

Marie Antoinette — Volume 03 eBook

Marie Antoinette — Volume 03 by Jeanne-Louise-Henriette Campan

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CHAPTER VI.

During the first few months of his reign Louis XVI. dwelt at La Muette, Marly, and Compiègne. When settled at Versailles he occupied himself with a general examination of his grandfather's papers. He had promised the Queen to communicate to her all that he might discover relative to the history of the man with the iron mask, who, he thought, had become so inexhaustible a source of conjecture only in consequence of the interest which the pen of a celebrated writer had excited respecting the detention of a prisoner of State, who was merely a man of whimsical tastes and habits.

I was with the Queen when the King, having finished his researches, informed her that he had not found anything among the secret papers elucidating the existence of this prisoner; that he had conversed on the matter with M. de Maurepas, whose age made him contemporary with the epoch during which the story must have been known to the ministers; and that M. de Maurepas had assured him he was merely a prisoner of a very dangerous character, in consequence of his disposition for intrigue. He was a subject of the Duke of Mantua, and was enticed to the frontier, arrested there, and kept prisoner, first at Pignerol, and afterwards in the Bastille. This transfer took place in consequence of the appointment of the governor of the former place to the government of the latter. It was for fear the prisoner should profit by the inexperience of a new governor that he was sent with the Governor of Pignerol to the Bastille.

Such was, in fact, the truth about the man on whom people have been pleased to fix an iron mask. And thus was it related in writing, and published by M. ----- twenty years ago. He had searched the archives of the Foreign Office, and laid the real story before the public; but the public, prepossessed in favour of a marvellous version, would not acknowledge the authenticity of his account. Every man relied upon the authority of Voltaire; and it was believed that a natural or a twin brother of Louis XIV. lived many years in prison with a mask over his face. The story of this mask, perhaps, had its origin in the old custom, among both men and women in Italy, of wearing a velvet mask when they exposed themselves to the sun. It is possible that the Italian captive may have sometimes shown himself upon the terrace of his prison with his face thus covered. As to the silver plate which this celebrated prisoner is said to have thrown from his window, it is known that such a circumstance did happen, but it happened at Valzin, in the time of Cardinal Richelieu. This anecdote has been mixed up with the inventions respecting the Piedmontese prisoner.

In this survey of the papers of Louis XV. by his grandson some very curious particulars relative to his private treasury were found. Shares in various financial companies afforded him a revenue, and had in course of time produced him a capital of some amount, which he applied to his secret expenses. The King collected his vouchers of title to these shares, and made a present of them to M. Thierry de Ville d'Avray, his chief valet de chambre.

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The Queen was desirous to secure the comfort of Mesdames, the daughters of Louis XV., who were held in the highest respect. About this period she contributed to furnish them with a revenue sufficient to provide them an easy, pleasant existence: The King gave them the Chateau of Bellevue; and added to the produce of it, which was given up to them, the expenses of their table and equipage, and payment of all the charges of their household, the number of which was even increased. During the lifetime of Louis XV., who was a very selfish prince, his daughters, although they had attained forty years of age, had no other place of residence than their apartments in the Chateau of Versailles; no other walks than such as they could take in the large park of that palace; and no other means of gratifying their taste for the cultivation of plants but by having boxes and vases, filled with them, in their balconies or their closets. They had, therefore, reason to be much pleased with the conduct of Marie Antoinette, who had the greatest influence in the King's kindness towards his aunts.

Paris did not cease, during the first years of the reign, to give proofs of pleasure whenever the Queen appeared at any of the plays of the capital. At the representation of "Iphigenia in Aulis," the actor who sang the words, "Let us sing, let us celebrate our Queen!" which were repeated by the chorus, directed by a respectful movement the eyes of the whole assembly upon her Majesty. Reiterated cries of 'Bis'! and clapping of hands, were followed by such a burst of enthusiasm that many of the audience added their voices to those of the actors in order to celebrate, it might too truly be said, another Iphigenia. The Queen, deeply affected, covered her eyes with her handkerchief; and this proof of sensibility raised the public enthusiasm to a still higher pitch.

The King gave Marie Antoinette Petit Trianon.

[The Chateau of Petit Trianon, which was built for Louis XV., was not remarkably handsome as a building. The luxuriance of the hothouses rendered the place agreeable to that Prince. He spent a few days there several times in the year. It was when he was setting off from Versailles for Petit Trianon that he was struck in the side by the knife of Damiens, and it was there that he was attacked by the smallpox, of which he died on the 10th of May, 1774.—*Madame Campan.*]

Henceforward she amused herself with improving the gardens, without allowing any addition to the building, or any change in the furniture, which was very shabby, and remained, in 1789, in the same state as during the reign of Louis XV. Everything there, without exception, was preserved; and the Queen slept in a faded bed, which had been used by the Comtesse du Barry. The charge of extravagance, generally made against the Queen, is the most unaccountable of all the popular errors respecting her character. She had exactly the contrary failing; and I could prove that she often carried her economy to a degree of parsimony actually blamable, especially in a sovereign. She took a great liking for Trianon, and used to go there alone, followed by a valet; but she found attendants ready to receive her,—a concierge and his wife, who served her as *femme de chambre*, women of the wardrobe, footmen, *etc.*



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When she first took possession of Petit Trianon, it was reported that she changed the name of the seat which the King had given her, and called it Little Vienna, or Little Schoenbrunn. A person who belonged to the Court, and was silly enough to give this report credit, wishing to visit Petit Trianon with a party, wrote to M. Campan, requesting the Queen's permission to do so. In his note he called Trianon Little Vienna. Similar requests were usually laid before the Queen just as they were made: she chose to give the permissions to see her gardens herself, liking to grant these little favours. When she came to the words I have quoted she was very, much offended, and exclaimed, angrily, that there were too many, fools ready, to aid the malicious; that she had been told of the report circulated, which pretended that she had thought of nothing but her own country, and that she kept an Austrian heart, while the interests of France alone ought to engage her. She refused the request so awkwardly made, and desired M. Campan to reply, that Trianon was not to be seen for some time, and that the Queen was astonished that any man in good society should believe she would do so ill-judged a thing as to change the French names of her palaces to foreign ones.

Before the Emperor Joseph II's first visit to France the Queen received a visit from the Archduke Maximilian in 1775. A stupid act of the ambassador, seconded on the part of the Queen by the Abbe de Vermond, gave rise at that period to a discussion which offended the Princes of the blood and the chief nobility of the kingdom. Travelling incognito, the young Prince claimed that the first visit was not due from him to the Princes of the blood; and the Queen supported his pretension.

From the time of the Regency, and on account of the residence of the family of Orleans in the bosom of the capital, Paris had preserved a remarkable degree of attachment and respect for that branch of the royal house; and although the crown was becoming more and more remote from the Princes of the House of Orleans, they had the advantage (a great one with the Parisians) of being the descendants of Henri IV. An affront to that popular family was a serious ground of dislike to the Queen. It was at this period that the circles of the city, and even of the Court, expressed themselves bitterly about her levity, and her partiality for the House of Austria. The Prince for whom the Queen had embarked in an important family quarrel—and a quarrel involving national prerogatives—was, besides, little calculated to inspire interest. Still young, uninformed, and deficient in natural talent, he was always making blunders.

He went to the Jardin du Roi; M. de Buffon, who received him there, offered him a copy of his works; the Prince declined accepting the book, saying to M. de Buffon, in the most polite manner possible, "I should be very sorry to deprive you of it."

[Joseph *ii*, on his visit to France, also went to see M. de Buffon, and said to that celebrated man, "I am come to fetch the copy of your works which my brother forgot."—*Note by the editor.*]



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It may be supposed that the Parisians were much entertained with this answer.

The Queen was exceedingly mortified at the mistakes made by her brother; but what hurt her most was being accused of preserving an Austrian heart. Marie Antoinette had more than once to endure that imputation during the long course of her misfortunes. Habit did not stop the tears such injustice caused; but the first time she was suspected of not loving France, she gave way to her indignation. All that she could say on the subject was useless; by seconding the pretensions of the Archduke she had put arms into her enemies' hands; they were labouring to deprive her of the love of the people, and endeavoured, by all possible means, to spread a belief that the Queen sighed for Germany, and preferred that country to France.

Marie Antoinette had none but herself to rely on for preserving the fickle smiles of the Court and the public. The King, too indifferent to serve her as a guide, as yet had conceived no love for her, notwithstanding the intimacy that grew between them at Choisy. In his closet Louis XVI. was immersed in deep study. At the Council he was busied with the welfare of his people; hunting and mechanical occupations engrossed his leisure moments, and he never thought on the subject of an heir.

The coronation took place at Rheims, with all the accustomed pomp. At this period the people's love for Louis XVI. burst forth in transports not to be mistaken for party demonstrations or idle curiosity. He replied to this enthusiasm by marks of confidence, worthy of a people happy in being governed by a good King; he took a pleasure in repeatedly walking without guards, in the midst of the crowd which pressed around him, and called down blessings on his head. I remarked the impression made at this time by an observation of Louis XVI. On the day of his coronation he put his hand up to his head, at the moment of the crown being placed upon it, and said, "It pinches me." Henri III. had exclaimed, "It pricks me." Those who were near the King were struck with the similarity between these two exclamations, though not of a class likely to be blinded by the superstitious fears of ignorance.

While the Queen, neglected as she was, could not even hope for the happiness of being a mother, she had the mortification of seeing the Comtesse d'Artois give birth to the Duc d'Angouleme.

Custom required that the royal family and the whole Court should be present at the accouchement of the Princesses; the Queen was therefore obliged to stay a whole day in her sister-in-law's chamber. The moment the Comtesse d'Artois was informed a prince was born, she put her hand to her forehead and exclaimed with energy, "My God, how happy I am!" The Queen felt very differently at this involuntary and natural exclamation. Nevertheless, her behaviour was perfect. She bestowed all possible marks of tenderness upon the young mother, and would



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not leave her until she was again put into bed; she afterwards passed along the staircase, and through the hall of the guards, with a calm demeanour, in the midst of an immense crowd. The poissardes, who had assumed a right of speaking to sovereigns in their own vulgar language, followed her to the very doors of her apartments, calling out to her with gross expressions, that she ought to produce heirs. The Queen reached her inner room, hurried and agitated; he shut herself up to weep with me alone, not from jealousy of her sister-in-law's happiness,—of that he was incapable,—but from sorrow at her own situation.

Deprived of the happiness of giving an heir to the crown, the Queen endeavoured to interest herself in the children of the people of her household. She had long been desirous to bring up one of them herself, and to make it the constant object of her care. A little village boy, four or five years old, full of health, with a pleasing countenance, remarkably large blue eyes, and fine light hair, got under the feet of the Queen's horses, when she was taking an airing in a calash, through the hamlet of St. Michel, near Louveciennes. The coachman and postilions stopped the horses, and the child was rescued without the slightest injury. Its grandmother rushed out of the door of her cottage to take it; but the Queen, standing up in her calash and extending her arms, called out that the child was hers, and that destiny had given it to her, to console her, no doubt, until she should have the happiness of having one herself. "Is his mother alive?" asked the Queen. "No, Madame; my daughter died last winter, and left five small children upon my hands." "I will take this one, and provide for all the rest; do you consent?" "Ah, Madame, they are too fortunate," replied the cottager; "but Jacques is a bad boy. I hope he will stay with you!" The Queen, taking little Jacques upon her knee, said that she would make him used to her, and gave orders to proceed. It was necessary, however, to shorten the drive, so violently did Jacques scream, and kick the Queen and her ladies.

The arrival of her Majesty at her apartments at Versailles, holding the little rustic by the hand, astonished the whole household; he cried out with intolerable shrillness that he wanted his grandmother, his brother Louis, and his sister Marianne; nothing could calm him. He was taken away by the wife of a servant, who was appointed to attend him as nurse. The other children were put to school. Little Jacques, whose family name was Armand, came back to the Queen two days afterwards; a white frock trimmed with lace, a rose-coloured sash with silver fringe, and a hat decorated with feathers, were now substituted for the woollen cap, the little red frock, and the wooden shoes. The child was really very beautiful. The Queen was enchanted with him; he was brought to her every morning at nine o'clock; he breakfasted and dined with her, and often even with the King. She liked to call him my child,



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[This little unfortunate was nearly twenty in 1792; the fury of the people and the fear of being thought a favourite of the Queen's had made him the most sanguinary terrorist of Versailles. He was killed at the battle of Jemappes.]

and lavished caresses upon him, still maintaining a deep silence respecting the regrets which constantly occupied her heart.

This child remained with the Queen until the time when Madame was old enough to come home to her august mother, who had particularly taken upon herself the care of her education.

The Queen talked incessantly of the qualities which she admired in Louis XVI., and gladly attributed to herself the slightest favourable change in his manner; perhaps she displayed too unreservedly the joy she felt, and the share she appropriated in the improvement. One day Louis XVI. saluted her ladies with more kindness than usual, and the Queen laughingly said to them, "Now confess, ladies, that for one so badly taught as a child, the King has saluted you with very good grace!"

The Queen hated M. de La Vauguyon; she accused him alone of those points in the habits, and even the sentiments, of the King which hurt her. A former first woman of the bedchamber to Queen Maria Leczinska had continued in office near the young Queen. She was one of those people who are fortunate enough to spend their lives in the service of kings without knowing anything of what is passing at Court. She was a great devotee; the Abbe Grisel, an ex-Jesuit, was her director. Being rich from her savings and an income of 50,000 livres, she kept a very good table; in her apartment, at the Grand Commun, the most distinguished persons who still adhered to the Order of Jesuits often assembled. The Duc de La Vauguyon was intimate with her; their chairs at the Eglise des Reollets were placed near each other; at high mass and at vespers they sang the "Gloria in Excelsis" and the "Magnificat" together; and the pious virgin, seeing in him only one of God's elect, little imagined him to be the declared enemy of a Princess whom she served and revered. On the day of his death she ran in tears to relate to the Queen the piety, humility, and repentance of the last moments of the Duc de La Vauguyon. He had called his people together, she said, to ask their pardon. "For what?" replied the Queen, sharply; "he has placed and pensioned off all his servants; it was of the King and his brothers that the holy man you bewail should have asked pardon, for having paid so little attention to the education of princes on whom the fate and happiness of twenty-five millions of men depend. Luckily," added she, "the King and his brothers, still young, have incessantly laboured to repair the errors of their preceptor."

The progress of time, and the confidence with which the King and the Princes, his brothers, were inspired by the change in their situation since the death of Louis XV., had developed their characters. I will endeavour to depict them.



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The features of Louis XVI. were noble enough, though somewhat melancholy in expression; his walk was heavy and unmajestic; his person greatly neglected; his hair, whatever might be the skill of his hairdresser, was soon in disorder. His voice, without being harsh, was not agreeable; if he grew animated in speaking he often got above his natural pitch, and became shrill. The Abbe de Radonvilliers, his preceptor, one of the Forty of the French Academy, a learned and amiable man, had given him and Monsieur a taste for study. The King had continued to instruct himself; he knew the English language perfectly; I have often heard him translate some of the most difficult passages in Milton's poems. He was a skilful geographer, and was fond of drawing and colouring maps; he was well versed in history, but had not perhaps sufficiently studied the spirit of it. He appreciated dramatic beauties, and judged them accurately. At Choisy, one day, several ladies expressed their dissatisfaction because the French actors were going to perform one of Moliere's pieces. The King inquired why they disapproved of the choice. One of them answered that everybody must admit that Moliere had very bad taste; the King replied that many things might be found in Moliere contrary to fashion, but that it appeared to him difficult to point out any in bad taste?

