obtain the desired information from the monarch, Madame de Maintenon hesitated. To assail his sick-bed with such a request appeared to her a certain method of incurring his displeasure; and she shrunk from involving herself in so gratuitous a risk. The urgency of M. du Maine, however, bore down this objection. He declared that at such a moment it would be impossible for the king to have any feeling save one of tenderness toward a person of whose devotion he had during so many years had daily and hourly proofs; and at length reassured by this argument, and unable to resist the pleading of her favorite friend and pupil, she consented to make the attempt.

Skillfully, however, as Madame de Maintenon seized her opportunity, the king was startled by the inquiry. He was conscious that in his tenderness for his illegitimate children, he had already in a great degree overpassed the boundary of justice, and all that could be extorted from him was his consent to inform them of what they desired

to know only on the express condition that they would pledge themselves to keep it a profound secret, and would adopt no measures in consequence.

As the royal compliance was rendered nugatory by these restrictions, the Duke du Maine considered it prudent to decline the confidence, but he ere long repented his decision; and as it was impossible to repair the error, it was next decided that the faction should limit their inquiries to the simple fact of the succession, and entreat the king to inform them whether or not he had decided that it should devolve upon the King of Spain.

This question he answered in the negative, whence they inferred that the Duke d'Orleans must necessarily hold a prominent position, be it what it might, under the regency; yet they declined the advances which, in complete ignorance of the success of the intrigue, he had recently made toward a reconciliation, and even evaded an alliance, at which he more than hinted, between Mademoiselle de Valois, his daughter, and the Prince de Dombes, the elder son of the Duke du Maine. It is true that the king, when it was mooted, showed some disinclination to the proposed marriage, which they made no effort to remove; while the suggestion also involved certain minor difficulties that were permitted to outweigh its obvious advantages.

To this fault they added another infinitely more serious, by informing the Duke d'Orleans that there was no mention made of Philip V. in the royal will—an assurance which, thanks to their own indiscretion, at once convinced the prince of the stability of his position.

As the fatal indisposition of Louis XIV. progressed, and the extreme languor under which he suffered convinced all around him that he was rapidly drawing near his end, the alarm of the Duchess du Maine augmented, and she once more assailed Madame de Maintenon with entreaties that she would induce the king to speak without reserve, and also to adopt the most stringent measures to

insure to the legitimized princes, beyond all risk of failure, the privileges to which they had attained.

On this occasion, however, Madame de Maintenon met her request with a resolute refusal, and declared her determination to resist every attempt which might be made to disturb and embitter his last moments; and it was consequently freely, and without solicitation, that the monarch ultimately imparted to the Duke du Maine all the clauses of the will. In vain did the bewildered listener expostulate with him upon the difficulties to which he should be exposed by such an arrangement; in vain did he assure him that he had invested him with an authority which, while it was sufficiently great to secure to him the animosity of the Duke d'Orleans, was still too limited to support him against his resentment; the king resisted all his arguments, and persisted in declaring that he would not alter in anywise the arrangements that he had made.*

There can indeed be little doubt that in the endeavor to aggrandize the Duke du Maine, Louis XIV. had adopted measures eminently calculated to frustrate his object. He might have foreseen that, in subjecting his nephew to the trammels of a council of regency, he should, as a natural consequence, excite his indignation, and impel him to attempt every expedient, however extreme, to liberate himself from such a thralldom; and he had long had sufficient experience of the hot and reckless nature of the Duke d'Orleans, whose habit of resisting every intrusion upon his individual privileges was little likely to desert him in a conjuncture which involved alike his power and his pride, not only in his own eyes but in the eyes of all Europe, to have convinced him that the prince would not tamely brook so glaring an affront; nor can his self-delusion, in framing such a will, be explained in any other manner than by the inference, that, having been implicitly obeyed throughout his life, he deemed it impossible that

* Louis XIV., sa Cour, et le Regent.

his wishes should be opposed when he was in his grave, forgetting that he had himself disregarded the dying injunctions of his own father.

