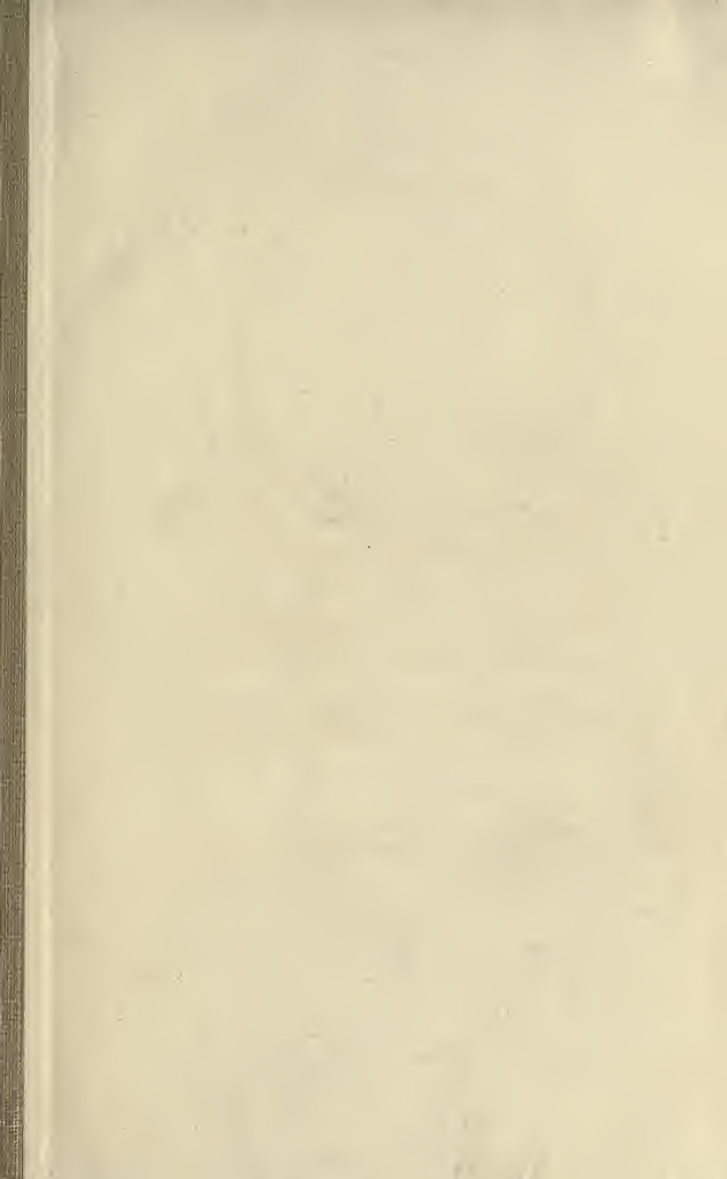
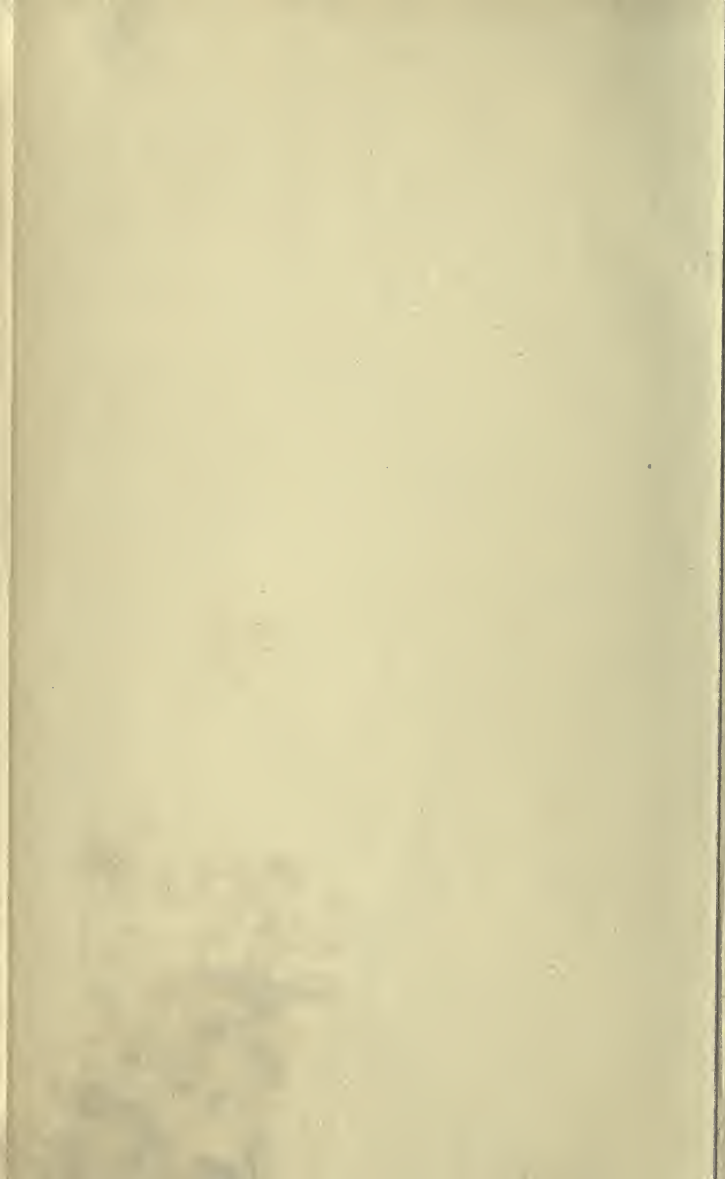


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MARIE-ANTOINETTE

From an engraving by Janinet

RECOLLECTIONS
OF
LÉONARD ✓

" *maroon*
Hairdresser to
Queen Marie-Antoinette

Translated from the French by

E. Jules Meras



LONDON
GREENING AND CO., LTD.
91 ST MARTIN'S LANE, W.C.

1912

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Marie-Antoinette, from an engraving by Janinet *Frontispiece*

	FACING PAGE
Comtesse du Barry.....	66
Charles Philippe, Comte d'Artois.....	124
Petit Trianon—The Queen's Boudoir.....	166
Louis XVI.....	198
Monsieur de Calonne.....	220
The Palace of Versailles.....	254
Mirabeau	296

COURT SERIES OF FRENCH MEMOIRS

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INTRODUCTION

Although the exact year of the birth of Léonard Autié is unknown, it is probable that it was 1746. Nothing is known of his early days, but it is likely that he spent them in the South of France, where he was born. It is also likely that he served his apprenticeship as hairdresser in a city in the same section of that country. He came to Paris, he tells us, in 1769 and quickly acquired a clientèle in the society of that capital.

As a hairdresser he became "king." It is he who created all the new head-dresses. He varied them weekly, almost daily, and the fashion papers of the period were filled with his innovations. He understood his epoch; novelties and eccentricities were in demand and he responded more than generously. His appointment as hairdresser to the Archduchess Marie-Antoinette crowned his reputation. He continued in that capacity after the Archduchess had become Queen of France, even until the flight of the royal family which terminated by the arrest of Louis XVI, at Varennes, June 22, 1791.

After this flight, in which he took part, Léonard went to Luxemburg, but nothing is known of his stay there. Later he is heard of as living abroad, in Russia and Germany. He remained away during the Directory, the Consulate, and the Empire, and only returned to France with the Bourbons in 1814. There he died, in Paris, on the 24th of March, 1820.