[The King, having purchased the Chateau of Rambouillet from the Duc de Penthièvre, amused himself with embellishing it. I have seen a register entirely in his own handwriting, which proves that he possessed a great variety of information on the minutiae of various branches of knowledge. In his accounts he would not omit an outlay of a franc. His figures and letters, when he wished to write legibly, were small and very neat, but in general he wrote very ill. He was so sparing of paper that he divided a sheet into eight, six, or four pieces, according to the length of what he had to write. Towards the close of the page he compressed the letters, and avoided interlineations. The last words were close to the edge of the paper; he seemed to regret being obliged to begin another page. He was methodical and analytical; he divided what he wrote into chapters and sections. He had extracted from the works of Nicole and Fenelon, his favourite authors, three or four hundred concise and sententious phrases; these he had classed according to subject, and formed a work of them in the style of Montesquieu. To this treatise he had given the following general title: "Of Moderate Monarchy" (De la Monarchie temperee), with chapters entitled, "Of the Person of the Prince;" "Of the Authority of Bodies in the State;" "Of the Character of the Executive Functions of the Monarchy." Had he been able to carry into effect all the grand precepts he had observed in Fenelon, Louis XVI. would have been an accomplished monarch, and France a powerful kingdom. The King used to accept the speeches his ministers presented



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to him to deliver on important occasions; but he corrected and modified them; struck out some parts, and added others; and sometimes consulted the Queen on the subject. The phrase of the minister erased by the King was frequently unsuitable, and dictated by the minister's private feelings; but the King's was always the natural expression. He himself composed, three times or oftener, his famous answers to the Parliament which he banished. But in his letters he was negligent, and always incorrect. Simplicity was the characteristic of the King's style; the figurative style of M. Necker did not please him; the sarcasms of Maurepas were disagreeable to him. Unfortunate Prince! he would predict, in his observations, that if such a calamity should happen, the monarchy would be ruined; and the next day he would consent in Council to the very measure which he had condemned the day before, and which brought him nearer the brink of the precipice.—*Soulavie*, "Historical and Political Memoirs of the Reign of Louis XVI.," vol. ii.]

This Prince combined with his attainments the attributes of a good husband, a tender father, and an indulgent master.

Unfortunately he showed too much predilection for the mechanical arts; masonry and lock-making so delighted him that he admitted into his private apartment a common locksmith, with whom he made keys and locks; and his hands, blackened by that sort of work, were often, in my presence, the subject of remonstrances and even sharp reproaches from the Queen, who would have chosen other amusements for her husband.

[Louis XVI. saw that the art of lock-making was capable of application to a higher study, He was an excellent geographer. The most valuable and complete instrument for the study of that science was begun by his orders and under his direction. It was an immense globe of copper, which was long preserved, though unfinished, in the Mazarine library. Louis XVI. invented and had executed under his own eyes the ingenious mechanism required for this globe.—*Note by the editor.*]

Austere and rigid with regard to himself alone, the King observed the laws of the Church with scrupulous exactness. He fasted and abstained throughout the whole of Lent. He thought it right that the queen should not observe these customs with the same strictness. Though sincerely pious, the spirit of the age had disposed his mind to toleration. Turgot, Malesherbes, and Necker judged that this Prince, modest and simple in his habits, would willingly sacrifice the royal prerogative to the solid greatness of his people. His heart, in truth, disposed him towards reforms; but his prejudices and fears, and the clamours of pious and privileged persons, intimidated him, and made him abandon plans which his love for the people had suggested.

Monsieur—



[During his stay at Avignon, Monsieur, afterwards Louis XVIII, lodged with the Duc de Crillon; he refused the town-guard which was offered him, saying, "A son of France, under the roof of a Crillon, needs no guard."—*Note by the editor.*]

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had more dignity of demeanour than the King; but his corpulence rendered his gait inelegant. He was fond of pageantry and magnificence. He cultivated the belles lettres, and under assumed names often contributed verses to the Mercury and other papers.

His wonderful memory was the handmaid of his wit, furnishing him with the happiest quotations. He knew by heart a varied repertoire, from the finest passages of the Latin classics to the Latin of all the prayers, from the works of Racine to the vaudeville of “Rose et Colas.”

The Comte d’Artoisi had an agreeable countenance, was well made, skilful in bodily exercises, lively, impetuous, fond of pleasure, and very particular in his dress. Some happy observations made by him were repeated with approval, and gave a favourable idea of his heart. The Parisians liked the open and frank character of this Prince, which they considered national, and showed real affection for him.

The dominion that the Queen gained over the King’s mind, the charms of a society in which Monsieur displayed his wit, and to which the Comte d’Artois—[Afterwards Charles X.]—gave life by the vivacity of youth, gradually softened that ruggedness of manner in Louis XVI. which a better-conducted education might have prevented. Still, this defect often showed itself, and, in spite of his extreme simplicity, the King inspired those who had occasion to speak to him with diffidence. Courtiers, submissive in the presence of their sovereign, are only the more ready to caricature him; with little good breeding, they called those answers they so much dreaded, Les coups de boutoir du Roi.—[The literal meaning of the phrase “coup de boutoir,” is a thrust from the snout of a boar.]

Methodical in all his habits, the King always went to bed at eleven precisely. One evening the Queen was going with her usual circle to a party, either at the Duc de Duras’s or the Princesse de Glumenee’s. The hand of the clock was slyly put forward to hasten the King’s departure by a few minutes; he thought bed-time was come, retired, and found none of his attendants ready to wait on him. This joke became known in all the drawing-rooms of Versailles, and was disapproved of there. Kings have no privacy. Queens have no boudoirs. If those who are in immediate attendance upon sovereigns be not themselves disposed to transmit their private habits to posterity, the meanest valet will relate what he has seen or heard; his gossip circulates rapidly, and forms public opinion, which at length ascribes to the most august persons characters which, however untrue they may be, are almost always indelible.

Note. The only passion ever shown by Louis XVI. was for hunting. He was so much occupied by it that when I went up into his private closets at Versailles, after the 10th of August, I saw upon the staircase six frames, in which were seen statements of all his hunts, when Dauphin and when King. In them was detailed the number, kind, and quality of the game he had killed at each hunting party during every month, every season, and every year of his reign.

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The interior of his private apartments was thus arranged: a salon, ornamented with gilded mouldings, displayed the engravings which had been dedicated to him, drawings of the canals he had dug, with the model of that of Burgundy, and the plan of the cones and works of Cherbourg. The upper hall contained his collection of geographical charts, spheres, globes, and also his geographical cabinet. There were to be seen drawings of maps which he had begun, and some that he had finished. He had a clever method of washing them in. His geographical memory was prodigious. Over the hall was the turning and joining room, furnished with ingenious instruments for working in wood. He inherited some from Louis XV., and he often busied himself, with Duret's assistance, in keeping them clean and bright. Above was the library of books published during his reign. The prayer books and manuscript books of Anne of Brittany, Francois I, the later Valois, Louis XIV., Louis XV., and the Dauphin formed the great hereditary library of the Chateau. Louis XVI. placed separately, in two apartments communicating with each other, the works of his own time, including a complete collection of Didot's editions, in vellum, every volume enclosed in a morocco case. There were several English works, among the rest the debates of the British Parliament, in a great number of volumes in folio (this is the *Moniteur of England*, a complete collection of which is so valuable and so scarce). By the side of this collection was to be seen a manuscript history of all the schemes for a descent upon that island, particularly that of Comte de Broglie. One of the presses of this cabinet was full of cardboard boxes, containing papers relative to the House of Austria, inscribed in the King's own hand: "Secret papers of my family respecting the House of Austria; papers of my family respecting the Houses of Stuart and Hanover." In an adjoining press were kept papers relative to Russia. Satirical works against Catherine *ii.* and against Paul I. were sold in France under the name of histories; Louis XVIII. collected and sealed up with his small seal the scandalous anecdotes against Catherine *ii.*, as well as the works of Rhulieres, of which he had a copy, to be certain that the secret life of that Princess, which attracted the curiosity of her contemporaries, should not be made public by his means.

Above the King's private library were a forge, two anvils, and a vast number of iron tools; various common locks, well made and perfect; some secret locks, and locks ornamented with gilt copper. It was there that the infamous Gamin, who afterwards accused the King of having tried to poison him, and was rewarded for his calumny with a pension of twelve thousand livres, taught him the art of lock-making. This Gamin, who became our guide, by order of the department and municipality of Versailles, did not, however, denounce the King on the 20th December, 1792.



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He had been made the confidant of that Prince in an immense number of important commissions; the King had sent him the "Red Book," from Paris, in a parcel; and the part which was concealed during the Constituent Assembly still remained so in 1793. Gamin hid it in a part of the Chateau inaccessible to everybody, and took it from under the shelves of a secret press before our eyes. This is a convincing proof that Louis XVI. hoped to return to his Chateau. When teaching Louis XVI. his trade Gamin took upon himself the tone and authority of a master. "The King was good, forbearing, timid, inquisitive, and addicted to sleep," said Gamin to me; "he was fond to excess of lock-making, and he concealed himself from the Queen and the Court to file and forge with me. In order to convey his anvil and my own backwards and forwards we were obliged to use a thousand stratagems, the history of which would: never end." Above the King's and Gamin's forges and anvils was an, observatory, erected upon a platform covered with lead. There, seated on an armchair, and assisted by a telescope, the King observed all that was passing in the courtyards of Versailles, the avenue of Paris, and the neighbouring gardens. He had taken a liking to Duret, one of the indoor servants of the palace, who sharpened his tools, cleaned his anvils, pasted his maps, and adjusted eyeglasses to the King's sight, who was short-sighted. This good Duret, and indeed all the indoor servants, spoke of their master with regret and affection, and with tears in their eyes.

The King was born weak and delicate; but from the age of twenty-four he possessed a robust constitution, inherited from his mother, who was of the House of Saxe, celebrated for generations for its robustness. There were two men in Louis XVI., the man of knowledge and the man of will. The King knew the history of his own family and of the first houses of France perfectly. He composed the instructions for M. de la Peyrouse's voyage round the world, which the minister thought were drawn up by several members of the Academy of Sciences. His memory retained an infinite number of names and situations. He remembered quantities and numbers wonderfully. One day an account was presented to him in which the minister had ranked among the expenses an item inserted in the account of the preceding year. "There is a double charge," said the King; "bring me last year's account, and I will show it yet there." When the King was perfectly master of the details of any matter, and saw injustice, he was obdurate even to harshness. Then he would be obeyed instantly, in order to be sure that he was obeyed.

But in important affairs of state the man of will was not to be found. Louis XVI. was upon the throne exactly what those weak temperaments whom nature has rendered incapable of an opinion are in society. In his pusillanimity, he gave his confidence to a minister; and although amidst various counsels he often knew which was the best, he never had the resolution to say, "I prefer the opinion of such a one." Herein originated the misfortunes of the State.—SOULAVIE'S "Historical and Political Memoirs Of the Reign Of *louis XVI.*," Vol ii.



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CHAPTER VII.

The winter following the confinement of the Comtesse d'Artois was very severe; the recollections of the pleasure which sleighing-parties had given the Queen in her childhood made her wish to introduce similar ones in France. This amusement had already been known in that Court, as was proved by sleighs being found in the stables which had been used by the Dauphin, the father of Louis XVI. Some were constructed for the Queen in a more modern style. The Princes also ordered several; and in a few days there was a tolerable number of these vehicles. They were driven by the princes and noblemen of the Court. The noise of the bells and balls with which the harness of the horses was furnished, the elegance and whiteness of their plumes, the varied forms of the carriages, the gold with which they were all ornamented, rendered these parties delightful to the eye. The winter was very favourable to them, the snow remaining on the ground nearly six weeks; the drives in the park afforded a pleasure shared by the spectators.

[Louis XVI., touched with the wretched condition of the poor of Versailles during the winter of 1776, had several cart-loads of wood distributed among them. Seeing one day a file of those vehicles passing by, while several noblemen were preparing to be drawn swiftly over the ice, he uttered these memorable words: "Gentlemen, here are my sleighs!"—*Note by the editor.*]

No one imagined that any blame could attach to so innocent an amusement. But the party were tempted to extend their drives as far as the Champs Elysees; a few sleighs even crossed the boulevards; the ladies being masked, the Queen's enemies took the opportunity of saying that she had traversed the streets of Paris in a sleigh.

This became a matter of moment. The public discovered in it a predilection for the habits of Vienna; but all that Marie Antoinette did was criticised.

Sleigh-driving, savouring of the Northern Courts, had no favour among the Parisians. The Queen was informed of this; and although all the sleighs were preserved, and several subsequent winters lent themselves to the amusement, she would not resume it.

It was at the time of the sleighing-parties that the Queen became intimately acquainted with the Princesse de Lamballe, who made her appearance in them wrapped in fur, with all the brilliancy and freshness of the age of twenty,—the emblem of spring, peeping from under sable and ermine. Her situation, moreover, rendered her peculiarly interesting; married, when she was scarcely past childhood, to a young prince, who ruined himself by the contagious example of the Duc d'Orleans, she had had nothing to do from the time of her arrival in France but to weep. A widow at eighteen, and

childless, she lived with the Duc de Penthièvre as an adopted daughter. She had the tenderest respect and attachment for that

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venerable Prince; but the Queen, though doing justice to his virtues, saw that the Duc de Penthièvre's way of life, whether at Paris or at his country-seat, could neither afford his young daughter-in-law the amusements suited to her time of life, nor ensure her in the future an establishment such as she was deprived of by her widowhood. She determined, therefore, to establish her at Versailles; and for her sake revived the office of superintendent, which had been discontinued at Court since the death of Mademoiselle de Clermont. It is said that Maria Leczinska had decided that this place should continue vacant, the superintendent having so extensive a power in the houses of queens as to be frequently a restraint upon their inclinations. Differences which soon took place between Marie Antoinette and the Princesse de Lamballe respecting the official prerogatives of the latter, proved that the wife of Louis XV. had acted judiciously in abolishing the office; but a kind of treaty made between the Queen and the Princess smoothed all difficulties. The blame for too strong an assertion of claims fell upon a secretary of the superintendent, who had been her adviser; and everything was so arranged that a firm friendship existed between these two Princesses down to the disastrous period which terminated their career.

Notwithstanding the enthusiasm which the splendour, grace, and kindness of the Queen generally inspired, secret intrigues continued in operation against her. A short time after the ascension of Louis XVI. to the throne, the minister of the King's household was informed that a most offensive libel against the Queen was about to appear. The lieutenant of police deputed a man named Goupil, a police inspector, to trace this libel; he came soon after to say that he had found out the place where the work was being printed, and that it was at a country house near Yverdun. He had already got possession of two sheets, which contained the most atrocious calumnies, conveyed with a degree of art which might make them very dangerous to the Queen's reputation. Goupil said that he could obtain the rest, but that he should want a considerable sum for that purpose. Three thousand Louis were given him, and very soon afterwards he brought the whole manuscript and all that had been printed to the lieutenant of police. He received a thousand Louis more as a reward for his address and zeal; and a much more important office was about to be given him, when another spy, envious of Goupil's good fortune, gave information that Goupil himself was the author of the libel; that, ten years before, he had been put into the Bicetre for swindling; and that Madame Goupil had been only three years out of the Salpetriere, where she had been placed under another name. This Madame Goupil was very pretty and very intriguing; she had found means to form an intimacy with Cardinal de Rohan, whom she led, it is said, to hope for a reconciliation with the Queen. All this affair was hushed up; but it shows that it was the Queen's fate to be incessantly attacked by the meanest and most odious machinations.