Return we to the suffering monarch. On the day succeeding his attack, the king declared himself considerably recovered, and commanded a concert, during which the musicians were instructed to play none but cheerful melodies; and they had already ascended the orchestra, when the tapestry hangings of the royal chamber, which had been drawn back, were suddenly closed, and the court physicians were summoned, who declared the condition of the king to be so precarious that expresses were immediately dispatched to his confessor and the Cardinal de Rohan, who both arrived in great haste at a moment when the danger of dissolution appeared so immediate, that while Le Tellier was receiving the confession of his illustrious penitent, the cardinal hurried to the chapel in search of the viaticum, and sent to desire the immediate attendance of the curate with the holy oils.

Two of the king's almoners summoned by the cardinal, a few of the inferior domestics of the palace bearing torches, two of the physician's private servants, and lastly Madame de Maintenon, were all who followed the pyx to the royal chamber, by a private stair-case; and not more than a dozen individuals surrounded the dying-bed, where the cardinal expatiated to the expiring monarch upon the importance and solemnity of this great and closing ceremony.

The aged king listened firmly, and with an expression of pious devotion, and when he had received the sacrament, and touched the holy oils, all who had been present left the chamber, save the chancellor and Madame de Maintenon; and they had no sooner retired than a small table was placed beside him, upon which he wrote a few lines comprising a last codicil in favor of the Duke du Maine; and, this done, fell back upon his pillow, in apparent tranquillity.

On the 22d of August mortification had taken place in one of his legs, and the Duke d'Orleans, whose saloons had for some time been totally deserted, found himself suddenly the center of a brilliant circle; but an empiric, who declared himself capable of renewing the strength of the king with an elixir of which he alone possessed the secret, and who succeeded in inducing his attendants to test its efficacy, having so far renovated him that he was enabled to swallow a small portion of food, and moreover declared that he would in time restore him to health, the crowd by whom the prince had been surrounded was so materially diminished, that as he glanced round his saloon he said, disdainfully, "Let him but make another meal, and I shall find myself alone."

The disease was, however, mortal. This last hope proved fallacious, and the king felt that he was beyond the power of human help. In his extremity he devoted himself entirely to prayer, and his tranquillity was so great that it was attributed to the rash and unmeasured assurances of his confessor. It was asserted that Anne of Austria had on one occasion exhorted him rather to strive to emulate his grandfather than his father, and when he had inquired wherefore, had replied, "Because at the death of Henry IV. the nation wept, but at that of Louis XIII. it smiled." This, however, it was generally conceded, could not be the memory by which his dying pillow was now smoothed; for after a reign of seventy-two years, and an existence of seventy-seven, sullied by the vices of his early life, so many wars recklessly undertaken, so many human lives sacrificed, so many taxes inflicted on an already burdened people, it could not be that the anticipation of the tears and lamentations of his subjects gave him this calm, and taught him to look with fearlessness upon his extinction.

The solution of the enigma was consequently supposed to exist in a report which had for some time been whis-

pered at court, to the effect that, a considerable period before his illness, Père le Tellier had induced the king to become a member of the fraternity of the Jesuits, of which he had vaunted the privileges and plenary indulgences, and had even succeeded in persuading him that whatever might be the sins of which he had been guilty, or in whatever impossibility he found himself of making reparation in this world to those whom he might have injured, the simple fact of his becoming a brother of the Company of Jesus would suffice for his complete exoneration, and infallibly induce his salvation.

Such assurances as these could not, as it was declared, have failed in their effect upon a conscience heavily burdened, and only newly awakened to a sense of its condition; and, accordingly, it was asserted that the king had taken the vows required of him, and instead of the habit of the order, had been invested with a minute sign of his confraternity, in the shape of a scapulary, which he wore upon his breast; while certain prayers and pledges which throughout the last days of his existence were exchanged between himself and his confessor, and which, having been partially overheard, were not recognized as the religious exercises commonly used before death, served to confirm the opinion that Louis XIV. was indeed, at that period, a Jesuit.