Histories usually give us the bare facts and dates. They seldom show us how the people lived of whose laws and battles they are the records. Memoirs like those of Léonard give us just what the histories lack.

We see in Léonard's book a "moving picture" of the events of the last twenty years of the Ancient Régime. We see Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette, their near relatives and their favorites at close range. We have lifelike portraits of a dull, well-intentioned Louis; of a proud, frivolous Marie-Antoinette. We have striking sketches of the Comte de Provence (later Louis XVIII), of the Comte d'Artois (later Charles X), and of Mirabeau, the "Demosthenes of the *Tiers-Etat*." We see the last of Louis XV's favorites, du Barry, and we have a glimpse of that gay monarch himself as he was towards the end of his reign.

Léonard tells us in a light and gossipy style, of those twenty years with their amusements, frivolities, struggles, and sorrows to the very eve of the flight of the royal family. We see the gradual dissatisfaction of the people, their protests, their rebellion, their attack on the palace of Versailles.

All the scenes of which Léonard has left us a description may not always be exact with the exactness of one who has been a witness or a party to them. He is a Gascon, as he himself tells us, and accordingly given to bragging. He wants to be an actor in almost everything he relates. The events did take place: this fact history has long since confirmed; but we suspect that they did not always occur in his presence, as he would have us believe.

Nevertheless it may be stated that few books, if any, give us a more striking picture of the Paris of the years preceding the Revolution.

RECOLLECTIONS OF
LÉONARD

CHAPTER I

When I had put up my hair and when a light cloud of flour, in lieu of powder, had whitened it; when my coat of fine gray cloth had been brushed to an extraordinary degree; when the puff of my cravat exhibited to an amateur's eye its artistic folds, and when my tightly drawn stocking showed the eloquent calf of my leg, then, faith, could I be taken, elsewhere besides in the castles in the air of my vanity, for a gentleman, if not accomplished, at least in a fair way to become so.

I went out on tiptoe, carrying under my left arm a hat tanned by the scorching sun of the highways; for the first time in my life I felt that I lacked a sword. I skirted the rue des Noyers and the rue Saint-Jacques with the assurance and ease of bearing which a man of twenty-three, whose future offers a security of forty-eight hours, seldom lacks. Now, I possessed a receipt for two weeks' room rent, five large *écus* of six francs, a beautiful shell comb, and an ample supply of confidence in myself. . . . At that time I used to dine at the rue de la

Huchette, for twenty-five centimes, less wine, of course, but in the company of several knights of Saint-Louis; which compensated in satisfied vanity what the stomach lacked in these economical meals. . . . I had hardly left my somber and miserable alley ten minutes, when my ear was caressed by these words: "What a handsome youth!"—"What beautiful blue eyes!"—"Really a marvelous head of hair!"—"That youth will make his way in the world!"

"I hope so," said I to myself; and I leave it to my panegyrists. This is as good as to have told you that my flatterers of the public ways were women, and from this you will naturally conclude that Jean Léonard was what was then called a *miroir à fillettes*.

A short time before my arrival in Paris I had corresponded with a journeyman barber whom I had known at Bordeaux and who, having gone into hairdressing for the past six or seven months, had secured a position with Legros, a manipulator of hair, whom the capital allowed to usurp a certain reputation. I betook myself to this alleged hairdresser, whom I found bloated with pride like a cellar rat who has become a farmer-general. Legros, wrapped in a magnificent dressing-gown,

and almost lying on a large armchair, was supervising at that moment the dressing of the hair of a councilor to the Parliament, who, having been unable to obtain a sitting at his residence from this self-styled *virtuoso*, had come to him so that he might study the style of head-dress most suitable to his features.

My friend having become first assistant to Legros, held the head of the limb of the law in his hands and made it turn so as to show its different sides to the artist; while the latter, wrapped in profound meditation, seemed unconscious of all that was going on around him. . . . He had not even seen me enter.

At last, after a good quarter of an hour of contemplation, the hairdresser cried in a resounding voice: "Curl this man's hair!" and the councilor's hair was curled.

While this operation was going on, Legros, to whom my friend had just introduced me without leaving his parliamentary head, called me to his armchair with a familiar gesture.

"Is it true, my boy," said he to me, while toying with his frill, "that you intend to take up hair-dressing? . . ."

"Yes, sir, and it is to perfect myself in this art that I have come to Paris."

"Perfect yourself! upon my honor, the word is exceedingly funny in the mouth of a youth coming from the country. . . ."

"Sir," replied I in an offended tone, "I have dressed hair at Bordeaux, Toulouse and Marseilles."

"You have frizzled and powdered in those cities, that is what you mean; but I want you to know that hairdressing only exists in Paris . . . since I appeared. . . ."

"I thought that the celebrated Dagé . . ."

"Dagé!" interrupted Legros with a disdainful pout, "a chance hairdresser, a reputation born of a *bon mot* slipped between two curl-papers of Pompadour: 'I dressed the other one's hair' . . .¹ Such reputations are despicable. . . . Come, come, my friend, it would be much better if Dagé had never existed . . . a man without genius, who could not train a single pupil and who allowed hairdressing to fall to the female line. . . . Do you know what I found in the profession when I entered it? Women hairdressers, sir! ignoble women hairdressers! . . . All was lost without me. . . . Have you read my book?"

“*L’Art de la Coiffure des Dames Françaises?* Yes, sir, I have read it.”

“Very good, young man; then we may make something of you.”

I had in fact run through the rhapsody of the said Legros, written in the French of a royal cook. The author had ornamented it with wretched illustrations of his own making, representing twenty-two head-dresses.

It was precisely because this alleged treatise had proved to me that the first of our hairdressers was nothing but a clumsy barber, that I entered the lists, full of the hope of surpassing this sham master and all his emulators.

“Certainly,” continued Legros, giving himself airs, “since you have read my work, there is a future before you; . . . the sacred spark has been communicated to you. . . . By the way, are you acquainted with the supplement which I have just published, with seven new head-dresses? . . . it is the *ne plus ultra* of the science . . . read that, young man, read that. . . .”

“I shall not fail to do so.”

“Next year,” resumed Legros with emphasis, “I vanish from Paris for some time, to put the foreign courts in possession of my discoveries;

England, Germany, Russia, are asking for me with might and main. . . . I have already drafted a plan for four academies—at London, at Vienna, at Berlin, at Saint Petersburg. . . . I shall go there to found them. Of course the capital of France shall suffer; but the talented man belongs to the universe. Improve, young man, and I shall give you employment.”

When my friend had finished curling the counselor’s hair, Legros let him off; I went out with him, after having thanked the master of Parisian head-dressing both for his favorable omens and for the excellent examples which I had imbibed from his work.

“Let us go to Procope’s,” said Legros’ first assistant, when passing the establishment of the famous coffee-house keeper; “it is the meeting place of the wits and we should indeed be very unfortunate if we failed to find some of them there: Piron, Marmontel, Poinciset or Dorat.”

Coffee was served to us, while I glanced over the *Gazette de France*, which was at that time, if I am not mistaken, the only daily paper existing in Paris. I had been reading for about ten minutes, when, starting with a sudden emotion, I struck the table with my knee and upset my cup,

which I had left untouched, so absorbed was I in my reading.

“Well! Léonard, what’s the matter with you?” exclaimed my friend while wiping his breeches wet with coffee.

“Here it is . . . here it is revealed, this art which your master prides himself on having discovered. . . . It is not he, zounds! who first understood the transcendent head-dress, it is a lawyer.”