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Another woman, named Cahouette de Millers, whose husband held an office in the Treasury, being very irregular in conduct, and of a scheming turn of mind, had a mania for appearing in the eyes of her friends at Paris as a person in favour at Court, to which she was not entitled by either birth or office. During the latter years of the life of Louis XV. she had made many dupes, and picked up considerable sums by passing herself off as the King's mistress. The fear of irritating Madame du Barry was, according to her, the only thing which prevented her enjoying that title openly. She came regularly to Versailles, kept herself concealed in a furnished lodging, and her dupes imagined she was secretly summoned to Court.

This woman formed the scheme of getting admission, if possible, to the presence of the Queen, or at least causing it to be believed that she had done so. She adopted as her lover Gabriel de Saint Charles, intendant of her Majesty's finances,—an office, the privileges of which were confined to the right of entering the Queen's apartment on Sunday. Madame de Villers came every Saturday to Versailles with M. de Saint Charles, and lodged in his apartment. M. Campan was there several times. She painted tolerably well, and she requested him to do her the favour to present to the Queen a portrait of her Majesty which she had just copied. M. Campan knew the woman's character, and refused her. A few days after, he saw on her Majesty's couch the portrait which he had declined to present to her; the Queen thought it badly painted, and gave orders that it should be carried back to the Princesse de Lamballe, who had sent it to her. The ill success of the portrait did not deter the manoeuvrer from following up her designs; she easily procured through M. de Saint Charles patents and orders signed by the Queen; she then set about imitating her writing, and composed a great number of notes and letters, as if written by her Majesty, in the tenderest and most familiar style. For many months she showed them as great secrets to several of her particular friends. Afterwards, she made the Queen appear to write to her, to procure various fancy articles. Under the pretext of wishing to execute her Majesty's commissions accurately, she gave these letters to the tradesmen to read, and succeeded in having it said, in many houses, that the Queen had a particular regard for her. She then enlarged her scheme, and represented the Queen as desiring to borrow 200,000 francs which she had need of, but which she did not wish to ask of the King from his private funds. This letter, being shown to M. Beranger, 'fermier general' of the finances, took effect; he thought himself fortunate in being able to render this assistance to his sovereign, and lost no time in sending the 200,000 francs to Madame de Villers. This first step was followed by some doubts, which he communicated to people better informed than himself of what was passing at Court;

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they added to his uneasiness; he then went to M. de Sartine, who unravelled the whole plot. The woman was sent to St. Pelagie; and the unfortunate husband was ruined, by replacing the sum borrowed, and by paying for the jewels fraudulently purchased in the Queen's name. The forged letters were sent to her Majesty; I compared them in her presence with her own handwriting, and the only distinguishable difference was a little more regularity in the letters.

This trick, discovered and punished with prudence and without passion, produced no more sensation out of doors than that of the Inspector Goupil.

A year after the nomination of Madame de Lamballe to the post of superintendent of the Queen's household, balls and quadrilles gave rise to the intimacy of her Majesty with the Comtesse Jules de Polignac. This lady really interested Marie Antoinette. She was not rich, and generally lived upon her estate at Claye. The Queen was astonished at not having seen her at Court earlier. The confession that her want of fortune had even prevented her appearance at the celebration of the marriages of the Princes added to the interest which she had inspired.

The Queen was full of consideration, and took delight in counteracting the injustice of fortune. The Countess was induced to come to Court by her husband's sister, Madame Diane de Polignac, who had been appointed lady of honour to the Comtesse d'Artois. The Comtesse Jules was really fond of a tranquil life; the impression she made at Court affected her but little; she felt only the attachment manifested for her by the Queen. I had occasion to see her from the commencement of her favour at Court; she often passed whole hours with me, while waiting for the Queen. She conversed with me freely and ingenuously about the honour, and at the same time the danger, she saw in the kindness of which she was the object. The Queen sought for the sweets of friendship; but can this gratification, so rare in any rank, exist between a Queen and a subject, when they are surrounded, moreover, by snares laid by the artifice of courtiers? This pardonable error was fatal to the happiness of Marie Antoinette.

The retiring character of the Comtesse Jules, afterwards Duchesse de Polignac, cannot be spoken of too favourably; but if her heart was incapable of forming ambitious projects, her family and friends in her fortune beheld their own, and endeavoured to secure the favour of the Queen.

[The Comtesse, afterwards Duchesse de Polignac, nee Polastron, Married the Comte (in 1780 the Duc) Jules de Polignac, the father of the Prince de Polignac of Napoleon's and of Charles X.'s time. She emigrated in 1789, and died in Vienna in 1793.]

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The Comtesse de Diane, sister of M. de Polignac, and the Baron de Besenval and M. de Vaudreuil, particular friends of the Polignac family, made use of means, the success of which was infallible. One of my friends (Comte de Moustier), who was in their secret, came to tell me that Madame de Polignac was about to quit Versailles suddenly; that she would take leave of the Queen only in writing; that the Comtesse Diane and M. de Vaudreuil had dictated her letter, and the whole affair was arranged for the purpose of stimulating the attachment of Marie Antoinette. The next day, when I went up to the palace, I found the Queen with a letter in her hand, which she was reading with much emotion; it was the letter from the Comtesse Jules; the Queen showed it to me. The Countess expressed in it her grief at leaving a princess who had loaded her with kindness. The narrowness of her fortune compelled her to do so; but she was much more strongly impelled by the fear that the Queen's friendship, after having raised up dangerous enemies against her, might abandon her to their hatred, and to the regret of having lost the august favour of which she was the object.

This step produced the full effect that had been expected from it. A young and sensitive queen cannot long bear the idea of contradiction. She busied herself in settling the Comtesse Jules near her, by making such a provision for her as should place her beyond anxiety. Her character suited the Queen; she had merely natural talents, no pedantry, no affectation of knowledge. She was of middle size; her complexion very fair, her eyebrows and hair dark brown, her teeth superb, her smile enchanting, and her whole person graceful. She was seen almost always in a demi-toilet, remarkable only for neatness and good taste. I do not think I ever once saw diamonds about her, even at the climax of her fortune, when she had the rank of Duchess at Court.

I have always believed that her sincere attachment for the Queen, as much as her love of simplicity, induced her to avoid everything that might cause her to be thought a wealthy favourite. She had not one of the failings which usually accompany that position. She loved the persons who shared the Queen's affections, and was entirely free from jealousy. Marie Antoinette flattered herself that the Comtesse Jules and the Princesse de Lamballe would be her especial friends, and that she should possess a society formed according to her own taste. "I will receive them in my closet, or at Trianon," said she; "I will enjoy the comforts of private life, which exist not for us, unless we have the good sense to secure them for ourselves." The happiness the Queen thought to secure was destined to turn to vexation. All those courtiers who were not admitted to this intimacy became so many jealous and vindictive enemies.



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It was necessary to make a suitable provision for the Countess. The place of first equerry, in reversion after the Comte de Tesse, given to Comte Jules unknown to the titular holder, displeased the family of Noailles. This family had just sustained another mortification, the appointment of the Princesse de Lamballe having in some degree rendered necessary the resignation of the Comtesse de Noailles, whose husband was thereupon made a marshal of France. The Princesse de Lamballe, although she did not quarrel with the Queen, was alarmed at the establishment of the Comtesse Jules at Court, and did not form, as her Majesty had hoped, a part of that intimate society, which was in turn composed of Mesdames Jules and Diane de Polignac, d'Andlau and de Chalon, and Messieurs de Guignes, de Coigny, d'Adhemar, de Besenval, lieutenant-colonel of the Swiss, de Polignac, de Vaudreuil, and de Guiche; the Prince de Ligne and the Duke of Dorset, the English ambassador, were also admitted.

It was a long time before the Comtesse Jules maintained any great state at Court. The Queen contented herself with giving her very fine apartments at the top of the marble staircase. The salary of first equerry, the trifling emoluments derived from M. de Polignac's regiment, added to their slender patrimony, and perhaps some small pension, at that time formed the whole fortune of the favourite. I never saw the Queen make her a present of value; I was even astonished one day at hearing her Majesty mention, with pleasure, that the Countess had gained ten thousand francs in the lottery. "She was in great want of it," added the Queen.

Thus the Polignacs were not settled at Court in any degree of splendour which could justify complaints from others, and the substantial favours bestowed upon that family were less envied than the intimacy between them and their proteges and the Queen. Those who had no hope of entering the circle of the Comtesse Jules were made jealous by the opportunities of advancement it afforded.

However, at the time I speak of, the society around the Comtesse Jules was fully engaged in gratifying the young Queen. Of this the Marquis de Vaudreuil was a conspicuous member; he was a brilliant man, the friend and protector of men of letters and celebrated artists.

The Baron de Besenval added to the bluntness of the Swiss all the adroitness of a French courtier. His fifty years and gray hairs made him enjoy among women the confidence inspired by mature age, although he had not given up the thought of love affairs. He talked of his native mountains with enthusiasm. He would at any time sing the "Ranz des Vaches" with tears in his eyes, and was the best story-teller in the Comtesse Jules's circle. The last new song or 'bon mot' and the gossip of the day were the sole topics of conversation in the Queen's parties. Wit was banished from them. The Comtesse Diane, more inclined to literary pursuits than her sister-in-law, one day, recommended her to read the "Iliad" and "Odyssey." The latter replied, laughing, that she was perfectly acquainted with the Greek poet, and said to prove it:



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“Homere etait aveugle et jouait du hautbois.”

(Homer was blind and played on the hautboy.)

[This lively repartee of the Duchesse de Polignac is a droll imitation of a line in the “Mercure Galant.” In the quarrel scene one of the lawyers says to his brother quill: ‘Ton pere etait aveugle et jouait du hautbois.’]

The Queen found this sort of humour very much to her taste, and said that no pedant should ever be her friend.

Before the Queen fixed her assemblies at Madame de Polignac’s, she occasionally passed the evening at the house of the Duc and Duchesse de Duras, where a brilliant party of young persons met together. They introduced a taste for trifling games, such as question and answer, ‘guerre panpan’, blind man’s buff, and especially a game called ‘descampativos’. The people of Paris, always criticising, but always imitating the customs of the Court, were infected with the mania for these childish sports. Madame de Genlis, sketching the follies of the day in one of her plays, speaks of these famous ‘descampativos’; and also of the rage for making a friend, called the ‘inseparable’, until a whim or the slightest difference might occasion a total rupture.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Duc de Choiseul had reappeared at Court on the ceremony of the King’s coronation for the first time after his disgrace under Louis XV. in 1770. The state of public feeling on the subject gave his friends hope of seeing him again in administration, or in the Council of State; but the opposite party was too firmly seated at Versailles, and the young Queen’s influence was outweighed, in the mind of the King, by long-standing prejudices; she therefore gave up for ever her attempt to reinstate the Duke. Thus this Princess, who has been described as so ambitious, and so strenuously supporting the interest of the House of Austria, failed twice in the only scheme which could forward the views constantly attributed to her; and spent the whole of her reign surrounded by enemies of herself and her house.

Marie Antoinette took little pains to promote literature and the fine arts. She had been annoyed in consequence of having ordered a performance of the “Connstable de Bourbon,” on the celebration of the marriage of Madame Clotilde with the Prince of Piedmont. The Court and the people of Paris censured as indecorous the naming characters in the piece after the reigning family, and that with which the new alliance was formed. The reading of this piece by the Comte de Guibert in the Queen’s closet had produced in her Majesty’s circle that sort of enthusiasm which obscures the judgment. She promised herself she would have no more readings. Yet, at the request of M. de Cubieres, the King’s equerry, the Queen agreed to hear the reading of a

comedy written by his brother. She collected her intimate circle, Messieurs de Coigny, de Vaudreuil, de Besenval, Mesdames de Polignac, de Chalon, *etc.*, and to increase the number of judges, she admitted the two Parnys, the Chevalier de Bertin, my father-in-law, and myself.



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Mold read for the author. I never could satisfy myself by what magic the skilful reader gained our unanimous approbation of a ridiculous work. Surely the delightful voice of Mold, by awakening our recollection of the dramatic beauties of the French stage, prevented the wretched lines of Dorat Cubieres from striking on our ears. I can assert that the exclamation Charming! charming! repeatedly interrupted the reader. The piece was admitted for performance at Fontainebleau; and for the first time the King had the curtain dropped before the end of the play. It was called the "Dramomane" or "Dramaturge." All the characters died of eating poison in a pie. The Queen, highly disconcerted at having recommended this absurd production, announced that she would never hear another reading; and this time she kept her word.

The tragedy of "Mustapha and Mangir," by M. de Chamfort, was highly successful at the Court theatre at Fontainebleau. The Queen procured the author a pension of 1,200 francs, but his play failed on being performed at Paris.

The spirit of opposition which prevailed in that city delighted in reversing the verdicts of the Court. The Queen determined never again to give any marked countenance to new dramatic works. She reserved her patronage for musical composers, and in a few years their art arrived at a perfection it had never before attained in France.

It was solely to gratify the Queen that the manager of the Opera brought the first company of comic actors to Paris. Gluck, Piccini, and Sacchini were attracted there in succession. These eminent composers were treated with great distinction at Court. Immediately on his arrival in France, Gluck was admitted to the Queen's toilet, and she talked to him all the time he remained with her. She asked him one day whether he had nearly brought his grand opera of "Armide" to a conclusion, and whether it pleased him. Gluck replied very coolly, in his German accent, "Madame, it will soon be finished, and really it will be superb." There was a great outcry against the confidence with which the composer had spoken of one of his own productions. The Queen defended him warmly; she insisted that he could not be ignorant of the merit of his works; that he well knew they were generally admired, and that no doubt he was afraid lest a modesty, merely dictated by politeness, should look like affectation in him.

[Gluck often had to deal with self-sufficiency equal to his own. He was very reluctant to introduce long ballets into "Iphigenia." Vestris deeply regretted that the opera was not terminated by a piece they called a chaconne, in which he displayed all his power. He complained to Gluck about it. Gluck, who treated his art with all the dignity it merits, replied that in so interesting a subject dancing would be misplaced. Being pressed another time by Vestris on the same subject, "A chaconne! A chaconne!" roared out the enraged musician; "we must describe the Greeks; and had the Greeks chaconnes?" "They had not?" returned the astonished dancer; "why, then, so much the worse for them!"—*Note by the editor.*]



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The Queen did not confine her admiration to the lofty style of the French and Italian operas; she greatly valued Gretry's music, so well adapted to the spirit and feeling of the words. A great deal of the poetry set to music by Gretry is by Marmontel. The day after the first performance of "Zemira and Azor," Marmontel and Gretry were presented to the Queen as she was passing through the gallery of Fontainebleau to go to mass. The Queen congratulated Gretry on the success of the new opera, and told him that she had dreamed of the enchanting effect of the trio by Zemira's father and sisters behind the magic mirror. Gretry, in a transport of joy, took Marmontel in his arms, "Ah! my friend," cried he, "excellent music may be made of this."—"And execrable words," coolly observed Marmontel, to whom her Majesty had not addressed a single compliment.