The Duke de St. Simon, however, even while recording this suspicion, proceeds to throw a doubt upon its truth, by adding, that as his own curiosity was excited upon the subject, he inquired in confidence of Maréchal, the king's principal surgeon, to whom he was much attached, and from whom he had few secrets, if such indeed were the case; when he was positively assured that the report had no foundation whatever, and even detesting Le Tellier as he did, Maréchal yet declared that although he was near the king at all hours of the day and night, he had never remarked the use of any particular formulary of prayer or

benediction ; while, as regarded the adoption of the scapulary, or any other badge, he could positively declare that the king wore nothing about his person save the relics which he had carried for years.

Calm as he appeared, moreover, Louis XIV. nevertheless bitterly expiated upon his death-bed the faults and excesses of his past life. He wept over the profligacy of his youth, which he publicly avowed ; deplored the madness of his ambition, by which he had brought mourning into every corner of his kingdom, and expressed the most earnest regret that sufficient time had not been afforded to him, since the termination of the war, to leave to his grandson a flourishing nation and a happy people.

That he had failed to do so was evident throughout his illness. The excessive burden of taxation, the fluctuating currency, and the discontent of the parliament, which he had subjected to slight and insult throughout the whole duration of a protracted reign, had induced every class of his subjects to look forward with anxiety to its close ; while even at court, the wearisomeness and constraint that had prevailed since the deaths of the Duke and Duchess de Bourgoyne diminished, in a very perceptible degree, the anxiety which they would otherwise have undoubtedly evinced.

Some few, however, wept at the prospect of losing their monarch ; but these were they who had grown old with him, and must necessarily see themselves thrust aside to make way for a new race ; those whose ideas and habits were alike becoming antediluvian, and who could not conceal even from themselves, that they were little fitted to figure in a court, which would be ruled by a dissipated regent, and a king who had not yet attained to boyhood. Not even his successor mourned over the approach of a separation which must be eternal, for he was yet too young to comprehend the extent of the loss to which he was about to be subjected by the failure of that protection which

would have been his best security; while the Duke d'Orleans looked forward to the demise of his almost octagenarian uncle as a release from restraint and mortification.

Nor were the children of Louis XIV.—those children to forward whose worldly interests he had forfeited his own sense of right—more earnest in their grief; the Princess de Conti indeed exhibited sorrow, but it was placid and resigned; the Duchess de Bourbon talked of her affliction, but pursued her intrigues as usual; while the Duchess d'Orleans shed showers of those painless tears which were, with her, ever ready upon any occasion of annoyance or expediency. The Duke du Maine, it is true, struggled to compose a countenance of decent grief; but he wore the mask loosely, and deceived no one, while the Count de Toulouse preserved a cold and undemonstrative deportment which forbade one suspicion of regret.*

Madame de Maintenon had at this period reached her eightieth year, and at so advanced an age might have been more readily acquitted, had she suffered her physical weakness to overpower her moral faculties; but such was far from being the case. To her Louis XIV. was every thing on earth; in him her affections, her ambition, and her hope had alike been concentrated, and she appeared to have garnered up all her energies, in order that she might be supported through the fearful trial which was so rapidly approaching. Watchful, anxious, and unwearying, she sat beside the death-pillow of her monarch husband; he who had loved her well enough for himself, but not sufficiently for his pride—who had readily made her his wife, but who had shrunk from making her his queen.

“My grief is great,” she said to one who attempted consolation, “but it is calm and unembittered. I shall weep for him often, but my tears will be those of affection rather than regret, for, in the depth of my heart, his truly Christian end will give me joy.”†

* Mémoires de St. Simon.

† Mémoires de la Beaumelle.