“I say! are you getting mad?” said my friend, with an air of amazement.

“Mad—well, so be it, but mad with inspiration. . . . And this inspiration, grand, sublime, capable of undertaking everything, I receive from a disciple of Cujas. Listen, friend Frémont, listen to this extract from the Memorial in favor of the lady hairdressers against the society of master barbers, wig-makers, bath-keepers. . . . It is a masterpiece.”

“Ah! yes, I know; this suit is being brought before the higher court. The wig-makers act on the authority of a so-called exclusive privilege which turns over to them, so they say, all heads, both male and female, . . . but we have on our side the wives of the presidents, of the councilors,

of the Masters of Requests, of the clerks of the court; if need be we shall have the swords of the light-horsemen and the musketeers. . . . The ladies have promised it."

"And better than all that, we have the pen of the great legist who wrote this Memorial; listen, listen:"

"The art of dressing ladies' hair is a free art, like poetry, painting, sculpture. By means of the talents which we possess, we bestow new charms on the beauty of which the poet sings; it is often through us that painting is inspired, and if the Hair of Berenice has been placed among the constellations, who will say, that in order to reach this high degree of glory, she did not require the services of a hairdresser?"

"A forehead more or less broad, a face more or less round, require very different treatment; everywhere it is necessary to improve nature or repair its blemishes. Moreover, it is proper to reconcile with the flesh-tones the color under which the head-dress is to be presented. . . . It is necessary to know the shades, the use of *clare-obscure* and the distribution of shadows so as to give more life to the complexion, more expression to the eyes, more attractiveness to the charms. Some-

times the whiteness of the skin will be heightened by the darkness of the hair; or the too great brilliancy of the blonde will be moderated by the pale gray color with which we cover the head-dress.' ”

I felt all that, but I should not have expressed it in such a beautiful manner.

“Do you want me to tell you something?” I resumed in solemn tones: “Before three years Léonard shall be the foremost hairdresser of the universe. . . .”

“Pshaw! . . . You will favor me, will you not?”

“You shall be my assistant. . . .”

“Well! I shall not be so badly off: second hairdresser of the universe! Where do you dwell that I may go to-morrow morning to ask you for my diploma? . . .”

“No. 15, rue des Noyers, in a room eight by four feet,” I replied, assuming the bantering tone which my friend had taken, and which, fortunately, suddenly drew me out of the ridicule into which I was about to sink to the very neck.

“Rue des Noyers! Jean Léonard, the neighborhood is ill selected to found the throne of universal hairdressing. . . .”

“Jest as much as you please; but this is how I

reason since I have read the beautiful address of the hairdressers: I want the head-dress to express, modify, and disguise the passions; I want to soften or embolden the eye; that it be either coquettish, languishing, melancholic, or conquering; that it glide unperceived into the heart, or take it by force like a soldier on the charge. . . . I want, friend Frémont, that a new Jouvence spring from my comb: if Heaven helps, women will from henceforth not be old before they are past sixty; and the life of young beauties may be spent, wasted even, without showing it."

"You will not lack patrons. . . . But then, you must have come to Paris well supplied with funds; for no matter what one may do, need always comes much faster than fortune. . . ."

"I possess thirty francs, ten centimes-and six deniers."

"That is not too much. Do you want me to find a place for you?"

"At a hairdresser's?"

"Fie! . . . the foremost hairdresser of the universe cannot start from there. What I wish to propose to you is more proper and at any rate more pleasant. There are, somewhere in this world, pretty nymphs who with three hundred

francs' salary at Nicolet's theater are able to run a thirty thousand francs' income establishment, and who will give an honest youth a chance. Just as you see me, Léonard, I belong to this order of things, until I receive through your friendship the diploma of second hairdresser of the known world. Accept such a life while waiting for a better one; that will not hinder fortune from putting wind in your sails. Perhaps you may even find in this arrangement the occasion to succeed more quickly, and I promise that it will only depend on you if you wish to try the daring experiments which you have in mind on Nicolet's feminine heads; I can even assure you that this director's pensioners would without reserve abandon their persons to your trials.

"It just happens that I know," continued Frémont, "a certain Julia, a dancer, blessed with great suppleness of limbs and who has just broken with a black musketeer. It had been agreed that the dancer, richly supported by a commendatory abbé, would give much money to her lover, and that as a reward the latter would bestow much affection on his mistress. During six months the contract was carried out, but at the beginning of the seventh month and of last winter, Julia noticed

that the military man eluded considerably the principal clause of their deal; she then slackened her financial supplies.

“The member of the king’s household wished to reëstablish the equilibrium by applying the whip to his charmer. Julia considered the compensation abominable, jumped at the eyes of the black musketeer, and the harbor of Cupid became a lists. . . . It was not in this sort of combat that the dancer of the boulevards could cope with a Hercules: she was beaten, but not satisfied, and secretly resolved to avenge herself in a striking manner.

“Meanwhile affectionate relations and subsidies had resumed their course: the black musketeer was sincere in his reconciliation; he knew, and perhaps he felt, that nothing gives more strength to a love intrigue than a few cuffs and scratches exchanged between lovers. But on Julia’s side this good nature was but a patched-up peace: the desire for revenge smoldered in her woman’s heart and worked out a vengeance which was not long in breaking out.

“One evening in January the black musketeer came to supper at Julia’s; the word supper explains all: people know what this meal, at the home of

a young lady of the theater means. That evening champagne frequently whitened the glass of the gallant with its sparkling froth.

“Finally all was about to end in the usual manner; dexterously the black musketeer was casting off the pomps of this world; he threw his coat on an armchair, his vest on another, his cravat here, his silk stockings there; an enchanting disorder to which in youth one deliciously gives one’s self up, and which when old, one recalls with regrets.

“Suddenly, and when the gallant was in that condition of undress which no longer allows of recognizing either musketeer or archbishop, duke or peer, a door opened, and there entered an abbé with shiny calotte, smart cloak, followed by two tall lackeys armed with clubs which appeared of tremendous size to our officer.

“‘Mercy! Monsieur l’Abbé!’ exclaimed Julia . . . we are lost!’

“‘Oh, no!’ said the musketeer resolutely, in spite of the extreme lightness of his fighting dress.

“And suddenly he began to look for his sword; but buried no doubt under the gay rags of the dancer, this helpful weapon could not be found, and the two lackeys seizing the military man not by the collar, and you know why, but by the arm,

were about to bring their clubs into play. The abbé objected to this.

“The Church abhors the shedding of blood,” said the rascal with an air of compunction; ‘content yourself with throwing this man out of doors.’

“Never was an order more promptly and more perfectly carried out: in about five minutes, the poor musketeer, in his shirt, with bare head and feet, found himself under a fall of great flakes of snow which came down most furiously as if to second the jealous vengeance of a minister of the Lord. . . .

“It was only after a wait of ten minutes on the boulevard, in the freezing cold, that the expelled musketeer saw fall from a window, a bundle made up of his clothes, in the middle of which was his sword, most useless, alas! against the frost.

“The knight’s dressing-room did not permit of a careful or prolonged toilette; he dressed in all haste, to the accompaniment of his chattering teeth; and not thinking it worth while to break Julia’s windows, he started off like a man to whom violent exercise is necessary, and reached rue de Beaune, where the musketeers’ quarters are situated.