The most indifferent artists were permitted to have the honour of painting the Queen. A full-length portrait, representing her in all the pomp of royalty, was exhibited in the gallery of Versailles. This picture, which was intended for the Court of Vienna, was executed by a man who does not deserve even to be named, and disgusted all people of taste. It seemed as if this art had, in France, retrograded several centuries.

The Queen had not that enlightened judgment, or even that mere taste, which enables princes to foster and protect great talents. She confessed frankly that she saw no merit in any portrait beyond the likeness. When she went to the Louvre, she would run hastily over all the little "genre" pictures, and come out, as she acknowledged, without having once raised her eyes to the grand compositions.

There is no good portrait of the Queen, save that by Werthmuller, chief painter to the King of Sweden, which was sent to Stockholm, and that by Madame Lebrun, which was saved from the revolutionary fury by the commissioners for the care of the furniture at Versailles.

[A sketch of very great interest made when the Queen was in the Temple and discovered many years afterwards there, recently reproduced in the memoirs of the Marquise de Tourzel (Paris, Plon), is the last authentic portrait of the unhappy Queen. See also the catalogue of portraits made by Lord Ronald Gower.]

The composition of the latter picture resembles that of Henriette of France, the wife of the unfortunate Charles I., painted by Vandyke. Like Marie Antoinette, she is seated, surrounded by her children, and that resemblance adds to the melancholy interest raised by this beautiful production.

While admitting that the Queen gave no direct encouragement to any art but that of music, I should be wrong to pass over in silence the patronage conferred by her and the Princes, brothers of the King, on the art of printing.

[In 1790 the King gave a proof of his particular good-will to the bookselling trade. A company consisting of the first Parisian booksellers, being on the eve of stopping



payment, succeeded in laying before the King a statement of their distressed situation. The monarch was affected by it; he took from the civil list the sum of which the society stood in immediate need, and became security for the repayment of the remainder of the 1,200,000 livres, which they wanted to borrow, and for the repayment of which he fixed no particular time.]

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To Marie Antoinette we are indebted for a splendid quarto edition of the works of Metastasio; to Monsieur, the King's brother, for a quarto Tasso, embellished with engravings after Cochin; and to the Comte d'Artois for a small collection of select works, which is considered one of the chef d'oeuvres of the press of the celebrated Didot.

In 1775, on the death of the Marechal du Muy, the ascendancy obtained by the sect of innovators occasioned M. de Saint-Germain to be recalled to Court and made Minister of War. His first care was the destruction of the King's military household establishment, an imposing and effectual rampart round the sovereign power.

When Chancellor Maupeou obtained from Louis XV. the destruction of the Parliament and the exile of all the ancient magistrates, the Mousquetaires were charged with the execution of the commission for this purpose; and at the stroke of midnight, the presidents and members were all arrested, each by two Mousquetaires. In the spring of 1775 a popular insurrection had taken place in consequence of the high price of bread. M. Turgot's new regulation, which permitted unlimited trade in corn, was either its cause or the pretext for it; and the King's household troops again rendered the greatest services to public tranquillity.

I have never be enable to discover the true cause of the support given to M. de Saint-Germain's policy by the Queen, unless in the marked favour shown to the captains and officers of the Body Guards, who by this reduction became the only soldiers of their rank entrusted with the safety of the sovereign; or else in the Queen's strong prejudice against the Duc d'Aiguillon, then commander of the light-horse. M. de Saint-Germain, however, retained fifty gens d'armes and fifty light-horse to form a royal escort on state occasions; but in 1787 the King reduced both these military bodies. The Queen then said with satisfaction that at last she should see no more red coats in the gallery of Versailles.

From 1775 to 1781 were the gayest years of the Queen's life. In the little journeys to Choisy, performances frequently took place at the theatre twice in one day: grand opera and French or Italian comedy at the usual hour; and at eleven at night they returned to the theatre for parodies in which the best actors of the Opera presented themselves in whimsical parts and costumes. The celebrated dancer Guimard always took the leading characters in the latter performance; she danced better than she acted; her extreme leanness, and her weak, hoarse voice added to the burlesque in the parodied characters of Ernelinde and Iphigenie.



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The most magnificent fete ever given to the Queen was one prepared for her by Monsieur, the King's brother, at Brunoy. That Prince did me the honour to admit me, and I followed her Majesty into the gardens, where she found in the first copse knights in full armour asleep at the foot of trees, on which hung their spears and shields. The absence of the beauties who had incited the nephews of Charlemagne and the gallants of that period to lofty deeds was supposed to occasion this lethargic slumber. But when the Queen appeared at the entrance of the copse they were on foot in an instant, and melodious voices announced their eagerness to display their valour. They then hastened into a vast arena, magnificently decorated in the exact style of the ancient tournaments. Fifty dancers dressed as pages presented to the knights twenty-five superb black horses, and twenty-five of a dazzling whiteness, all most richly caparisoned. The party led by Augustus Vestris wore the Queen's colours. Picq, balletmaster at the Russian Court, commanded the opposing band. There was running at the negro's head, tilting, and, lastly, combats 'a outrance', perfectly well imitated. Although the spectators were aware that the Queen's colours could not but be victorious, they did not the less enjoy the apparent uncertainty.

Nearly all the agreeable women of Paris were ranged upon the steps which surrounded the area of the tourney. The Queen, surrounded by the royal family and the whole Court, was placed beneath an elevated canopy. A play, followed by a ballet-pantomime and a ball, terminated the fete. Fireworks and illuminations were not spared. Finally, from a prodigiously high scaffold, placed on a rising ground, the words 'Vive Louis! Vive Marie Antoinette!' were shown in the air in the midst of a very dark but calm night.

Pleasure was the sole pursuit of every one of this young family, with the exception of the King. Their love of it was perpetually encouraged by a crowd of those officious people who, by anticipating the desires and even the passions of princes, find means of showing their zeal, and hope to gain or maintain favour for themselves.

Who would have dared to check the amusements of a queen, young, lively, and handsome? A mother or a husband alone would have had the right to do it; and the King threw no impediment in the way of Marie Antoinette's inclinations. His long indifference had been followed by admiration and love. He was a slave to all the wishes of the Queen, who, delighted with the happy change in the heart and habits of the King, did not sufficiently conceal the ascendancy she was gaining over him.

The King went to bed every night at eleven precisely; he was very methodical, and nothing was allowed to interfere with his rules. The noise which the Queen unavoidably made when she returned very late from the evenings which she spent with the Princesse de Gugmenee or the Duc de Duras, at last annoyed the King, and it was amicably agreed that the Queen should apprise him when she intended to sit up late. He then began to sleep in his own apartment, which had never before happened from the time of their marriage.



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During the winter the Queen attended the Opera balls with a single lady of the palace, and always found there Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois. Her people concealed their liveries under gray cloth greatcoats. She never thought she was recognized, while all the time she was known to the whole assembly, from the first moment she entered the theatre; they pretended, however, not to recognise her, and some masquerade manoeuvre was always adopted to give her the pleasure of fancying herself incognito.

Louis XVI. determined once to accompany the Queen to a masked ball; it was agreed that the King should hold not only the grand but the petit coucher, as if actually going to bed. The Queen went to his apartment through the inner corridors of the palace, followed by one of her women with a black domino; she assisted him to put it on, and they went alone to the chapel court, where a carriage waited for them, with the captain of the Guard of the quarter, and a lady of the palace. The King was but little amused, spoke only to two or three persons, who knew him immediately, and found nothing to admire at the masquerade but Punches and Harlequins, which served as a joke against him for the royal family, who often amused themselves with laughing at him about it.

An event, simple in itself, brought dire suspicion upon the Queen. She was going out one evening with the Duchesse de Lupnes, lady of the palace, when her carriage broke down at the entrance into Paris; she was obliged to alight; the Duchess led her into a shop, while a footman called a 'fiacre'. As they were masked, if they had but known how to keep silence, the event would never have been known; but to ride in a fiacre is so unusual an adventure for a queen that she had hardly entered the Opera-house when she could not help saying to some persons whom she met there: "That I should be in a fiacre! Is it not droll?"

From that moment all Paris was informed of the adventure of the fiacre. It was said that everything connected with it was mysterious; that the Queen had kept an assignation in a private house with the Duc de Coigny. He was indeed very well received at Court, but equally so by the King and Queen. These accusations of gallantry once set afloat, there were no longer any bounds to the calumnies circulated at Paris. If, during the chase or at cards, the Queen spoke to Lord Edward Dillon, De Lambertye, or others, they were so many favoured lovers. The people of Paris did not know that none of those young persons were admitted into the Queen's private circle of friends; the Queen went about Paris in disguise, and had made use of a fiacre; and a single instance of levity gives room for the suspicion of others.



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Conscious of innocence, and well knowing that all about her must do justice to her private life, the Queen spoke of these reports with contempt, contenting herself with the supposition that some folly in the young men mentioned had given rise to them. She therefore left off speaking to them or even looking at them. Their vanity took alarm at this, and revenge induced them either to say, or to leave others to think, that they were unfortunate enough to please no longer. Other young coxcombs, placing themselves near the private box which the Queen occupied incognito when she attended the public theatre at Versailles, had the presumption to imagine that they were noticed by her; and I have known such notions entertained merely on account of the Queen's requesting one of those gentlemen to inquire behind the scenes whether it would be long before the commencement of the second piece.

The list of persons received into the Queen's closet which I gave in the preceding chapter was placed in the hands of the ushers of the chamber by the Princesse de Lamballe; and the persons there enumerated could present themselves to enjoy the distinction only on those days when the Queen chose to be with her intimates in a private manner; and this was only when she was slightly indisposed. People of the first rank at Court sometimes requested special audiences of her; the Queen then received them in a room within that called the closet of the women on duty, and these women announced them in her Majesty's apartment.

The Duc de Lauzun had a good deal of wit, and chivalrous manners. The Queen was accustomed to see him at the King's suppers, and at the house of the Princesse de Guemenee, and always showed him attention. One day he made his appearance at Madame de Guemenee's in uniform, and with the most magnificent plume of white heron's feathers that it was possible to behold. The Queen admired the plume, and he offered it to her through the Princesse de Guemenee. As he had worn it the Queen had not imagined that he could think of giving it to her; much embarrassed with the present which she had, as it were, drawn upon herself, she did not like to refuse it, nor did she know whether she ought to make one in return; afraid, if she did give anything, of giving either too much or too little, she contented herself with once letting M. de Lauzun see her adorned with the plume. In his secret "Memoirs" the Duke attaches an importance to his present, which proves him utterly unworthy of an honour accorded only to his name and rank

A short time afterwards he solicited an audience; the Queen granted it, as she would have done to any other courtier of equal rank. I was in the room adjoining that in which he was received; a few minutes after his arrival the Queen reopened the door, and said aloud, and in an angry tone of voice, "Go, monsieur." M. de Lauzun bowed low, and withdrew. The Queen was much agitated. She said to me: "That man shall never again come within my doors." A few years before the Revolution of 1789 the Marechal de Biron died. The Duc de Lauzun, heir to his name, aspired to the important post of colonel of the regiment of French guards. The Queen, however, procured it for the Duc

du Chaatelet. The Duc de Biron espoused the cause of the Duc d'Orleans, and became one of the most violent enemies of Marie Antoinette.



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It is with reluctance that I enter minutely on a defence of the Queen against two infamous accusations with which libellers have dared to swell their envenomed volumes. I mean the unworthy suspicions of too strong an attachment for the Comte d'Artois, and of the motives for the tender friendship which subsisted between the Queen, the Princesse de Lamballe, and the Duchesse de Polignac. I do not believe that the Comte d'Artois was, during his own youth and that of the Queen, so much smitten as has been said with the loveliness of his sister-in-law; I can affirm that I always saw that Prince maintain the most respectful demeanour towards the Queen; that she always spoke of his good-nature and cheerfulness with that freedom which attends only the purest sentiments; and that none of those about the Queen ever saw in the affection she manifested towards the Comte d'Artois more than that of a kind and tender sister for her youngest brother. As to the intimate connection between Marie Antoinette and the ladies I have named, it never had, nor could have, any other motive than the very innocent wish to secure herself two friends in the midst of a numerous Court; and notwithstanding this intimacy, that tone of respect observed by persons of the most exalted rank towards majesty never ceased to be maintained.

The Queen, much occupied with the society of Madame de Polignac, and an unbroken series of amusements, found less time for the Abbe de Vermond; he therefore resolved to retire from Court. The world did him the honour to believe that he had hazarded remonstrances upon his august pupil's frivolous employment of her time, and that he considered himself, both as an ecclesiastic and as instructor, now out of place at Court. But the world was deceived his dissatisfaction arose purely from the favour shown to the Comtesse Jules. After a fortnight's absence we saw him at Versailles again, resuming his usual functions.

The Queen could express herself with winning graciousness to persons who merited her praise. When M. Loustouneau was appointed to the reversion of the post of first surgeon to the King, he came to make his acknowledgments. He was much beloved by the poor, to whom he had chiefly devoted his talents, spending nearly thirty thousand francs a year on indigent sufferers. The Queen replied to his thanks by saying: "You are satisfied, Monsieur; but I am far from being so with the inhabitants of Versailles. On the news of your appointment the town should have been illuminated."—"How so, Madame?" asked the astonished surgeon, who was very modest. "Why," replied the Queen, "if the poor whom you have succoured for the past twenty years had each placed a single candle in their windows it would have been the most beautiful illumination ever witnessed."



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The Queen did not limit her kindness to friendly words. There was frequently seen in the apartments of Versailles a veteran captain of the grenadiers of France, called the Chevalier d'Orville, who for four years had been soliciting from the Minister of War the post of major, or of King's lieutenant. He was known to be very poor; but he supported his lot without complaining of this vexatious delay in rewarding his honourable services. He regularly attended the Marechal de Segur, at the hour appointed for receiving the numerous solicitations in his department. One day the Marshal said to him: "You are still at Versailles, M. d'Orville?"—"Monsieur," he replied, "you may observe that by this board of the flooring where I regularly place myself; it is already worn down several lines by the weight of my body." The Queen frequently stood at the window of her bedchamber to observe with her glass the people walking in the park. Sometimes she inquired the names of those who were unknown to her. One day she saw the Chevalier d'Orville passing, and asked me the name of that knight of Saint Louis, whom she had seen everywhere for a long time past. I knew who he was, and related his history. "That must be put an end to," said the Queen, with some vivacity. "Such an example of indifference is calculated to discourage our soldiers." Next day, in crossing the gallery to go to mass, the Queen perceived the Chevalier d'Orville; she went directly towards him. The poor man fell back in the recess of a window, looking to the right and left to discover the person whom the Queen was seeking, when she thus addressed him: "M. d'Orville, you have been several years at Versailles, soliciting a majority or a King's lieutenancy. You must have very powerless patrons."—"I have none, Madame," replied the Chevalier, in great confusion. "Well! I will take you under my protection. To-morrow at the same hour be here with a petition, and a memorial of your services." A fortnight after, M. d'Orville was appointed King's lieutenant, either at La Rochelle or at Rochefort.