Her watch was frequently shared by the Duke-Marshal de Villeroy, to whom the monarch was greatly attached, and toward the close of his existence, having called him to his side, he said, firmly,

“ Marshal, I feel that I am dying ; when all is over, conduct your new master to Vincennes, and cause my wishes to be observed.” Then, having sent to summon the Duke d’Orleans, as the prince approached his bed he made a signal to those who were about him to retire, which they had no sooner done than he conversed with his nephew for a considerable time in so low a voice that no portion of the conversation could be overheard. After his death, however, the duke affirmed that in this last interview the king had expressed himself in terms of affection and confidence, and had assured him that, by the dispositions contained in his will, he had preserved to him inviolably the rights of his high birth ; adding, that should the dauphin not survive to claim the crown, it would become his own, and that under these circumstances he had endeavored to act with judgment ; but that, as it was impossible to foresee the result, should any thing have been ill arranged, it would without doubt be remedied.

When the Duke d’Orleans retired, the king desired the presence of the Duke du Maine, with whom he spoke apart for a shorter period, after which he received the Count de Toulouse ; and subsequently the princes of the blood collectively ; to whom, however, he addressed merely a few words, and even those were uttered in a sufficiently audible voice to be heard by all who were in attendance.

On the 26th of August, the king dined in his bed, when all were admitted who had the privilege of the *entrées* ; and as the attendants were preparing to retire at the close of his repast, he desired them to draw nearer, and then said, with emotion,

“ Gentlemen, I desire your pardon for the bad example which I have set you. I have greatly to thank you for the

manner in which you have served me, as well as for the attachment and fidelity which I have always experienced at your hands. I request from you the same zeal and the same fidelity toward my grandson, in order that your example may induce those of all my other subjects. Farewell, gentlemen; I feel that this parting has affected not only myself, but you also. Forgive me. I trust that you will sometimes think of me when I am gone."

The scene was a touching one: the gray-haired king, half lying, half sitting, in his gorgeous bed, whose velvet hangings, looped back with their heavy ropes and tassels of gold, were the laborious offering of the pupils of St. Cyr, and were wrought with threads of gold and silver, and party-colored silks, representing, in a singular and incongruous mixture the principal passages of the Scriptures, interspersed with the less holy incidents of the heathen mythology; the groups of princes in their gorgeous costumes, dispersed over the vast apartment; the door opening from the cabinet thronged with courtiers and ladies; and, finally, the court functionaries, who had simultaneously sunk upon their knees as they approached the dying monarch; the gilded cornices, the priceless, the tapestried hangings, the richly-carpeted floor, the waste of luxury on every side, the pride of man's intellect and of man's strength; and in the midst decay and death, a palsied hand, and a dimmed eye.

The most stoical were moved at such a moment; and even when the attendant gentlemen had risen slowly and in silence, and disappeared across the threshold, like a procession of shadows, the stillness of the death-room continued for a time unbroken.

It was the voice of the king by which it was at length dispelled. He first informed the Marshal de Villeroy that he had appointed him governor to the dauphin; and then desired that the Duchess de Ventadour would introduce the child who was soon to become his successor; and the little

prince had no sooner knelt upon the cushion which had been placed for him near the side of the bed, still holding the hand of his *gouvernante* firmly grasped in his own, than the monarch, after gazing upon him for a time with an expression of mingled anxiety and tenderness, said, in an impressive voice,

“My child, you are about to become a great king; do not imitate me either in my taste for building or in my love of war. Endeavor, on the contrary, to live in peace with the neighboring nations; render to God all that you owe him, and cause his name to be honored by your subjects. Strive to relieve the burdens of your people, in which I have been unfortunate enough to fail; and never forget the gratitude that you owe to Madame de Ventadour.”*

“Madame,” he continued, addressing himself to the duchess, “permit me to embrace the prince.”

The dauphin was lifted into his arms; and after he had clasped him fondly to his breast, he said, in a less steady voice, “I bless you, my dear child, with all my heart.”

This done, Madame de Ventadour was about to reclaim her charge, but the king did not relax his hold, until, raising his eyes to heaven, he had repeated his solemn benediction.