“While he ran so as to lose his breath, long

bumpers of champagne were being tossed off at the dancer's. Hilarious joy prevailed. The disciple of Terpsichore was merrily clicking glasses with the abbé and with his lackeys, who pledged her in a familiar manner: the abbé was no other than the actor Taconnet, and his valets had been selected among Nicolet's most robust supernumeraries. . . . Julia, with the assistance of her three comrades, had just settled the blows of the whip which she had not forgotten.

"Now, dear Léonard," continued Frémont, "for fear of such another experience with a new gallant, the commendatory abbé's mistress has remained good since then . . . as good, you understand, as a woman of the stage may be. . . . In brief, this nymph is without a lover. You, my dear fellow, require first of all a trusty friend; do you want Julia? She is a good creature if not beaten too much; and I believe that if not beaten at all, you will be able to turn her to good account. . . . Comb her as much as you please, but don't strike her, and I warrant that you will have a share of the benefices and prebends of the venerable abbé. . . . Well, what do you say to that, Léonard? Must I prepare the way for you? Decide; on hearing a categorical yes I leave you

for an hour; I run to Laura, my damsel, who is the intimate friend of Julia; I arrange a party of four for this evening, and we sign the contract."

"I accept my dear Frémont; I become the black musketeer's successor. . . . I rather like your Julia. . . . Is she nice?"

"She is charming, lucky rogue; supple as Grenoble gloves, lively as a squirrel . . . a real treasure. . . . And then superb hair, which you will comb by the day for practice."

"All that you have said delights me; I am anxious to meet her."

"I should think so! . . . So at three o'clock meet me at the Palais-Royal, under the *Cracovie* tree;² I shall not keep you waiting long if I am not there already.

"We shall leave from there to go and dine at the Temple boulevard; then, we shall go to Nicolet's and slip into my beauty's dressing-room. . . . I have free entry there.

"The essential thing is that you should meet Julia: the supper question will come up quite naturally."

Frémont left me soon, and as I had four hours to wait before that of the rendezvous, I took up the *Mercure*, which happened to be at hand.

Before three o'clock I was under the *Cracovie* tree, which daily spread its vast branches over a multitude of simpletons and newsmongers. . . .

I did not wait long for my friend.

"Good news," cried he, as far as he could see me: "All is settled; you please already by the description I have given of you. We are expected in Laura's dressing-room at half past five. . . . First let us go and dine at Bancelin's. . . . I happen to be in funds; the councilors' wives have been generous this week; Legros only goes out for presidents' wives and these substitutes always line my pockets well. Let us go."

Bancelin, at that time, kept on the boulevard what was known as a roadside inn, with doors open to all winds and all comers.

On a very neat counter there arose pyramids of roast pigeons and chickens, wild-boars' heads, legs of mutton with golden-brown surface—alluring morsels offered to the famished public: Behind these could be seen Madame Bancelin, a beauty in her autumnal period, profuse of winning smiles, and glittering with diamonds.

Bancelin was a stout, short man, red of face, wide-awake eyes, thick lips trained at tasting wines, and a smile whose frankness sometimes degen-

erated into silliness. This innkeeper, become a man of the world by his constant contact with all classes, lacked however neither wit nor judgment; and had even acquired a sort of education from the literary and scientific echoes heard in his place. Bancelin always appeared gay, communicative, and full of dubious anecdotes, collected in the neighborhood or caught on the fly from the conversations of his patrons, among which comedians, lawyers' clerks, scamp marquises and damsels of a certain class always predominated. In a word Bancelin was an innkeeper cut on the pattern of those of Le Sage.

Our dinner was long, choice, and washed down by a Clos-Vougeot which Bancelin had taken, so he told us, from under the fagots. As was his habit, he brought his glass to the table to help us finish the bottle, a thing, however, which he only did with his favored customers, and Frémont was one of these.

We were slightly flustered when we slipped, without being seen by a watchful manager, into the dressing-room of our dancers. They were dressing to appear in a new pantomime.

"My beauties," said Frémont in a tone of intimate familiarity, "I present to you my friend

Léonard, a hairdresser of greatest prospects, a gentleman who, from head to foot, may defy the most scrupulous examination! A seductive youth and clever artist, both in one, who knows, with equal superiority, how to dress or turn a woman's head."

"I beg you, ladies, to take this exaggerated praise in the light of a joke," said I with a provincial timidity of which I was soon to be rid.

"Really, sir," replied Laura, who was not lacking in wit, "on seeing you one is inclined to believe that what Frémont says is not in the least too much. . . ."

Until then Julia had remained quiet; she now advanced towards me smiling with charming affability.

"Since monsieur is so great a master of hair-dressing," she said to me in a caressing voice, "I suppose that he will be kind enough to inform me how I should arrange my hair so as to properly represent a fairy, for I am a fairy in the piece I play to-night."

"I would wager that you are one everywhere," I replied with a spontaneity of inspiration which furthered my cause considerably.

"You are too kind, Monsieur Léonard." an-

swered the enchantress of the Nicolet theater; "but my power does not go so far as to enable me to create a head-dress appropriate to the character I am to represent."

"If you will allow me," said I, slightly turning up the sleeves of my coat, "I shall try to perform this task."

"Come, come, too modest Léonard," said Frémont with malicious gayety, "are you forgetting that in less than three years you are to be the foremost hairdresser of the terrestrial globe? . . . Come, quickly make a fairy's head of the roguish face you have here."

"To work then," I replied like a man inspired, while with my finger I pointed to Julia the seat which stood in front of the dressing-table. "What sort of a fairy are you, mademoiselle? Kindly fairy, protecting fairy of the king's son? or avenging fairy, furious at not having been called to the birth of a princess as beautiful as the day? . . . I must be posted in that respect. . . ."

"Bravo, Léonard," shouted Frémont applauding; "you have just been superb."

"I am a protecting fairy: I never accept the parts in which one has to hate . . . they are harmful to an actress."

“Good, I’m on the track,” I continued, dexterously dividing the beautiful ashen blond hair which Julia surrendered to my inspiration, . . . you have pearls, flowers, tinsel, carbuncles. . . .”

“That box is full of those things,” said Julia, showing me a sort of case of imitation jewels.

“What do I see? . . . Stars!” I continued with enthusiasm . . . precious discovery. . . . Beauteous Julia, your head-dress, I dare promise, will create a sensation.”

“So much the better, Monsieur Léonard; I am a friend of sensations. . . .”

Meanwhile Julia’s hair, freed from its curl-papers, had taken a certain form under my comb; I had divided it in zones and each one presented different beauties: here emeralds, there pearls; a little lower, a few flowers which seemed to pierce through the curls. . . . But the most ingenious, the most original of the attributes of that head-dress, to which I wished to give the character of all the wealth which may be created by the wand of a fairy, was an aureola of stars which did not seem to be a part of the head which it crowned. The means I used, to which I perhaps owed my fortune, were simple; but I had to find them. I fastened my stars to a circle of extremely fine wire,

to this I attached two pieces of the same wire which I fixed in the hair, so that the golden stars seemed to arch themselves as a crown on my fairy's head without any visible attachment. At two steps away the illusion was complete.

When Julia's head-dress was entirely finished, Frémont looked at it with meditative attention. I saw very well that there was more than one detail to which he objected; but his criticism, dumfounded, dared not express itself. . . .

"Léonard," said he to me, "I consider you a prudent man: you have thought and with good reason, that one can chance everything with one's contemporaries. . . . You will make your way, my boy."