[Louis XVI. vied with his Queen in benevolent actions of this kind. An old officer had in vain solicited a pension during the administration of the Duc de Choiseul. He returned to the charge in the times of the Marquis de Montesnard and the Duc d'Aiguillon. He urged his claims, to Comte du Muy, who made a note of them. Tired of so many fruitless efforts, he at last appeared at the King's supper, and, having placed himself so as to be seen and heard, cried out at a moment when silence prevailed, "Sire." The people near him said, "What are you about? This is not the way to speak to the King."—"I fear nothing," said he, and raising his voice, repeated, "Sire." The King, much surprised, looked at him and said, "What do you want, monsieur."—"Sire," answered he, "I am seventy years of age; I have served your Majesty more than fifty years, and I am dying for want."—"Have you



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a memorial?" replied the King. "Yes, Sire, I have."—"Give it to me;" and his Majesty took it without saying anything more. Next morning he was sent for by the, King, who said, "Monsieur, I grant you an annuity of 1,500 livres out of my privy purse, and you may go and receive the first year's payment, which is now due." ("Secret Correspondence of the Court: Reign of Louis XVI.") The King preferred to spend money in charity rather than in luxury or magnificence. Once during his absence, M. d'Augivillers caused an unused room in the King's apartment to be repaired at a cost of 30,000 francs. On his return the King made Versailles resound with complaints against M. d'Augivillers: "With that sum I could have made thirty families happy," he said.]

CHAPTER IX.

From the time of Louis XVI.'s accession to the throne, the Queen had been expecting a visit from her brother, the Emperor Joseph *ii*. That Prince was the constant theme of her discourse. She boasted of his intelligence, his love of occupation, his military knowledge, and the perfect simplicity of his manners. Those about her Majesty ardently wished to see at Versailles a prince so worthy of his rank. At length the coming of Joseph *ii*., under the title of Count Falkenstein, was announced, and the very day on which he would be at Versailles was mentioned. The first embraces between the Queen and her august brother took place in the presence of all the Queen's household. The sight of their emotion was extremely affecting.

The Emperor was at first generally admired in France; learned men, well-informed officers, and celebrated artists appreciated the extent of his information. He made less impression at Court, and very little in the private circle of the King and Queen. His eccentric manners, his frankness, often degenerating into rudeness, and his evidently affected simplicity,—all these characteristics caused him to be looked upon as a prince rather singular than admirable. The Queen spoke to him about the apartment she had prepared for him in the Chateau; the Emperor answered that he would not accept it, and that while travelling he always lodged at a cabaret (that was his very expression); the Queen insisted, and assured him that he should be at perfect liberty, and placed out of the reach of noise. He replied that he knew the Chateau of Versailles was very large, and that so many scoundrels lived there that he could well find a place; but that his valet de chambre had made up his camp-bed in a lodging-house, and there he would stay.

He dined with the King and Queen, and supped with the whole family. He appeared to take an interest in the young Princesse Elisabeth, then just past childhood, and blooming in all the freshness of that age. An intended marriage between him and this young sister of the King was reported at the time, but I believe it had no foundation in truth.



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The table was still served by women only, when the Queen dined in private with the King, the royal family, or crowned heads.

[The custom was, even supposing dinner to have commenced, if a princess of the blood arrived, and she was asked to sit down at the Queen's table, the comptrollers and gentlemen-in-waiting came immediately to attend, and the Queen's women withdrew. These had succeeded the maids of honour in several parts of their service, and had preserved some of their privileges. One day the Duchesse d'Orleans arrived at Fontainebleau, at the Queen's dinner-hour. The Queen invited her to the table, and herself motioned to her women to leave the room, and let the men take their places. Her Majesty said she was resolved to continue a privilege which kept places of that description most honourable, and render them suitable for ladies of nobility without fortune. Madame de Misery, Baronne de Biache, the Queen's first lady of the chamber, to whom I was made reversioner, was a daughter of M. le Comte de Chemant, and her grandmother was a Montmorency. M. le Prince de Tingry, in the presence of the Queen, used to call her cousin. The ancient household of the Kings of France had prerogatives acknowledged in the state. Many of the offices were tenable only by those of noble blood, and were sold at from 40,000 to 300,000 franca. A collection of edicts of the Kings in favour of the prerogatives and right of precedence of the persons holding office in the royal household is still in existence.]

I was present at the Queen's dinner almost every day. The Emperor would talk much and fluently; he expressed himself in French with facility, and the singularity, of his expressions added a zest to his conversation. I have often heard him say that he liked spectacular objects, when he meant to express such things as formed a show, or a scene worthy of interest. He disguised none of his prejudices against the etiquette and customs of the Court of France; and even in the presence of the King made them the subject of his sarcasms. The King smiled, but never made any answer; the Queen appeared pained. The Emperor frequently terminated his observations upon the objects in Paris which he had admired by reproaching the King for suffering himself to remain in ignorance of them. He could not conceive how such a wealth of pictures should remain shut up in the dust of immense stores; and told him one day that but for the practice of placing some of them in the apartments of Versailles he would not know even the principal chef d'oeuvres that he possessed.

[The Emperor loudly censured the existing practice of allowing shopkeepers to erect shops near the outward walls of all the palaces, and even to establish something like a fair in the galleries of Versailles and Fontainebleau, and even upon the landings of the staircases.]

He also reproached him for not having visited the Hotel des Invalides nor the Ecole Militaire; and even went so far as to tell him before us that he ought not only to know what Paris contained, but to travel in France, and reside a few days in each of his large towns.



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At last the Queen was really hurt at the Emperor's remarks, and gave him a few lectures upon the freedom with which he allowed himself to lecture others. One day she was busied in signing warrants and orders for payment for her household, and was conversing with M. Augeard, her secretary for such matters, who presented the papers one after another to be signed, and replaced them in his portfolio. While this was going forward, the Emperor walked about the room; all at once he stood still, to reproach the Queen rather severely for signing all those papers without reading them, or, at least, without running her eye over them; and he spoke most judiciously to her upon the danger of signing her name inconsiderately. The Queen answered that very wise principles might be very ill applied; that her secretary, who deserved her implicit confidence, was at that moment laying before her nothing but orders for payment of the quarter's expenses of her household, registered in the Chamber of Accounts; and that she ran no risk of incautiously giving her signature.

The Queen's toilet was likewise a never-failing subject for animadversion with the Emperor. He blamed her for having introduced too many new fashions; and teased her about her use of rouge. One day, while she was laying on more of it than usual, before going to the play, he pointed out a lady who was in the room, and who was, in truth, highly painted. "A little more under the eyes," said the Emperor to the Queen; "lay on the rouge like a fury, as that lady does." The Queen entreated her brother to refrain from his jokes, or at all events to address them, when they were so outspoken, to her alone.

The Queen had made an appointment to meet her brother at the Italian theatre; she changed her mind, and went to the French theatre, sending a page to the Italian theatre to request the Emperor to come to her there. He left his box, lighted by the comedian Clairval, and attended by M. de la Ferte, comptroller of the Queen's privy purse, who was much hurt at hearing his Imperial Majesty, after kindly expressing his regret at not being present during the Italian performance, say to Clairval, "Your young Queen is very giddy; but, luckily, you Frenchmen have no great objection to that."

I was with my father-in-law in one of the Queen's apartments when the Emperor came to wait for her there, and, knowing that M. Campan was librarian, he conversed with him about such books as would of course be found in the Queen's library. After talking of our most celebrated authors, he casually said, "There are doubtless no works on finance or on administration here?"

These words were followed by his opinion on all that had been written on those topics, and the different systems of our two famous ministers, Sully and Colbert; on errors which were daily committed in France, in points essential to the prosperity of the Empire; and on the reform he himself would make at Vienna. Holding M. Campan by the button, he spent more than an hour, talking vehemently, and without the slightest reserve, about the French Government. My father-in-law and myself maintained

profound silence, as much from astonishment as from respect; and when we were alone we agreed not to speak of this interview.



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The Emperor was fond of describing the Italian Courts that he had visited. The jealous quarrels between the King and Queen of Naples amused him highly; he described to the life the manner and speech of that sovereign, and the simplicity with which he used to go and solicit the first chamberlain to obtain permission to return to the nuptial bed, when the angry Queen had banished him from it. The time which he was made to wait for this reconciliation was calculated between the Queen and her chamberlain, and always proportioned to the gravity of the offence. He also related several very amusing stories relative to the Court of Parma, of which he spoke with no little contempt. If what this Prince said of those Courts, and even of Vienna, had been written down, the whole would have formed an interesting collection. The Emperor told the King that the Grand Duke of Tuscany and the King of Naples being together, the former said a great deal about the changes he had effected in his State. The Grand Duke had issued a mass of new edicts, in order to carry the precepts of the economists into execution, and trusted that in so doing he was labouring for the welfare of his people. The King of Naples suffered him to go on speaking for a long time, and then casually asked how many Neapolitan families there were in Tuscany. The Duke soon reckoned them up, as they were but few. "Well, brother," replied the King of Naples, "I do not understand the indifference of your people towards your great reforms; for I have four times the number of Tuscan families settled in my States that you have of Neapolitan families in yours."

The Queen being at the Opera with the Emperor, the latter did not wish to show himself; but she took him by the hand, and gently drew him to the front of the box. This kind of presentation to the public was most warmly received. The performance was "Iphigenia in Aulis," and for the second time the chorus, "Chantons, celebrons notre Reine!" was called for with universal plaudits.

A fete of a novel description was given at Petit Trianon. The art with which the English garden was not illuminated, but lighted, produced a charming effect. Earthen lamps, concealed by boards painted green, threw light upon the beds of shrubs and flowers, and brought out their varied tints. Several hundred burning fagots in the moat behind the Temple of Love made a blaze of light, which rendered that spot the most brilliant in the garden. After all, this evening's entertainment had nothing remarkable about it but the good taste of the artists, yet it was much talked of. The situation did not allow the admission of a great part of the Court; those who were uninvited were dissatisfied; and the people, who never forgive any fetes but those they share in, so exaggerated the cost of this little fete as to make it appear that the fagots burnt in the moat had required the destruction of a whole forest. The Queen being informed of these reports, was determined to know exactly how much wood had been consumed; and she found that fifteen hundred fagots had sufficed to keep up the fire until four o'clock in the morning.



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After staying a few months the Emperor left France, promising his sister to come and see her again. All the officers of the Queen's chamber had many opportunities of serving him during his stay, and expected that he would make them presents before his departure. Their oath of office positively forbade them to receive a gift from any foreign prince; they had therefore agreed to refuse the Emperor's presents at first, but to ask the time necessary for obtaining permission to accept them. The Emperor, probably informed of this custom, relieved the good people from their difficulty by setting off without making a single present.

About the latter end of 1777 the Queen, being alone in her closet, sent for my father-in-law and myself, and, giving us her hand to kiss; told us that, looking upon us both as persons deeply interested in her happiness, she wished to receive our congratulations,—that at length she was the Queen of France, and that she hoped soon to have children; that till now she had concealed her grief, but that she had shed many tears in secret.

Dating from this happy but long-delayed moment, the King's attachment to the Queen assumed every characteristic of love. The good Lassone, first physician to the King and Queen, frequently spoke to me of the uneasiness that the King's indifference, the cause of which he had been so long in overcoming, had given him, and appeared to me at that time to entertain no anxiety except of a very different description.

In the winter of 1778 the King's permission for the return of Voltaire; after an absence of twenty-seven years, was obtained. A few strict persons considered this concession on the part of the Court very injudicious. The Emperor, on leaving France, passed by the Chateau of Ferney without stopping there. He had advised the Queen not to suffer Voltaire to be presented to her. A lady belonging to the Court learned the Emperor's opinion on that point, and reproached him with his want of enthusiasm towards the greatest genius of the age. He replied that for the good of the people he should always endeavour to profit by the knowledge of the philosophers; but that his own business of sovereign would always prevent his ranking himself amongst that sect. The clergy also took steps to hinder Voltaire's appearance at Court. Paris, however, carried to the highest pitch the honours and enthusiasm shown to the great poet.

It was very unwise to let Paris pronounce with such transport an opinion so opposite to that of the Court. This was pointed out to the Queen, and she was told that, without conferring on Voltaire the honour of a presentation, she might see him in the State apartments. She was not averse to following this advice, and appeared embarrassed solely about what she should say to him. She was recommended to talk about nothing but the "Henriade," "Merope," and "Zaira." The Queen replied that she would still consult a few other persons in whom



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she had great confidence. The next day she announced that it was irrevocably decided Voltaire should not see any member of the royal family,—his writings being too antagonistic to religion and morals. “It is, however, strange,” said the Queen, “that while we refuse to admit Voltaire into our presence as the leader of philosophical writers, the Marechale de Mouchy should have presented to me some years ago Madame Geoffrin, who owed her celebrity to the title of foster-mother of the philosophers.”

On the occasion of the duel of the Comte d’Artois with the Prince de Bourbon the Queen determined privately to see the Baron de Besenval, who was to be one of the witnesses, in order to communicate the King’s intentions. I have read with infinite pain the manner in which that simple fact is perverted in the first volume of M. de Besenval’s “Memoirs.” He is right in saying that M. Campan led him through the upper corridors of the Chateau, and introduced him into an apartment unknown to him; but the air of romance given to the interview is equally culpable and ridiculous. M. de Besenval says that he found himself, without knowing how he came there, in an apartment unadorned, but very conveniently furnished, of the existence of which he was till then utterly ignorant. He was astonished, he adds, not that the Queen should have so many facilities, but that she should have ventured to procure them. Ten printed sheets of the woman Lamotte’s libels contain nothing so injurious to the character of Marie Antoinette as these lines, written by a man whom she honoured by undeserved kindness. He could not have had any opportunity of knowing the existence of the apartments, which consisted of a very small antechamber, a bedchamber, and a closet. Ever since the Queen had occupied her own apartment, these had been appropriated to her Majesty’s lady of honour in cases of illness, and were actually so used when the Queen was confined. It was so important that it should not be known the Queen had spoken to the Baron before the duel that she had determined to go through her inner room into this little apartment, to which M. Campan was to conduct him. When men write of recent times they should be scrupulously exact, and not indulge in exaggerations or inventions.

The Baron de Besenval appears mightily surprised at the Queen’s sudden coolness, and refers it to the fickleness of her disposition. I can explain the reason for the change by repeating what her Majesty said to me at the time; and I will not alter one of her expressions. Speaking of the strange presumption of men, and the reserve with which women ought always to treat them, the Queen added that age did not deprive them of the hope of pleasing, if they retained any agreeable qualities; that she had treated the Baron de Besenval as a brave Swiss, agreeable, polished, and witty, whose gray hairs had induced her to look upon him as a man whom she might see without harm; but that she had been much deceived. Her Majesty,



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after having enjoined me to the strictest secrecy, told me that, finding herself alone with the Baron, he began to address her with so much gallantry that she was thrown into the utmost astonishment, and that he was mad enough to fall upon his knees, and make her a declaration in form. The Queen added that she said to him: "Rise, monsieur; the King shall be ignorant of an offence which would disgrace you for ever;" that the Baron grew pale and stammered apologies; that she left her closet without saying another word, and that since that time she hardly ever spoke to him. "It is delightful to have friends," said the Queen; "but in a situation like mine it is sometimes difficult for the friends of our friends to suit us."