On the 27th, the king, having commanded all the great dignitaries and officers of the household to meet in his apartment, addressed them in a firm voice, in the presence of Madame de Maintenon and his confessor, saying,

“Gentleman, I die in the faith and obedience of the Church. I know nothing of the dogmas by which it is divided; I have followed the advice that I received, and have done only what I was desired to do. If I have erred, my guides alone must answer before God, whom I call upon to witness this assertion.”

Toward the afternoon Louis XIV., next desired the at-

* Louis XV. caused the last words addressed to him by his royal grandfather to be inscribed on vellum; and it is stated that throughout his life they were attached to the headcloth of his bed.

tendance of the chancellor, to whom he delivered a casket filled with papers, a portion of which he instructed him to burn, giving distinct instructions for the disposal of the remainder : and, in the course of the evening, he sent for M. de Pontchartrain, who still acted as one of the secretaries of state, and when he appeared, said, calmly,

“ So soon as I am dead, you will be good enough to issue an order that my heart may be conveyed to the church of the Jesuits in Paris, and cause it to be placed there precisely in the same manner as that of my deceased father.”

Then, after a pause, he continued, in a tone of equal placidity,

“ When I shall have breathed my last, and that my death has been announced according to custom from the balcony of the state apartment, conduct *the king* to Vincennes. But as it strikes me that Cavoie has never regulated the distribution of the rooms in that castle, where the court have not resided for the last fifty years, in the casket”—(and as he spoke the dying monarch indicated one with his finger)—“ you will find a plan of the apartments of Vincennes ; take it, and carry it to the grand-marshal of the palace, in order that it may assist him in his arrangements.”

The night which succeeded was restless and agitated, and was entirely passed by the monarch in prayer ; and on the morning of the 28th, immediately that he awoke, the physicians proposed to amputate the leg in which mortification had commenced.

“ Will the operation prolong my life ?” was the composed inquiry.

“ Yes, sire,” replied the head surgeon ; “ certainly, for several days ; and perhaps even for several weeks.”

“ If that be all,” said Louis XIV., “ the result will not be adequate to the suffering. God’s will be done !”

On the morning of the 30th the strength of the king was nearly exhausted.

“ All is well-nigh over,” he said feebly to the Marshal

de Villeroy, who stood at his bedside; "farewell, my friend, we must soon part."

The courage of the dying monarch never forsook him for an instant; neither did he exhibit the slightest emotion. He took leave of every member of his family with a dry eye and a steady voice, merely exhorting them to live, if possible, on terms of friendship, to do their duty to the young king, and to conduct themselves in a Christian spirit; nor was it until the princes and princesses had withdrawn that he at length betrayed a slight degree of feeling as he turned toward Madame de Maintenon, saying,

"At this moment I only regret yourself. I have not made you happy; but I have ever felt for you all the regard and affection which you deserved. My only consolation in leaving you," he added, as he grasped her hand, and gazed fixedly upon her with his dim and failing eyes, "exists in the hope that we shall ere long meet again in eternity."

Madame de Maintenon made no rejoinder; but she soon after rose to leave the apartment, and as she crossed the threshold, exclaimed, as if unconsciously, "A pretty rendezvous he has given me! That man has never loved any one but himself." And this equally imprudent and ill-timed ejaculation was overheard by the king's apothecary, by whom it was repeated.*

As she retired, the king saw in an opposite mirror the reflection of two of his valets-de-chambre, who were weeping bitterly. "Why do you shed tears?" he asked. "Did you, then, imagine that I was immortal? As for myself, I never believed that such was the case, and you should have been prepared, at my age, to lose me long ago."