"And Monsieur Léonard will make it quickly," added Julia delighted at the hotch-potch which I had just erected on her head.

This dancer had received but little approbation on the stage up to this time: she knew not how to make the best of the prettiest limb and foot in the world; there was a certain awkwardness in her gestures, and but little grace in her attitudes and motions. People enjoyed seeing her because her wanton countenance promised much; but Julia's success on the stage was limited.

This was very different when the fairy fresh from my hands appeared on the scene; when the audience had noticed the strangely original head-dress, and had sought in vain to discover how the aureola of stars held above her head. It was admired the more because it was not understood; that is the usual way; and Julia who had never before been applauded on the stage, was enthusiastically greeted every time she showed herself. This unaccustomed reception encouraged her; she risked a few poses outside of the sphere of her ordinary mediocrity; she succeeded in all, and, a thing which had not yet been seen in *Les Grands Danseurs du Roi*, she was recalled after the performance.

When Julia and Laura joined us in the green-room, the former embraced me with transport.

"I owe you the greatest happiness I have ever experienced in my life," said she to me. "Léonard, I am yours in life and in death."

"As such debts are imperious to all well-born souls," said Frémont in a dramatic manner, "let us go and have supper."

CHAPTER II

There is not a single one of my readers who, in the present year 1800, during which I begin to write my memoirs, does not know what a party of four is, composed of two lively actresses and of two young men delighted at being with them. . . . To-day people generally know the outcome of a little supper before a table where knees touch, where the seats are later set closer, then the heads. . . . In 1769, it was already like this: the Revolution has only made the method more general. . . .

The next morning between nine and ten Julia and I joined the other two members of our quartette in Laura's room, where we had breakfast.

"Now," said Frémont's lady-love, while swallowing a last mouthful of liqueur, "you cannot, Monsieur Léonard, live so far from your new friends; you must leave your wretched rue des Noyers, and take up your abode on the boulevard: it is the fashionable section, and it will not be long, I predict, before you hold a distinguished place in its set. . . ."

"I should much like to," I replied, "but I cannot at this time. . . ."

"There is no *but*, Léonard," said Julia; "I want you to live near me. . . . It is the proper thing, do you understand, and scruples are out of place in people who like one another. . . . Between friends all things should be in common: to-day I share with you, to-morrow or a little later it will be your turn to share with me. So that's settled. Be good enough to take a cab to bring all your baggage here, and to-night we'll install you in a nice boulevard furnished room."

"A cab to bring my baggage!" I answered laughing; "do you take me for a farmer-general? . . . I could, if compelled to, save myself the trouble of moving, if I did not so highly prize my shell-comb, which I have left in the rue des Noyers."

"You are right," said Laura, who for a few moments had been going through a series of exercises before her looking-glass: the comb of a hairdresser is the violin of a virtuoso, the sword of a general. . . . Go, handsome Léonard, go and get your shell-comb. During your trip Frémont will go and engage a room for you, and after rehearsal we dine together. . . . Let us not for-

get that to-night you have to create a new fairy. . . . Ah! ah! ah! how funny life is. . . . By the way, Frémont, do you know *La Bourbonnaise*, a charming song, which is being sung everywhere at l'Oeil-de-Bœuf and on the Port-au-Blé; an allegory in vaudeville on our almost-queen, du Barry.³ . . . This week at our theater, a piece of the same title: *La Bourbonnaise*, is to be played. What a fortune for Nicolet if this piece has as many performances as the other Bourbonnaise has had admirers! . . .

“Hello! my bureau is dancing; I believe I am a bit tipsy. . . . That devil of a Chablis always plays the same trick on me; I am certain to stumble during the rehearsal of my appearance on the stage.”

At these words, the dancer wrapped her graceful form in a drapery of black taffeta, and rushed up the stairs repeating some lines from the song *La Bourbonnaise*.

Laura and Julia went to the rehearsal; Frémont said that he was going to devote two hours to his art, and I hastened to my lodgings in the rue des Noyers, to begin my moving.

For the second performance of the new pantomime, I made Julia a head-dress even more

extraordinary than the first; this prodigious edifice of hair, tinsel, imitation stones, and of everything else which came under my hand, could not have been put into a bushel-basket. Accordingly the actress was received with a crescendo of enthusiasm. . . .

The *Gazette* had mentioned my masterpiece, that morning, and in the evening a considerable portion of the higher bourgeoisie and of the nobility had flocked to the boulevard to enjoy so new a spectacle. At the door of the theater there stood a long, double line of carriages. . . . Nicolet had never seen so illustrious an audience in his smoky house.

The next day, Frémont informed me that Legros, the haughty Legros, having rushed to Nicolet's at the report of my fame, had turned pale on seeing the amazing head-dress of the fairy. . . .

"Your friend," he had told his first assistant, "has tried a style which I have not taken up in a sufficiently open manner, he has dared to make use of the strange, the exaggerated, the ridiculous. . . . It is a dangerous experiment; an artist who gives himself up to this sort of thing provokes either hootings or cheers; in order to aspire to a

crop of laurels, he defies a volley of baked apples. Léonard has won laurels. . . . Now, he may rush headlong into the absurd . . . he will succeed in everything . . . unless . . . we shall see."

"The academic style will always have its partisans," replied Frémont, so as to console the cast-down Legros.

"May God hear you, my boy. But I am very much afraid that this daring innovator will soon leave to us only the dowagers who no longer have admirers, and the limbs of the law who have ceased to be interested in actresses."

Thereupon, shaking his head, Legros left his first assistant.

"I bring some news," exclaimed Julia, on returning that same day from rehearsal: "Nicolet's company is to play its new pantomime this evening at Madame la Comtesse d' Amblimont's! One more honor which the famous fairy's head-dress brings to us. . . . This morning, an order of M. le Duc de Choiseul was brought to M. Nicolet by a groom; His Excellency has called two companies together, that of the *Variétés Amusantes* and ours, to the residence of the comtesse . . . that will be fun!"

The fairy, its stars, and its head-dress, pro-

duced the same effect at the Amblimont residence as on the boulevard. Not only did the comtesse ask to see me, but after the play I was taken through the salons by her and shown to her brilliant society like a pretty sapajou recently come from the Antilles. . . . Haughtily looked down upon in one room, ogled through the openings of fans in another, complimented on my talent in a third, hearing praise of my looks whispered elsewhere, I at last, conducted by the mistress of the house, reached a small rear room where we only found a nobleman superbly attired, seated on a little sofa, by the side of a very pretty woman. . . . I was later informed that the couple were M. le Duc de Choiseul and Madame de Grammont, his sister.

“Here, Monsieur le Duc,” said la Comtesse d’Amblimont, “is the author of the head-dress which is being so much talked about in Paris.”

“Ah! this is the young innovator,” said the minister laughing. “Well! this is capital, my friend; you know how to do senseless things when necessary . . . a precious quality, forsooth! . . . Have you ever dressed the hair of abbés?” . . .

I contented myself with replying that in the

provinces I had accommodated several episcopal heads.

"To-day," replied the minister laughing, "the question is only to assist in *incommoding* one."

"What, brother, you persist in your project of mystifying that poor M. de Jarente!"

"Sister, I must take my revenge; he has refused a living to a young ecclesiastic whom you favored. . . . Besides, the jest I have in mind, is more innocent than His Grace."

After which, the illustrious minister having risen, requested me to follow him.