In the beginning of the year 1778 Mademoiselle d'Eon obtained permission to return to France, on condition that she should appear there in female dress. The Comte de Vergennes entreated my father, M. Genet, chief clerk of Foreign Affairs, who had long known the Chevalier d'Eon, to receive that strange personage at his house, to guide and restrain, if possible, her ardent disposition. The Queen, on learning her arrival at Versailles, sent a footman to desire my father to bring her into her presence; my father thought it his duty first to inform the Minister of her Majesty's wish. The Comte de Vergennes expressed himself pleased with my father's prudence, and desired that he would accompany him to the Queen. The Minister had a few minutes' audience; her Majesty came out of her closet with him, and condescended to express to my father the regret she felt at having troubled him to no purpose; and added, smiling, that a few words from M. de Vergennes had for ever cured her of her curiosity. The discovery in London of the true sex of this pretended woman makes it probable that the few words uttered by the Minister contained a solution of the enigma.

The Chevalier d'Eon had been useful in Russia as a spy of Louis XV. while very young he had found means to introduce himself at the Court of the Empress Elizabeth, and served that sovereign in the capacity of reader. Resuming afterwards his military dress, he served with honour and was wounded. Appointed chief secretary of legation, and afterwards minister plenipotentiary at London, he unpardonably insulted Comte de Guerchy, the ambassador. The official order for the Chevalier's return to France was actually delivered to the King's Council; but Louis XV. delayed the departure of the courier who was to be its bearer, and sent off another courier privately, who gave the Chevalier d'Eon a letter in his own writing, in which he said, "I know that you have served me as effectually in the dress of a woman as in that which you now wear. Resume it instantly; withdraw into the city; I warn you that the King yesterday signed an order for your return to France; you are not safe in your hotel, and you would here find too powerful enemies." I heard the Chevalier d'Eon repeat the contents



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of this letter, in which Louis XV. thus separated himself from the King of France, several times at my father's. The Chevalier, or rather the Chevalaere d'Eon had preserved all the King's letters. Messieurs de Maurepas and de Vergennes wished to get them out of his hands, as they were afraid he would print them. This eccentric being had long solicited permission to return to France; but it was necessary to find a way of sparing the family he had offended the insult they would see in his return; he was therefore made to resume the costume of that sex to which in France everything is pardoned. The desire to see his native land once more determined him to submit to the condition, but he revenged himself by combining the long train of his gown and the three deep ruffles on his sleeves with the attitude and conversation of a grenadier, which made him very disagreeable company.

[The account given by Madame Campan of the Chevalier d'Eon is now known to be incorrect in many particulars. Enough details for most readers will be found in the Duc de Broglie's "Secret of the King," vol. ii., chaps. vi. and g., and at p. 89, vol. ii. of that work, where the Duke refers to the letter of most dubious authenticity spoken of by Madame Campan. The following details will be sufficient for these memoirs: The Chevalier Charles d'Eon de Beaumont (who was born in 1728) was an ex-captain of dragoons, employed in both the open and secret diplomacy of Louis XV. When at the embassy in London he quarrelled with the ambassador, his superior, the Comte de Guerchy (Marquis do Nangis), and used his possession of papers concerning the secret diplomacy to shield himself. It was when hiding in London, in 1765, on account of this business, that he seems first to have assumed woman's dress, which he retained apparently chiefly from love of notoriety. In 1775 a formal agreement with the French Court, made by the instrumentality of Beaumarchais, of all people in the world, permitted him to return to France, retaining the dress of a woman. He went back to France, but again came to England, and died there, at his residence in Millman Street, near the Foundling Hospital, May 22, 1710. He had been a brave and distinguished officer, but his form and a certain coldness of temperament always remarked in him assisted him in his assumption of another sex. There appears to be no truth in the story of his proceedings at the Russian Court, and his appearing in female attire was a surprise to those who must have known of any earlier affair of the sort.]

At last, the event so long desired by the Queen, and by all those who wished her well, took place; her Majesty became enceinte. The King was in ecstasies. Never was there a more united or happier couple. The disposition of Louis XVI. entirely altered, and became prepossessing and conciliatory; and the Queen was amply compensated for the uneasiness which the King's indifference during the early part of their union had caused her.



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The summer of 1778 was extremely hot. July and August passed, but the air was not cooled by a single storm. The Queen spent whole days in close rooms, and could not sleep until she had breathed the fresh night air, walking with the Princesses and her brothers upon the terrace under her apartments. These promenades at first gave rise to no remark; but it occurred to some of the party to enjoy the music of wind instruments during these fine summer nights. The musicians belonging to the chapel were ordered to perform pieces suited to instruments of that description, upon steps constructed in the middle of the garden. The Queen, seated on one of the terrace benches, enjoyed the effect of this music, surrounded by all the royal family with the exception of the King, who joined them but, twice, disliking to change his hour of going to bed.

Nothing could be more innocent than these parties; yet Paris, France, nay, all Europe, were soon canvassing them in a manner most disadvantageous to the reputation of Marie Antoinette. It is true that all the inhabitants of Versailles enjoyed these serenades, and that there was a crowd near the spot from eleven at night until two or three in the morning. The windows of the ground floor occupied by Monsieur and Madame—[The wife of Monsieur, the Comte de Provence.]—were kept open, and the terrace was perfectly well lighted by the numerous wax candles burning in the two apartments. Lamps were likewise placed in the garden, and the lights of the orchestra illuminated the rest of the place.

I do not know whether a few incautious women might not have ventured farther, and wandered to the bottom of the park; it may have been so; but the Queen, Madame, and the Comtesse d'Artois were always arm-in-arm, and never left the terrace. The Princesses were not remarkable when seated on the benches, being dressed in cambric muslin gowns, with large straw hats and muslin veils, a costume universally adopted by women at that time; but when standing up their different figures always distinguished them; and the persons present stood on one side to let them pass. It is true that when they seated themselves upon the benches private individuals would sometimes, to their great amusement, sit down by their side.

A young clerk in the War Department, either not knowing or pretending not to know the Queen, spoke to her of the beauty of the night, and the delightful effect of the music. The Queen, fancying she was not recognised, amused herself by keeping up the incognito, and they talked of several private families of Versailles, consisting of persons belonging to the King's household or her own. After a few minutes the Queen and Princesses rose to walk, and on leaving the bench curtsied to the clerk. The young man knowing, or having subsequently discovered, that he had been conversing with the Queen, boasted of it in his office. He was merely, desired to hold his tongue; and so little attention did he excite that the Revolution found him still only a clerk.



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Another evening one of Monsieur's body-guard seated himself near the Princesses, and, knowing them, left the place where he was sitting, and placed himself before the Queen, to tell her that he was very fortunate in being able to seize an opportunity of imploring the kindness of his sovereign; that he was "soliciting at Court"—at the word soliciting the Queen and Princesses rose hastily and withdrew into Madame's apartment.—[Soulavie has most criminally perverted these two facts.—*Madame Campan.*]—I was at the Queen's residence that day. She talked of this little occurrence all the time of her 'coucher'; though she only complained that one of Monsieur's guards should have had the effrontery to speak to her. Her Majesty added that he ought to have respected her incognito; and that that was not the place where he should have ventured to make a request. Madame had recognised him, and talked of making a complaint to his captain; the Queen opposed it, attributing his error to his ignorance and provincial origin.

The most scandalous libels were based on these two insignificant occurrences, which I have related with scrupulous exactness. Nothing could be more false than those calumnies. It must be confessed, however, that such meetings were liable to ill consequences. I ventured to say as much to the Queen, and informed her that one evening, when her Majesty beckoned to me to go and speak to her, I thought I recognised on the bench on which she was sitting two women deeply veiled, and keeping profound silence; that those women were the Comtesse du Barry and her sister-in-law; and that my suspicions were confirmed, when, at a few paces from the seat, and nearer to her Majesty, I met a tall footman belonging to Madame du Barry, whom I had seen in her service all the time she resided at Court.

My advice was disregarded. Misled by the pleasure she found in these promenades, and secure in the consciousness of blameless conduct, the Queen would not see the lamentable results which must necessarily follow. This was very unfortunate; for besides the mortifications they brought upon her, it is highly probable that they prompted the vile plot which gave rise to the Cardinal de Rohan's fatal error.

Having enjoyed these evening promenades about a month, the Queen ordered a private concert within the colonnade which contained the group of Pluto and Proserpine. Sentinels were placed at all the entrances, and ordered to admit within the colonnade only such persons as should produce tickets signed by my father-in-law. A fine concert was performed there by the musicians of the chapel and the female musicians belonging to the Queen's chamber. The Queen went with Mesdames de Polignac, de Chalon, and d'Andlau, and Messieurs de Polignac, de Coigny, de Besenval, and de Vaudreuil; there were also a few equerries present. Her Majesty gave me permission to attend the concert with some of my female relations.



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There was no music upon the terrace. The crowd of inquisitive people, whom the sentinels kept at a distance from the enclosure of the colonnade, went away highly discontented; the small number of persons admitted no doubt occasioned jealousy, and gave rise to offensive comments which were caught up by the public with avidity. I do not pretend to apologise for the kind of amusements with which the Queen indulged herself during this and the following summer; the consequences were so lamentable that the error was no doubt very great; but what I have said respecting the character of these promenades may be relied on as true.

When the season for evening walks was at an end, odious couplets were circulated in Paris; the 'Queen was treated in them in the most insulting manner; her situation ranked among her enemies persons attached to the only prince who for several years had appeared likely to give heirs to the crown. People uttered the most inconsiderate language; and those improper conversations took place in societies wherein the imminent danger of violating to so criminal an extent both truth and the respect due to sovereigns ought to have been better understood. A few days before the Queen's confinement a whole volume of manuscript songs, concerning her and all the ladies about her remarkable for rank or station was, thrown down in the oiel-de-boeuf.—[A large room at Versailles lighted by a bull's-eye window, and used as a waiting-room.]— This manuscript was immediately put into the hands of the King, who was highly incensed at it, and said that he had himself been at those promenades; that he had seen nothing connected with them but what was perfectly harmless; that such songs would disturb the harmony of twenty families in the Court and city; that it was a capital crime to have made any against the Queen herself; and that he wished the author of the infamous libels to be discovered and punished. A fortnight afterwards it was known publicly that the verses were by M. Champcenetz de Riquebourg, who was not even reprimanded.

[The author of a great many songs, some of which are very well written. Lively and satirical by nature, he did not lose either his cheerfulness or his carelessness before the revolutionary tribunal. After hearing his own sentence read, he asked his judges if he might not be allowed to find a substitute.—*Madame Campan.*]

I knew for a certainty that the King spoke to M. de Maurepas, before two of his most confidential servants, respecting the risk which he saw the Queen ran from these night walks upon the terrace of Versailles, which the public ventured to censure thus openly, and that the old minister had the cruelty to advise that she should be suffered to go on; she possessed talent; her friends were very ambitious, and longed to see her take a part in public affairs; and to let her acquire the reputation of levity would do no harm. M. de Vergennes was as hostile to the Queen's influence as M. de Maurepas. It may therefore be fairly presumed, since the Prime Minister durst point out to his King an advantage to be gained by the Queen's discrediting herself, that he and M. de

Vergennes employed all means within the reach of powerful ministers in order to ruin her in the opinion of the public.



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The Queen's accouchement approached; Te Deums were sung and prayers offered up in all the cathedrals. On the 11th of December, 1778, the royal family, the Princes of the blood, and the great officers of State passed the night in the rooms adjoining the Queen's bedchamber. Madame, the King's daughter, came into the world before mid-day on the 19th of December.—[Marie Therese Charlotte (1778-1861), Madame Royale; married in 1799 Louis, Duc d'Angouleme, eldest son of the Comte d'Artois.]—The etiquette of allowing all persons indiscriminately to enter at the moment of the delivery of a queen was observed with such exaggeration that when the accoucheur said aloud, "La Reine va s'accoucher," the persons who poured into the chamber were so numerous that the rush nearly destroyed the Queen. During the night the King had taken the precaution to have the enormous tapestry screens which surrounded her Majesty's bed secured with cords; but for this they certainly would have been thrown down upon her. It was impossible to move about the chamber, which was filled with so motley a crowd that one might have fancied himself in some place of public amusement. Two Savoyards got upon the furniture for a better sight of the Queen, who was placed opposite the fireplace.

The noise and the sex of the infant, with which the Queen was made acquainted by a signal previously agreed on, as it is said, with the Princesse de Lamballe, or some error of the accoucheur, brought on symptoms which threatened fatal consequences; the accoucheur exclaimed, "Give her air—warm water—she must be bled in the foot!" The windows were stopped up; the King opened them with a strength which his affection for the Queen gave him at the moment. They were of great height, and pasted over with strips of paper all round. The basin of hot water not being brought quickly enough, the accoucheur desired the chief surgeon to use his lancet without waiting for it. He did so; the blood streamed out freely, and the Queen opened her eyes. The Princesse de Lamballe was carried through the crowd in a state of insensibility. The valets de chambre and pages dragged out by the collar such inconsiderate persons as would not leave the room. This cruel custom was abolished afterwards. The Princes of the family, the Princes of the blood, the chancellor, and the ministers are surely sufficient to attest the legitimacy of an hereditary prince. The Queen was snatched from the very jaws of death; she was not conscious of having been bled, and on being replaced in bed asked why she had a linen bandage upon her foot.

The delight which succeeded the moment of fear was equally lively and sincere. We were all embracing each other, and shedding tears of joy. The Comte d'Esterhazy and the Prince de Poix, to whom I was the first to announce that the Queen was restored to life, embraced me in the midst of the cabinet of nobles. We little imagined, in our happiness at her escape from death, for how much more terrible a fate our beloved Princess was reserved.



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Note. The two following specimens of the Emperor Joseph's correspondence forcibly demonstrate the vigour, shrewdness, and originality of his mind, and complete the portrait left of him by Madame Campan.

Few sovereigns have given their reasons for refusing appointments with the fullness and point of the following letter

To a Lady.

Madam.—I do not think that it is amongst the duties of a monarch to grant places to one of his subjects merely because he is a gentleman. That, however, is the inference from the request you have made to me. Your late husband was, you say, a distinguished general, a gentleman of good family, and thence you conclude that my kindness to your family can do no less than give a company of foot to your second son, lately returned from his travels.

Madam, a man may be the son of a general and yet have no talent for command. A man may be of a good family and yet possess no other merit than that which he owes to chance,—the name of gentleman.

I know your son, and I know what makes the soldier; and this twofold knowledge convinces me that your son has not the disposition of a warrior, and that he is too full of his birth to leave the country a hope of his ever rendering it any important service.

What you are to be pitied for, madam, is, that your son is not fit either for an officer, a statesman or a priest; in a word, that he is nothing more than a gentleman in the most extended acceptance of the word.

You may be thankful to that destiny, which, in refusing talents to your son, has taken care to put him in possession of great wealth, which will sufficiently compensate him for other deficiencies, and enable him at the same time to dispense with any favour from me.

I hope you will be impartial enough to see the reasons which prompt me to refuse your request. It may be disagreeable to you, but I consider it necessary. Farewell, madam. —Your sincere well-wisher, *Joseph LACHSENBURG*, 4th August, 1787.

The application of another anxious and somewhat covetous mother was answered with still more decision and irony:

To a Lady.