After a time the king exhibited extreme uneasiness at the absence of Madame de Maintenon, who, believing that all would shortly be over, had already departed for St. Cyr; but having been informed that her presence was required, she excused herself when she reappeared by

* Chroniques de l'Œil de Bœuf.

stating that she had been uniting her prayers for his recovery with those of her pupils. On the 30th, however, the intellect of the monarch had become so much impaired that she again left his side, and retired to her own apartment, whither she was followed, to her extreme annoyance, by the captain of the body-guard. Her first care was to lock some papers, which she selected from among others in a bureau, into a small casket, in order to remove them; but this measure was resolutely opposed by M. de Cavoie, who informed her that he had received an order from the Duke d'Orleans to take possession of all the papers in the apartments frequented by the king. "Shall I at least be permitted, sir," she asked, after an instant of indignant silence, "to remove my furniture?"

"Every thing, madam," was the reply, "save what is the property of the crown."

"The orders with which you have been intrusted, sir," said Madame de Maintenon, more and more incensed, "are somewhat bold; the king is not yet dead, and if Providence should see fit to restore him to us, you may have cause to regret their so stringent execution."

"If Providence should indeed prolong the life of His Majesty, madam," answered M. de Cavoie, with a profound bow, "we must hope that he will recognize his real friends, and approve the conduct they have pursued." And then, after a brief pause, he added, "If you wish to return to the king's chamber you are at liberty to do so; but if not, I have orders to accompany you to St. Cyr."

Madame de Maintenon started; and then, without vouchsafing any reply, she hastily divided her furniture among her servants, and departed for St. Cyr, under the escort of Cavoie.

Once during the illness of the monarch he had been betrayed into the expression, "When I was king;" and the scene which we have just described proved that he had not been premature in separating the present from the past.

On arriving at the convent, Madame de Maintenon was instantly made conscious, by the altered manner of the superior, that although the monarch had not yet expired, her own reign was over. "Sir," demanded the abbess of M. de Cavoie, when she had greeted her visitor with a cold and distant bow, "shall I not compromise myself and my community by receiving Madame de Maintenon without the permission of the Duke d'Orleans?"

"Madam," exclaimed the captain of the guard, with generous indignation, "have you, then, forgotten that Madame de Maintenon was the foundress of this house?"

M. de Cavoie had no sooner retired than the widowed favorite desired that her pupils might be sent to her, and as they appeared, she said, emphatically, "Henceforth I will belong wholly to my God, and my children;" and then turning toward one of the nuns to whom she was much attached, she added, "I have seen the king meet his death like a saint and a hero; I have quitted a world I never loved, and I am in a retreat which is most dear to me. I wish, with all my heart, that others were as happy as myself." Even at this bitter crisis the consummate tact and self-control of Madame de Maintenon did not abandon her.

The following day was one of agony to the expiring king. His intervals of consciousness were rare and brief. The mortification extended rapidly, and toward midday his condition became so much exasperated that it was found necessary to perform the service for the dying without further delay. The mournful ceremony aroused him from his lethargy, and the surprise was general when his voice was once more heard, audibly and clearly, combined with those of the priests. At the termination of the prayers he moreover recognized the Cardinal de Rohan, and said, calmly, "These are the last favors of the Church."

He then repeated several times, "*Nunc et in horâ mortis;*" and finally he exclaimed, with earnest fervor, "Oh, my God, come to my aid, and hasten to help me!"

He never spoke again; for as these words escaped him

he once more fell back insensible upon his pillow, and throughout the night continued unconscious of every thing save bodily suffering.

At eight o'clock on the following morning Louis XIV. expired. As he exhaled his last sigh, a man was seen to approach a window of the state apartment which opened on the great balcony, and throw it suddenly back. It was the captain of the body-guard, who had no sooner attracted the attention of the populace, by whom the court-yard was thronged in expectation of the tidings which they knew could not be long delayed, than raising his truncheon above his head, he broke it in the center, and throwing the pieces among the crowd exclaimed, in a loud voice, "The king is dead!" Then seizing another staff from an attendant, without the pause of an instant, he flourished it in the air as he shouted, "Long live the king!"

And a multitudinous echo from the depths of the lately-deserted apartment answered as buoyantly, "Long live the king!"





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