Having gone through several apartments, we reached the rear of the stage on which the boulevard pantomime had just been performed. His Excellency, after having knocked lightly at a little door, opened it without having been told to enter, and we found ourselves in the midst of four young actresses busy making up as abbés.

"Ah! my lord," exclaimed one of these, "you should not have entered, we are not yet ready to play our part."

"Pretty rogues," replied the duke, "I rather like to slip behind the curtain. . . . Besides, do you not see that I bring you our clever hair-dresser?"

“Ah! yes, thank you, my lord. . . .”

I took them in hand, and soon made of their wanton looks the four prettiest abbé faces that ever came out of a seminary, and I then slipped into the salons to see what was going to take place.

There were that evening at Madame d' Ambli-mont's, a crowd of noble lords and several prelates, among whom was Monseigneur de Jarente. Our young abbés immediately followed in the steps of this bishop. Our four little abbés appeared so interesting to Monseigneur, they looked so much like cherubs, and the compliments which they made to His Grace were so well turned, that their requests were favorably received. Youthful, fervent candidates, they wanted, they said, to devote themselves to the service of the altar, and M. le Duc de Choiseul, a relative of one of these, had promised them his protection. The minister, who was not far off, came to second their applications; M. de Jarente, who was as good a courtier as he was a catholic, vowed that he would take the keenest interest in His Excellency's protégés; and as a guarantee of his promise, he consented to embrace the charming neophytes several times.

It is unnecessary to say, that the whole company, with the exception of the bishops, were

acquainted with the secret of the masquerade, and that the embraces bestowed by His Grace on the liveliest actresses of the *Variétés Amusantes*, diverted those present extremely.

Still, this was only the first act of the play imagined by M. de Choiseul; when the other performance continued, M. de Jarente was quite near the stage; you may imagine his surprise when he recognized, in feminine garb, the four abbés whom he had so cordially embraced. . . .

At the supper which concluded the festivity, the abbés again become young girls, pretty, amiable and not in the least shy, appeared with all sorts of charms and affectations. They did not wish, they said, to keep the property of the Church, and they compelled the obliging prelate to allow them to return to him the kisses which he had given and with liberal interest. . . .

“Should the payment of this debt have been delayed six months,” said Louis XV to whom this was told a few days after, “Monsieur de Jarente would have been kept so busy that he would not have had one minute in which to read his breviary, for at least two weeks.”

On leaving the Amblimont residence, my hand could feel in my left pocket some ten *louis* which

M. le Duc de Choiseul had just given me for the head-dresses of the abbés of his and my making. The minister had told me with the noble ease which distinguished him: "You must come and see me, Léonard; I shall recommend you to the ladies of the court, and Madame de Grammont will grant you her support."

While I was riding along towards the boulevard with my dancer, she was saying to me between loud peals of laughter:

"I say, Léonard, I really believe that, in fact, I am something of a fairy; since you know me, you have become almost a man of fashion, and you are protected by noble lords. . . ."

"Silence, silly! . . . The most real things in all this are your caresses and M. de Choiseul's ten *louis*. As to his protection, it is prudent to reflect before accepting it."

"What! please repeat; I did not understand."

"I say that Monsieur the Minister of Foreign Affairs is not a protector on whom one can depend."

"Jean Léonard, you who roosted two days ago in a small room of the rue des Noyers, at the rate of four cents a night, I consider you a bit disdainful towards the mighty of the world."

"It is because I reason, my dear Julia, as a man who wishes to take no chances."

"Mercy me! take no chances in this life! . . ."

"Choiseul's power is on the wane, do you see?"

"Ah! ah! ah! *Choiseul*, only that; one would think that he roosted by your side in the rue des Noyers?"

"La Comtesse du Barry will have overthrown this minister before three months have passed."

"Bah! you think so; so good a head!"

"Of course, he has his head; but has not the favorite her charms?"

"That's true, and our good King is their willing prisoner."

"Then you see that by writing myself down as one of the duc's creatures, I run the risk of displeasing the comtesse at the time when the good head will be defeated by all the charms she possesses."

"Truly; I approve you now, Léonard; it is better to advance less fast, and advance more surely."

Without ever having been able to find out how my address had been discovered, I received, within the week which followed Madame d'Amblimont's soirée, some thirty musk-scented notes which were

that number of demands for my talents; now it was a dancer, now a singer, now an actress of the *Théâtre-Français*, more often a nymph from the *Variétés Amusantes*; I soon numbered on my list of clients, as one would say to-day, the Sophie Arnoulds, the Duthés, the Adelines;⁴ but orders from the women of quality were few and far between, and this surprised me. In the salons of Madame d'Amblimont I had heard the whispered praise of my figure, of the brightness of my eyes, of the whiteness of my hands, and I was astonished that at a time when lackeys in high society made their fortune, a hairdresser, whose début had been so brilliant, should still languish, after three months, in the half-light of actresses' dressing-rooms. I heard finally that an ill turn had been done me with the powers, and I was not long in discovering that envy had taxed its ingenuity to ruin me. Legros, stunned by my first success, had gone about venting his spite upon me. He could not deny my superiority; my fairy's head had crushed him, and every day the head of an actress or dancer *léonarded*, as it was called in the theatrical world would have given the lie to the detraction of my antagonist. But, not knowing

how to attack the artist, he attacked the morality of the man.

In order to more clearly understand the success of the malignant words which Legros uttered or caused to be uttered against me, it is necessary to know that at that epoch, the hairdresser was, with the ladies, the man of intimacy, the confessor of the dressing-room.

For the hairdresser worthy of his mission, there was no secret neither in the boudoir nor in the dressing-room. . . .

Now, one of the first merits of a hairdresser in those days was to be a handsome man and blessed with a fine physique. . . . And you know what the ladies thought of me in that respect. Yet Legros, by means of slander, succeeded for a time in closing to me the dressing-rooms of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, of the Place Royale, of l'île Saint-Louis and of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. . . .

Thus matters stood, when one morning I received a small triangular note; this one was impregnated with a most delicate perfume; I opened it and read:

“Madame la Marquise de L—— requests Monsieur Léonard to call on her to-morrow at

noon; she is to give a reception in the evening, and as a kindly fairy may be there, she will be delighted to come to an understanding with Monsieur Léonard on the head-dress which may best suit that fairy, so that she may have nothing in common with that of Nicolet."

I do not know what instinct prevented me from showing this note to Julia; but I prepared myself to go to the house of the Marquise de L—— with the greatest secrecy.

In Paris, in those days, one could be fashionable with little money: the noble lords only wore the divers pieces of their clothes two or three times, and it was great booty for the valets although they sold these discarded effects very cheap. By means of second-hand acquisitions, I had formed a rather neat but especially a varied collection. There was nothing lacking, not even the sword with steel hilt, nor the cocked hat covered with black satin, for full dress. In short, I could have been taken anywhere for the son of a good family, and when I spoke, I seldom belied by any vulgarity either my elegance or my figure of fashionable cavalier.

I assuredly looked more like a marquis than a hairdresser; and when I had myself announced

at the residence of the marquise, the chambermaid, who brought me in, called out: "Monsieur de Léonard."

Madame de L—— received me in bed, as was formerly the custom of women of fashion towards persons whom they treated without ceremony.

"Monsieur Léonard," said the marquise with a charming smile, while her large eye examined me from head to foot, "Larsenneur used to dress my hair, I make choice of you for a substitute."

"Madame la Marquise, this honors me very much. . . ."

"Let us put honor aside, Monsieur Léonard, you who create divinities out of Nicolet's wretched dancers; it is your achievements which honor you."