Madam.—You know my disposition; you are not ignorant that the society of the ladies is to me a mere recreation, and that I have never sacrificed my principles to the fair sex. I



pay but little attention to recommendations, and I only take them into consideration when the person in whose behalf I may be solicited possesses real merit.

Two of your sons are already loaded with favours. The eldest, who is not yet twenty, is chief of a squadron in my army, and the younger has obtained a canonry at Cologne, from the Elector, my brother. What would you have more? Would you have the first a general and the second a bishop?

In France you may see colonels in leading-strings, and in Spain the royal princes command armies even at eighteen; hence Prince Stahremberg forced them to retreat so often that they were never able all the rest of their lives to comprehend any other manoeuvre.



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It is necessary to be sincere at Court, and severe in the field, stoical without obduracy, magnanimous without weakness, and to gain the esteem of our enemies by the justice of our actions; and this, madam, is what I aim at. *Joseph Vienna, September, 1787.*

(From the inedited Letters of Joseph IL, published at Paris, by Persan, 1822.)

CHAPTER X.

During the alarm for the life of the Queen, regret at not possessing an heir to the throne was not even thought of. The King himself was wholly occupied with the care of preserving an adored wife. The young Princess was presented to her mother. "Poor little one," said the Queen, "you were not wished for, but you are not on that account less dear to me. A son would have been rather the property of the State. You shall be mine; you shall have my undivided care, shall share all my happiness, and console me in all my troubles."

The King despatched a courier to Paris, and wrote letters himself to Vienna, by the Queen's bedside; and part of the rejoicings ordered took place in the capital.

A great number of attendants watched near the Queen during the first nights of her confinement. This custom distressed her; she knew how to feel for others, and ordered large armchairs for her women, the backs of which were capable of being let down by springs, and which served perfectly well instead of beds.

M. de Lassone, the chief physician, the chief surgeon, the chief apothecary, the principal officers of the buttry, *etc.*, were likewise nine nights without going to bed. The royal children were watched for a long time, and one of the women on duty remained, nightly, up and dressed, during the first three years from their birth.

The Queen made her entry into Paris for the churching. One hundred maidens were portioned and married at Notre-Dame. There were few popular acclamations, but her Majesty was perfectly well received at the Opera.

A few days after the Queen's recovery from her confinement, the Cure of the Magdelaine de la City at Paris wrote to M. Campan and requested a private interview with him; it was to desire he would deliver into the hands of the Queen a little box containing her wedding ring, with this note written by the Cure: "I have received under the seal of confession the ring which I send to your Majesty; with an avowal that it was stolen from you in 1771, in order to be used in sorceries, to prevent your having any children." On seeing her ring again the Queen said that she had in fact lost it about seven years before, while washing her hands, and that she had resolved to use no endeavour to discover the superstitious woman who had done her the injury.



The Queen's attachment to the Comtesse Jules increased every day; she went frequently to her house at Paris, and even took up her own abode at the Chateau de la Muette to be nearer during her confinement. She married Mademoiselle de Polignac, when scarcely thirteen years of age, to M. de Grammont, who, on account of this marriage, was made Duc de Guiche, and captain of the King's Guards, in reversion after the Duc de Villeroy. The Duchesse de Civrac, Madame Victoire's dame d'honneur, had been promised the place for the Duc de Lorges, her son. The number of discontented families at Court increased.



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The title of favourite was too openly given to the Comtesse Jules by her friends. The lot of the favourite of a queen is not, in France, a happy one; the favourites of kings are treated, out of gallantry, with much greater indulgence.

A short time after the birth of Madame the Queen became again enceinte; she had mentioned it only to the King, to her physician, and to a few persons honoured with her intimate confidence, when, having overexerted her strength in pulling lip one of the glasses of her carriage, she felt that she had hurt herself, and eight days afterwards she miscarried. The King spent the whole morning at her bedside, consoling her, and manifesting the tenderest concern for her. The Queen wept exceedingly; the King took her affectionately in his arms, and mingled his tears with hers. The King enjoined silence among the small number of persons who were informed of this unfortunate occurrence; and it remained generally unknown. These particulars furnish an accurate idea of the manner in which this august couple lived together.

The Empress Maria Theresa did not enjoy the happiness of seeing her daughter give an heir to the crown of France. That illustrious Princess died at the close of 1780, after having proved by her example that, as in the instance of Queen Blanche, the talents of a sovereign might be blended with the virtues of a pious princess. The King was deeply affected at the death of the Empress; and on the arrival of the courier from Vienna said that he could not bring himself to afflict the Queen by informing her of an event which grieved even him so much. His Majesty thought the Abbe de Vermond, who had possessed the confidence of Maria Theresa during his stay at Vienna, the most proper person to discharge this painful duty. He sent his first valet de chambre, M. de Chamilly, to the Abbe on the evening of the day he received the despatches from Vienna, to order him to come the next day to the Queen before her breakfast hour, to acquit himself discreetly of the afflicting commission with which he was charged, and to let his Majesty know the moment of his entering the Queen's chamber. It was the King's intention to be there precisely a quarter of an hour after him, and he was punctual to his time; he was announced; the Abbe came out; and his Majesty said to him, as he drew up at the door to let him pass, "I thank you, Monsieur l'Abbe, for the service you have just done me." This was the only time during nineteen years that the King spoke to him.

Within an hour after learning the event the Queen put on temporary mourning, while waiting until her Court mourning should be ready; she kept herself shut up in her apartments for several days; went out only to mass; saw none but the royal family; and received none but the Princesse de Lamballe and the Duchesse de Polignac. She talked incessantly of the courage, the misfortunes, the successes, and the virtues of her mother. The shroud and dress in which Maria



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Theresa was to be buried, made entirely by her own hands, were found ready prepared in one of her closets. She often regretted that the numerous duties of her august mother had prevented her from watching in person over the education of her daughters; and modestly said that she herself would have been more worthy if she had had the good fortune to receive lessons directly from a sovereign so enlightened and so deserving of admiration.

The Queen told me one day that her mother was left a widow at an age when her beauty was yet striking; that she was secretly informed of a plot laid by her three principal ministers to make themselves agreeable to her; of a compact made between them, that the losers should not feel any jealousy towards him who should be fortunate enough to gain his sovereign's heart; and that they had sworn that the successful one should be always the friend of the other two. The Empress being assured of this scheme, one day after the breaking up of the council over which she had presided, turned the conversation upon the subject of female sovereigns, and the duties of their sex and rank; and then applying her general reflections to herself in particular, told them that she hoped to guard herself all her life against weaknesses of the heart; but that if ever an irresistible feeling should make her alter her resolution, it should be only in favour of a man proof against ambition, not engaged in State affairs, but attached only to a private life and its calm enjoyments,—in a word, if her heart should betray her so far as to lead her to love a man invested with any important office, from the moment he should discover her sentiments he would forfeit his place and his influence with the public. This was sufficient; the three ministers, more ambitious than amorous, gave up their projects for ever.

On the 22d of October, 1781, the Queen gave birth to a Dauphin.—[The first Dauphin, Louis, born 1781, died 1789.]—So deep a silence prevailed in the room that the Queen thought her child was a daughter; but after the Keeper of the Seals had declared the sex of the infant, the King went up to the Queen's bed, and said to her, "Madame, you have fulfilled my wishes and those of France: you are the mother of a Dauphin." The King's joy was boundless; tears streamed from his eyes; he gave his hand to every one present; and his happiness carried away his habitual reserve. Cheerful and affable, he was incessantly taking occasion to introduce the words, "my son," or "the Dauphin." As soon as the Queen was in bed, she wished to see the long-looked-for infant. The Princesse de Guemenee brought him to her. The Queen said there was no need for commending him to the Princess, but in order to enable her to attend to him more freely, she would herself share the care of the education of her daughter. When the Dauphin was settled in his apartment, he received the customary homages and visits. The Duc d'Angouleme, meeting his father at the entrance of the Dauphin's apartment, said to him, "Oh, papa! how little my cousin is!"—"The day will come when you will think him great enough, my dear," answered the Prince, almost involuntarily.—[Eldest son of the Comte d'Artois, and till the birth of the Dauphin with near prospects of the succession.]



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The birth of the Dauphin appeared to give joy to all classes. Men stopped one another in the streets, spoke without being acquainted, and those who were acquainted embraced each other. In the birth of a legitimate heir to the sovereign every man beholds a pledge of prosperity and tranquillity.

[M. Merard de Saint Just made a quatrain on the birth of the Dauphin to the following effect:

“This infant Prince our hopes are centred in, will doubtless make us happy, rich, and free; And since with somebody he must begin, My fervent prayer is—that it may be me!”

—*Note by the editor.*]

The rejoicings were splendid and ingenious. The artificers and tradesmen of Paris spent considerable sums in order to go to Versailles in a body, with their various insignia. Almost every troop had music with it. When they arrived at the court of the palace, they there arranged themselves so as to present a most interesting living picture. Chimney-sweepers, quite as well dressed as those that appear upon the stage, carried an ornamented chimney, at the top of which was perched one of the smallest of their fraternity. The chairmen carried a sedan highly gilt, in which were to be seen a handsome nurse and a little Dauphin. The butchers made their appearance with their fat ox. Cooks, masons, blacksmiths, all trades were on the alert. The smiths hammered away upon an anvil, the shoemakers finished off a little pair of boots for the Dauphin, and the tailors a little suit of the uniform of his regiment. The King remained a long time upon a balcony to enjoy the sight. The whole Court was delighted with it. So general was the enthusiasm that (the police not having carefully examined the procession) the grave-diggers had the imprudence to send their deputation also, with the emblematic devices of their ill-omened occupation. They were met by the Princesse Sophie, the King's aunt, who was thrilled with horror at the sight, and entreated the King to have the audacious, fellows driven out of the procession, which was then drawing up on the terrace.

The ‘dames de la halle’ came to congratulate the Queen, and were received with the suitable ceremonies.

Fifty of them appeared dressed in black silk gowns, the established full dress of their order, and almost all wore diamonds. The Princesse de Chimay went to the door of the Queen's bedroom to receive three of these ladies, who were led up to the Queen's bed. One of them addressed her Majesty in a speech written by M. de la Harpe. It was set down on the inside of a fan, to which the speaker repeatedly referred, but without any embarrassment. She was handsome, and had a remarkably fine voice. The Queen was affected by the address, and answered it with great affability,—wishing a distinction to be made between these women and the poissardes, who always left a disagreeable impression on her mind.



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The King ordered a substantial repast for all these women. One of his Majesty's maitres d'hotel, wearing his hat, sat as president and did the honours of the table. The public were admitted, and numbers of people had the curiosity to go.

The Garden-du-Corps obtained the King's permission to give the Queen a dress ball in the great hall of the Opera at Versailles. Her Majesty opened the ball in a minuet with a private selected by the corps, to whom the King granted the baton of an exempt. The fete was most splendid. All then was joy, happiness, and peace.

The Dauphin was a year old when the Prince de Guemenee's bankruptcy compelled the Princess, his wife, who was governess to the children of France, to resign her situation.

The Queen was at La Muette for the inoculation of her daughter. She sent for me, and condescended to say she wished to converse with me about a scheme which delighted her, but in the execution of which she foresaw some inconveniences. Her plan was to appoint the Duchesse de Polignac to the office lately held by the Princesse de Guemenee. She saw with extreme pleasure the facilities which this appointment would give her for superintending the education of her children, without running any risk of hurting the pride of the governess; and that it would bring together the objects of her warmest affections, her children and her friend. "The friends of the Duchesse de Polignac," continued the Queen, "will be gratified by the splendour and importance conferred by the employment. As to the Duchess, I know her; the place by no means suits her simple and quiet habits, nor the sort of indolence of her disposition. She will give me the greatest possible proof of her devotion if she yields to my wish." The Queen also spoke of the Princesse de Chimay and the Duchesse de Duras, whom the public pointed out as fit for the post; but she thought the Princesse de Chimay's piety too rigid; and as to the Duchesse de Duras, her wit and learning quite frightened her. What the Queen dreaded as the consequence of her selection of the Duchesse de Polignac was principally the jealousy of the courtiers; but she showed so lively a desire to see her scheme executed that I had no doubt she would soon set at naught all the obstacles she discovered. I was not mistaken; a few days afterwards the Duchess was appointed governess.

The Queen's object in sending for me was no doubt to furnish me with the means of explaining the feelings which induced her to prefer a governess disposed by friendship to suffer her to enjoy all the privileges of a mother. Her Majesty knew that I saw a great deal of company.

The Queen frequently dined with the Duchess after having been present at the King's private dinner. Sixty-one thousand francs were therefore added to the salary of the governess as a compensation for this increase of expense.



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The Queen was tired of the excursions to Marly, and had no great difficulty in setting the King against them. He did not like the expense of them, for everybody was entertained there gratis. Louis XIV. had established a kind of parade upon these excursions, differing from that of Versailles, but still more annoying. Card and supper parties occurred every day, and required much dress. On Sundays and holidays the fountains played, the people were admitted into the gardens, and there was as great a crowd as at the fetes of St. Cloud.

Every age has its peculiar colouring; Marly showed that of Louis XIV. even more than Versailles. Everything in the former place appeared to have been produced by the magic power of a fairy's wand. Not the slightest trace of all this splendour remains; the revolutionary spoilers even tore up the pipes which served to supply the fountains. Perhaps a brief description of this palace and the usages established there by Louis XIV. may be acceptable.

The very extensive gardens of Marly ascended almost imperceptibly to the Pavilion of the Sun., which was occupied only by the King and his family. The pavilions of the twelve zodiacal signs bounded the two sides of the lawn. They were connected by bowers impervious to the rays of the sun. The pavilions nearest to that of the sun were reserved for the Princes of the blood and the ministers; the rest were occupied by persons holding superior offices at Court, or invited to stay at Marly. Each pavilion was named after fresco paintings, which covered its walls, and which had been executed by the most celebrated artists of the age of Louis XIV. On a line with the upper pavilion there was on the left a chapel; on the right a pavilion called La Perspective, which concealed along suite of offices, containing a hundred lodging-rooms intended for the persons belonging to the service of the Court, kitchens, and spacious dining-rooms, in which more than thirty tables were splendidly laid out.

During half of Louis XV.'s reign the ladies still wore the habit de cour de Marly, so named by Louis XIV., and which differed little from, that devised for Versailles. The French gown, gathered in the back, and with great hoops, replaced this dress, and continued to be worn till the end of the reign of Louis XVI. The diamonds, feathers, rouge, and embroidered stuffs spangled with gold, effaced all trace of a rural residence; but the people loved to see the splendour of their sovereign and a brilliant Court glittering in the shades of the woods.

After dinner, and before the hour for cards, the Queen, the Princesses, and their ladies, paraded among the clumps of trees, in little carriages, beneath canopies richly embroidered with gold, drawn by men in the King's livery. The trees planted by Louis XIV. were of prodigious height, which, however, was surpassed in several of the groups by fountains of the clearest water; while, among others, cascades over white marble, the waters of which, met by the sunbeams, looked like draperies of silver gauze, formed a contrast to the solemn darkness of the groves.