The marquise had laid great stress on the words *Nicolet's wretched dancers*, and no doubt by reason of the vanity which possessed me that day, I had attached the idea of a jealous impulse to it.

"But I shall not conceal from you, Léonard, that I have heard various reports about you, sometimes favorable, more often unfavorable."

"Unfavorable! Madame la Marquise, who can spread such reports about me?"

"Wicked people, I believe, and the proof that I

take very little stock in what they say is, that you are here by my orders.

“Come, Léonard,” continued Madame de L—— pointing to an armchair standing at the head of her bed, come and sit here, and let us talk a bit. I wish to know from where you come.”

“From Gascony. . . .”

Then the Marquise asked me several questions from which I judged that she was acquainted with the slanderous stories circulated against me by Legros and his confederates. . . .

“Léonard,” continued Madame de L——, “you are my hairdresser. Now, listen to what I can predict for your future. The King is graciously pleased to include me among the ladies of the court who are, he asserts, to be acceptable to the young Dauphine, who is expected; I have been chosen to belong to this princess’ select circle as soon as she arrives at Versailles; His Majesty has reasons for this, with which I may later acquaint you. . . . For,” added Madame de L—— with an alluring wink, “you know, Léonard, that a hairdresser, when he understands his calling, soon deserves the confidence of the ladies who employ him. Well, I consent to tell you now that my intention is to help you on in society. Better

still, I do not despair of placing you with the Dauphine. Larsenneur, whom the Abbé de Vermont has sent to Vienna, is a dull man, without imagination, a sort of wig-maker, whose speeches crush our minds at the same time that his heavy hand crushes our heads. Such a servant cannot suit Marie-Antoinette d'Autriche, of whom M. le Cardinal de Rohan, ambassador at Vienna, has spoken to us as an archduchess quick, lively, and a bit frivolous. Besides Her Imperial Highness is trained to French ways by a pretty actress, a sister of Fleury.

"Thus, Léonard, you may hope to become hairdresser to the Dauphine. But I want you to be devoted to me and I warn you that I am a bit exacting."

"It must be so nice to obey you, Madame la Marquise, that one cannot get enough opportunities."

"Rather a pretty compliment, truly. . . . But we shall see," said the noble lady with a shake of the head which seemed to express some doubt. "And first of all," she continued resolutely, "no more assiduity at Nicolet's place; the actresses of the boulevard spoil a hair-dresser's hand. The Guimards, the Sophie Arnoulds, the Duménils, I

don't mind; all these ladies have made a trial of princely life; they have adopted its ways. . . . We, women of quality, share everything with them. . . . We must submit to it, since the gentlemen wish it so. And then, I should not care to forbid you access to these powers in the empire of fashion; I am anxious to have your renown increase and no one knows better how to assist reputations than actresses. . . . But I repeat again so that you may understand me well: no more boulevard dancers . . . it is beneath a protégé of the Marquise de L——. You promise to be faithful. . . . How foolish I am! . . . I mean you promise to be manageable. . . .”

“Both, Madame la Marquise,” I replied, carried away by a movement of vanity which in no way startled my protectress.

“Good, Léonard. . . . Now go, that I may rise. . . . But no, do not go. . . . Arrange everything on my dressing-table to dress my hair. . . . Wipe the looking glass . . . and don't look into it.”

I took the last words in the sense which the noble lady evidently attached to them: I looked in the mirror, which stood opposite the bed, and the marquise got out of it with the most complete

lack of precaution. . . . I said to myself: "Léonard, my friend, there you are launched into brilliant adventures. . . . Lucky rogue! . . ."

Imagine if I were not, in fact, to consider myself fortunate: the Marquise de L—— was a woman of twenty-three, small, but beautifully formed; a foot, a leg, neck and shoulders which defied all comparison; and with that features, if not most regular, at least most attractive. . . .

The marquise, without the assistance of her maid, had taken an almost transparent muslin skirt, and was rather carelessly wrapping herself in a peignoir of batiste adorned with wide Malines lace. She sat down at her dressing table, and I prepared myself to dress her hair.

"How does Madame la Marquise wish her hair arranged?" said I, while dividing into silky locks, the dark hair which had been confided to me.

"Really, I do not know . . . advise me, Léonard."

"If Madame la Marquise will tell me what sort of gown she intends to wear this morning, this information will determine me as to the character of head-dress I must select."

"Ah! yes, you are right, Léonard. . . . Well! I believe I don't want to go out. . . ."

“Madame is perhaps going to receive this morning and, in this case, I must catch the exquisite confusion of a negligée.”

“Yes, as you say, Léonard, you must catch the confusion of a negligée. . . . Still, I don’t want to receive. . . . Call Sophie, my maid.”

I obeyed, and the maid entered, suppressing a smile.

“Sophie,” said the marquise without turning, “have the head porter informed that I am out to every one; I give you the morning off.”

“Very good, madame,” replied Sophie leaving the room.

“There, now we’re alone, Léonard,” resumed Madame de L. . . ; make me very pretty. . . .”

“Nature has left nothing for me to do in that respect, Madame la Marquise.”

“Little flatterer! Yes, yes, nature may always be improved by art. But it seems to me that your hand trembles.”

“It is because never before have I been so afraid to make a mistake.”

“And why should you be afraid? Do I look as severe as all that?”

And, at this moment, Madame de L—— having neglected to hold her peignoir, it opened, and

permitted me to see the most beautiful bosom in the world. . . .

Bewildered, no longer knowing what I was doing, I tried to distract my mind by giving all my attention to the marquise's head-dress.

"Be careful, Léonard, you are pulling my hair," exclaimed Madame de L. . . ; "really, I am beginning to think that you do not understand your calling as you should."

"I must confess, madame, that I am very much disturbed."

"Poor boy! Who can be the cause of this?"

"I dare not tell Madame la Marquise."

"Oh! I understand," said Madame de L—— after having glanced at her mirror.

"And you comprehend no doubt," I continued quickly, "that poor little mortals for whom Heaven opens suddenly . . ."

"Heaven is lovely," repeated the marquise laughing. "Come, child, continue your work," she added while turning a languishing look on me, and without covering that which I had at first thought uncovered by chance, and which now seemed to me intentionally exposed.

"Faith! madame," I exclaimed with rapture, "were the lightning to strike me I cease to resist

the temptation . . .” and I imprinted a burning kiss on the marquise’s bosom. . . .

A smile appeared on the trembling lips of the marquise; and her head a moment wavering, let itself fall on my arm, wrapped in the long locks of hair which my comb had divided. . . .

Late, very late in the evening, Madame de L—— said to me: “Léonard, if I had the privilege of making nobles, you would be a prince this very evening.”

“Marquise, I consider myself lucky enough to be a bit of a marquis; but, for mercy’s sake, do not *demarquis* me too soon.”

CHAPTER III

After this first meeting with Madame de L——, she used to send for me at all hours; one would have thought that she spent her whole time in the hands of her hairdresser, and yet never had her hair been seen so badly arranged.

It was usually in the evening, at the hour when the city and the court have their hair rolled up, that Madame de L—— sent for me. There was always shortly to be some ball, some concert at the Vauxhall, which had just been opened; or else it was the reading of a comedy of Dorat or of a tragedy of la Harpe, which was to be given at the residence of a fifty-year-old countess, who no longer had anything better to do than to become a wit. And of all that nothing except the stupidly significant laugh of the head porter, accustomed to seeing me enter by the courtyard gate without ever seeing me come out again; nothing except the malicious laugh of Sophie, who accompanied me to the little door of the garden. . . .