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In the evening nothing more was necessary for any well-dressed man to procure admission to the Queen's card parties than to be named and presented, by some officer of the Court, to the gentleman usher of the card-room. This room, which was very, large, and of octagonal shape, rose to the top of the Italian roof, and terminated in a cupola furnished with balconies, in which ladies who had not been presented easily obtained leave to place themselves, and enjoy, the sight of the brilliant assemblage.

Though not of the number of persons belonging to the Court, gentlemen admitted into this salon might request one of the ladies seated with the Queen at lansquenet or faro to bet upon her cards with such gold or notes as they presented to her. Rich people and the gamblers of Paris did not miss one of the evenings at the Marly salon, and there were always considerable sums won and lost. Louis XVI. hated high play, and very often showed displeasure when the loss of large sums was mentioned. The fashion of wearing a black coat without being in mourning had not then been introduced, and the King gave a few of his 'coups de boutoir' to certain chevaliers de St. Louis, dressed in this manner, who came to venture two or three louis, in the hope that fortune would favour the handsome duchesses who deigned to place them on their cards.

[Bachaumont in his "Memoirs," (tome xii., p. 189), which are often satirical; and always somewhat questionable, speaks of the singular precautions taken at play at Court. "The bankers at the Queen's table," says he, "in order to prevent the mistakes [I soften the harshness of his expression] which daily happen, have obtained permission from her Majesty that before beginning to play the table shall be bordered by a ribbon entirely round it, and that no other money than that upon the cards beyond the ribbon shall be considered as staked."—*Note By the editor.*]

Singular contrasts are often seen amidst the grandeur of courts. In order to manage such high play at the Queen's faro table, it was necessary to have a banker provided with large sums of money; and this necessity placed at the table, to which none but the highest titled persons were admitted in general, not only M. de Chalabre, who was its banker, but also a retired captain of foot, who officiated as his second. A word, trivial, but perfectly appropriate to express the manner in which the Court was attended there, was often heard. Gentlemen presented at Court, who had not been invited to stay at Marly, came there notwithstanding, as they did to Versailles, and returned again to Paris; under such circumstances, it was said such a one had been to Marly only 'en polisson';—[A contemptuous expression, meaning literally "as a scamp" or "rascal"]—and it appeared odd to hear a captivating marquis, in answer to the inquiry whether he was of the royal party at Marly, say, "No, I am only here 'en polisson'."



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meaning simply "I am here on the footing of all those whose nobility is of a later date than 1400." The Marly excursions were exceedingly expensive to the King. Besides the superior tables, those of the almoners, equerries, maitres d'hotel, *etc.*, were all supplied with such a degree of magnificence as to allow of inviting strangers to them; and almost all the visitors from Paris were boarded at the expense of the Court.

The personal frugality of the unfortunate Prince who sank beneath the weight of the national debts thus favoured the Queen's predilection for her Petit Trianon; and for five or six years preceding the Revolution the Court very seldom visited Marly.

The King, always attentive to the comfort of his family, gave Mesdames, his aunts, the use of the Chateau de Bellevue, and afterwards purchased the Princesse de Guemenee's house, at the entrance to Paris, for Elisabeth. The Comtesse de Provence bought a small house at Montreuil; Monsieur already had Brunoy; the Comtesse d'Artois built Bagatelle; Versailles became, in the estimation of all the royal family, the least agreeable of residences. They only fancied themselves at home in the plainest houses, surrounded by English gardens, where they better enjoyed the beauties of nature. The taste for cascades and statues was entirely past.

The Queen occasionally remained a whole month at Petit Trianon, and had established there all the ways of life in a chateau. She entered the sitting-room without driving the ladies from their pianoforte or embroidery. The gentlemen continued their billiards or backgammon without suffering her presence to interrupt them. There was but little room in the small Chateau of Trianon. Madame Elisabeth accompanied the Queen there, but the ladies of honour and ladies of the palace had no establishment at Trianon. When invited by the Queen, they came from Versailles to dinner. The King and Princes came regularly to sup. A white gown, a gauze kerchief, and a straw hat were the uniform dress of the Princesses.

[The extreme simplicity of the Queen's toilet began to be strongly censured, at first among the courtiers, and afterwards throughout the kingdom; and through one of those inconsistencies more common in France than elsewhere, while the Queen was blamed, she was blindly imitated. There was not a woman but would have the same undress, the same cap, and the same feathers as she had been seen to wear. They crowded to Mademoiselle Bertin, her milliner; there was an absolute revolution in the dress of our ladies, which gave importance to that woman. Long trains, and all those fashions which confer a certain nobility on dress, were discarded; and at last a duchess could not be distinguished from an actress. The men caught the mania; the upper classes had long before given up to their lackeys feathers, tufts of ribbon, and laced hats. They now got rid of red heels and embroidery; and walked about our streets in plain cloth, short thick shoes, and with knotty cudgels in their hands. Many humiliating scrapes were the consequence of this metamorphosis. Bearing no mark to distinguish them from the

common herd, some of the lowest classes got into quarrels with them, in which the nobles had not always the best of it.—MONTJOIE, "History of Marie Antoinette."]



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Examining all the manufactories of the hamlet, seeing the cows milked, and fishing in the lake delighted the Queen; and every year she showed increased aversion to the pompous excursions to Marly.

The idea of acting comedies, as was then done in almost all country houses, followed on the Queen's wish to live at Trianon without ceremony.

[The Queen got through the characters she assumed indifferently enough; she could hardly be ignorant of this, as her performances evidently excited little pleasure. Indeed, one day while she was thus exhibiting, somebody ventured to say, by no means inaudibly, "well, this is royally ill played!" The lesson was thrown away upon her, for never did she sacrifice to the opinion of another that which she thought permissible. When she was told that her extreme plainness in dress, the nature of her amusements, and her dislike to that splendour which ought always to attend a Queen, had an appearance of levity, which was misinterpreted by a portion of the public, she replied with Madame de Maintenon: "I am upon the stage, and of course I shall be either hissed or applauded." Louis XIV. had a similar taste; he danced upon the stage; but he had shown by brilliant actions that he knew how to enforce respect; and besides, he unhesitatingly gave up the amusement from the moment he heard those beautiful lines in which Racine pointed out how very unworthy of him such pastimes were.—
MONTJOIE, "History of Marie Antoinette."]

It was agreed that no young man except the Comte d'Artois should be admitted into the company of performers, and that the audience should consist only of the King, Monsieur, and the Princesses, who did not play; but in order to stimulate the actors a little, the first boxes were to be occupied by the readers, the Queen's ladies, their sisters and daughters, making altogether about forty persons.

The Queen laughed heartily at the voice of M. d'Adhemar, formerly a very fine one, but latterly become rather tremulous. His shepherd's dress in Colin, in the "Devin du Village," contrasted very ridiculously with his time of life, and the Queen said it would be difficult for malevolence itself to find anything to criticise in the choice of such a lover. The King was highly amused with these plays, and was present at every performance. Caillot, a celebrated actor, who had long quitted the stage, and Dazincourt, both of acknowledged good character, were selected to give lessons, the first in comic opera, of which the easier sorts were preferred, and the second in comedy. The office of hearer of rehearsals, prompter, and stage manager was given to my father-in-law. The Duc de Fronsac, first gentleman of the chamber, was much hurt at this. He thought himself called upon to make serious remonstrances upon the subject, and wrote to the Queen, who made him the following answer: "You cannot be first gentleman when we are the actors. Besides, I have already intimated to you my determination respecting



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Trianon. I hold no court there, I live like a private person, and M. Campan shall be always employed to execute orders relative to the private fetes I choose to give there.” This not putting a stop to the Duke’s remonstrances, the King was obliged to interfere. The Duke continued obstinate, and insisted that he was entitled to manage the private amusements as much as those which were public. It became absolutely necessary to end the argument in a positive manner.

The diminutive Duc de Fronsac never failed, when he came to pay his respects to the Queen at her toilet, to turn the conversation upon Trianon, in order to make some ironical remarks on my father-in-law, of whom, from the time of his appointment, he always spoke as “my colleague Campan.” The Queen would shrug her shoulders, and say, when he was gone, “It is quite shocking to find so little a man in the son of the Marechal de Richelieu.”

So long as no strangers were admitted to the performances they were but little censured; but the praise obtained by the performers made them look for a larger circle of admirers. The company, for a private company, was good enough, and the acting was applauded to the skies; nevertheless, as the audience withdrew, adverse criticisms were occasionally heard. The Queen permitted the officers of the Body Guards and the equeries of the King and Princes to be present at the plays. Private boxes were provided for some of the people belonging to the Court; a few more ladies were invited; and claims arose on all sides for the favour of admission. The Queen refused to admit the officers of the body guards of the Princes, the officers of the King’s Cent Suisses, and many other persons, who were highly mortified at the refusal.

While delight at having given an heir to the throne of the Bourbons, and a succession of fetes and amusements, filled up the happy days of Marie Antoinette, the public was engrossed by the Anglo-American war. Two kings, or rather their ministers, planted and propagated the love of liberty in the new world; the King of England, by shutting his ears and his heart against the continued and respectful representations of subjects at a distance from their native land, who had become numerous, rich, and powerful, through the resources of the soil they had fertilised; and the King of France, by giving support to this people in rebellion against their ancient sovereign. Many young soldiers, belonging to the first families of the country, followed La Fayette’s example, and forsook luxury, amusement, and love, to go and tender their aid to the revolted Americans. Beaumarchais, secretly seconded by Messieurs de Maurepas and de Vergennes, obtained permission to send out supplies of arms and clothing. Franklin appeared at Court in the dress of an American agriculturist. His unpowdered hair, his round hat, his brown cloth coat formed a contrast to the laced and embroidered coats and the powder and perfume of the courtiers



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of Versailles. This novelty turned the light heads of the Frenchwomen. Elegant entertainments were given to Doctor Franklin, who, to the reputation of a man of science, added the patriotic virtues which invested him with the character of an apostle of liberty. I was present at one of these entertainments, when the most beautiful woman out of three hundred was selected to place a crown of laurels upon the white head of the American philosopher, and two kisses upon his cheeks. Even in the palace of Versailles Franklin's medallion was sold under the King's eyes, in the exhibition of Sevres porcelain. The legend of this medallion was

“Eripuit coelo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis.”

The King never declared his opinion upon an enthusiasm which his correct judgment no doubt led him to blame. The Queen spoke out more plainly about the part France was taking respecting the independence of the American colonies, and constantly opposed it. Far was she from foreseeing that a revolution at—such a distance could excite one in which a misguided populace would drag her from her palace to a death equally unjust and cruel. She only saw something ungenerous in the method which France adopted of checking the power of England.

However, as Queen of France, she enjoyed the sight of a whole people rendering homage to the prudence, courage, and good qualities of a young Frenchman; and she shared the enthusiasm inspired by the conduct and military success of the Marquis de La Fayette. The Queen granted him several audiences on his first return from America, and, until the 10th of August, on which day my house was plundered, I preserved some lines from Gaston and Bayard, in which the friends of M. de La Fayette saw the exact outline of his character, written by her own hand:

“Why talk of youth,
When all the ripe experience of the old
Dwells with him? In his schemes profound and cool,
He acts with wise precaution, and reserves
For time of action his impetuous fire.
To guard the camp, to scale the leaguered wall,
Or dare the hottest of the fight, are toils
That suit th' impetuous bearing of his youth;
Yet like the gray-hair'd veteran he can shun
The field of peril. Still before my eyes
I place his bright example, for I love
His lofty courage, and his prudent thought.
Gifted like him, a warrior has no age.”



[During the American war a general officer in the service of the United States advanced with a score of men under the English batteries to reconnoitre their position. His aide-de-camp, struck by a ball, fell at his side. The officers and orderly dragoons fled precipitately. The general, though under the fire of the cannon, approached the wounded man to see whether any help could be afforded him. Finding the wound had been mortal, he slowly rejoined



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the group which had got out of the reach of the cannon. This instance of courage and humanity took place at the battle of Monmouth. General Clinton, who commanded the English troops, knew that the Marquis de La Fayette generally rode a white horse; it was upon a white horse that the general officer who retired so slowly was mounted; Clinton desired the gunners not to fire. This noble forbearance probably saved M. de La Fayette's life, for he it was. At that time he was but twenty-two years of age.—
“Historical Anecdotes of the Reign of Louis XVI.”]

These lines had been applauded and encored at the French theatre; everybody's head was turned. There was no class of persons that did not heartily approve of the support given openly by the French Government to the cause of American independence. The constitution planned for the new nation was digested at Paris, and while liberty, equality, and the rights of man were commented upon by the Condorcets, Baillys, Mirabeaus, *etc.*, the minister Segur published the King's edict, which, by repealing that of 1st November, 1750, declared all officers not noble by four generations incapable of filling the rank of captain, and denied all military rank to the roturiers, excepting sons of the chevaliers de St. Louis.

[“M. de Segur,” says Chamfort, “having published an ordinance which prohibited the admission of any other than gentlemen into the artillery corps, and, on the other hand, none but well-educated persons being proper for admission, a curious scene took place: the Abbe Bossat, examiner of the pupils, gave certificates only to plebeians, while Cherin gave them only to gentlemen. Out of one hundred pupils, there were not above four or five who were qualified in both respects.”]

The injustice and absurdity of this law was no doubt a secondary cause of the Revolution. To understand the despair and rage with which this law inspired the Tiers Etat one should have belonged to that honourable class. The provinces were full of roturier families, who for ages had lived as people of property upon their own domains, and paid the taxes. If these persons had several sons, they would place one in the King's service, one in the Church, another in the Order of Malta as a chevalier servant d'armes, and one in the magistracy; while the eldest preserved the paternal manor, and if he were situated in a country celebrated for wine, he would, besides selling his own produce, add a kind of commission trade in the wines of the canton. I have seen an individual of this justly respected class, who had been long employed in diplomatic business, and even honoured with the title of minister plenipotentiary, the son-in-law and nephew of colonels and town mayors, and, on his mother's side, nephew of a lieutenant-general with a cordon rouge, unable to introduce his sons as sous-lieutenants into a regiment of foot.

Another decision of the Court, which could not be announced by an edict, was that all ecclesiastical benefices, from the humblest priory up to the richest abbey, should in



future be appanages of the nobility. Being the son of a village surgeon, the Abbe de Vermond, who had great influence in the disposition of benefices, was particularly struck with the justice of this decree.

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During the absence of the Abbe in an excursion he made for his health, I prevailed on the Queen to write a postscript to the petition of a cure, one of my friends, who was soliciting a priory near his curacy, with the intention of retiring to it. I obtained it for him. On the Abbe's return he told me very harshly that I should act in a manner quite contrary to the King's wishes if I again obtained such a favour; that the wealth of the Church was for the future to be invariably devoted to the support of the poorer nobility; that it was the interest of the State that it should be so; and a plebeian priest, happy in a good curacy, had only to remain curate.

Can we be astonished at the part shortly afterwards taken by the deputies of the Third Estate, when called to the States General?

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Elegant entertainments were given to Doctor Franklin
Fashion of wearing a black coat without being in mourning
Favourite of a queen is not, in France, a happy one
History of the man with the iron mask
Of course I shall be either hissed or applauded.
She often carried her economy to a degree of parsimony
Shocking to find so little a man in the son of the Marechal
Simplicity of the Queen's toilet began to be strongly censured
The charge of extravagance
The three ministers, more ambitious than amorous
Well, this is royally ill played!
While the Queen was blamed, she was blindly imitated