But interested parties are, in all things, hard to

deceive: my dancer, by my frequent evening absences, by the somewhat impertinent airs which I affected towards her, perhaps by other signs, began to suspect something. . . . Julia had me followed one night by some theater boy, who saw me enter the house of the Marquise de L——. Up to this, there was nothing very extraordinary; but, he did not see me come out after having waited more than five hours, and this was beginning to become very significant. . . .

One morning before eight o'clock (it was at the commencement of winter), I heard some one hurriedly knock at my door; I had just come in, and my bed, untouched, eloquently testified that I had not used it the night before. . . . I opened the door to the early visitor, without in the least suspecting who it might be; I took two steps backwards on recognizing Julia.

"Yes, it is I," said she in a calm tone which I hardly expected to hear from a character so irascible and petulant. . . .

"What a pleasant surprise!" I exclaimed, with a joyous accent, which I fear was not very well feigned.

"Pleasant surprise! that's what we are going to see. . . . Léonard, do you love me? . . ."

"The question, after six months of sweet intimacy, is startling, to say the least. . . ."

"Not at all; but I shall make it more clear by repeating it with the addition of a word; do you *still* love me?"

"This doubt, my dear Julia . . ."

"Is very natural, it seems to me, when I find you all dressed up as early as this, before your bed, which has not been touched."

"Singular motive to doubt my love! . . ."

"The best of motives! . . . I do not reproach you," continued Nicolet's dancer, while looking at herself in the glass; "constancy in love, is, as one might say, a violent itching with scratching prohibited: ten times out of twelve, it happens that one scratches. . . . Besides, there is no faithfulness clause in our treaty. When I fancied a man, I took him; example *le Petit-Diable*, our head tight-rope dancer, who is certainly the most seductive Adonis I know. Thus as I expect you to overlook my rope-walker, I myself overlook your Marquise de L——."

"The Marquise de L——! who told you. . . ."

"That you go and arrange or disarrange her head-dress every evening, and that this lasts until morning. . . . Why, everybody knows it . . ."

it isn't the little woman's first affair . . . and she did not think it worth her while to make a mystery of this one. . . . However, we shall have to arise and protest, we women of the theater, against the beauties of high society. In truth, if this continues, it will be impossible for us to have any fairly decent admirers. Now these ladies are setting about robbing us of our hairdressers and lackeys. I can't stand it any longer, and I'm certainly going to start a revolt.

"Adieu, Léonard, I wanted to know what to think with regard to certain matters so as to properly divide my time. I am going to arrange that conscientiously. . . . The abbé will have comedy for his money; you will have affection for your beautiful eyes, and I flatter myself that there still will be some left to reward *le Petit-Diable* . . ."

And Julia went out of the room maliciously singing the refrain of an old song.

The strange conversation which my dancer and I had just had, took away all possibility of resting a little; the marquise awaited me at eleven o'clock, and this time it was really a question of dressing her hair. The coaches which were to be sent to the Archduchess Marie-Antoinette at that time excited the curiosity of the city and of the court:

everyone wished to see them; there were crowds at Francien's the coach-builder to admire these exquisite carriages, built at great expense by order of M. le Duc de Choiseul.

Madame de L——, who, in the matter of longings surpassed all women, was astonished at not having yet seen Madame La Dauphine's coaches. "Truly," said she to me, while I arranged her hair to humor a whim, "had I not been so seriously engaged satisfying a caprice . . ."

I bowed very low.

"Come, Léonard, surpass yourself," said the marquise, . . . "make me a very coquettish head-dress, a very roguish one. It is rumored that Madame du Barry is to visit Francien's shops this morning; it is possible that I may meet this young beauty, and the Marquise de L—— is not in the habit of losing a single one of the gentlemen's glances, even when the favorite is around.

"By the way, Léonard," continued the marquise, "you will come to Francien's; I wish to see you there. . . . Be sure to be near; I shall present you to Madame du Barry; it will be a quite natural opportunity which may profit you."

"I shall obey you, Madame la Marquise."

"It might be possible that the comtesse dismiss

Legros in order to take you. But," added Madame de L—— with an expressive wink, "you must be no more than Legros' substitute."

"That's understood, Madame la Marquise."

"Because, you see, our half-queen protects in a manner. . . . There is always something of the milliner in her."

When Madame de L——'s head-dress was completed, I turned her over to her maid, so that she finish dressing her. . . . I then excused myself on the plea of having to change my attire to present myself at Francien's. . . .

A compact crowd was besieging the door of the renowned coach-builder when I reached there, and I had considerable trouble to enter the shed where the carriages intended for the Archduchess could be seen: they were large traveling-coaches. One was covered, on the outside, with crimson velvet, on which the four seasons were embroidered in gold, with all the attributes which distinguish them. The other, covered with blue velvet, represented the four elements also embroidered in gold. There was no part painted in all that; but the embroidering was in exquisite taste. The roof of each carriage had bouquets of golden flowers, in various shades and of wonderful workmanship.

The flexibility of the springs was such that these carriages swung at the slightest touch. Madame du Barry, who happened to be there with M. le Duc d' Aumont, first gentleman of the Chamber, gave one of the carriages a light touch, and having started it into a gentle swing, she said in a low voice to her escort: "See, Monsieur le Duc, this looks more suitable to tender love rather than sober hymen."

At this moment, the favorite perceived Madame de L——, and eagerly approached her:

"Good day, dear marquise," said she to her, in the most caressing tone, what are you doing these days? You are no longer seen at court; you are ill, perhaps. You look pale; are you ill?"

"I very much appreciate the interest which you take in me, Madame la Comtesse; but I have the honor of assuring you that I am quite well."

While speaking, Madame de L——, who had perceived me in the crowd, made me a sign to approach; I obeyed. My protectress presented me to the favorite of Louis XV, saying:

"Here, Madame la Comtesse, is young Léonard, a hairdresser of great merit, who would already be famous at court if he were not so modest."

“Madame d’Amblimont has spoken to me of this young man. . . . Truly, he is very nice . . . and you protect him, marquise?” added the favorite with a smile too studied to have been without meaning.

“I am sufficiently interested in him, owing to the knowledge I have of his talent, to dare recommend him to madame la comtesse. . . .”

“How, dear heart! there is nothing I should not do to oblige you. The young man must come to see me at Versailles; I shall take care of his fortune. . . . Is it not so, Monsieur le Duc,” continued the countess and addressing M. d’Aumont, “we shall be able to push this hairdresser forward. . . .”

“Only too glad, madame,” replied the courtier, “only too glad to be able to please you, as well as our charming mischief of a marquise, in this matter,” and he kissed the hand of my pretty protectress. . . . The first gentleman of the chamber looked at me with that patronizing contempt with which the noble lords in former times seasoned their favors, when they said: “Is that your protégé? . . .”

Three days after, I made the trip to Versailles like an old knight of Saint-Louis going to solicit

a pension, like a vicar running after a living of suitable proportion, like a poet who goes and asks a lord for permission to dedicate his work to him; in a word, I took my seat, one of three, on the flattened cushion of an omnibus. I was lucky to have found that place.

When I had myself announced to Madame du Barry, the King was with her. But there was nothing mysterious about their interview; for from the room in which I was asked to wait, I heard Louis XV and the favorite discoursing aloud:

“Sire, there are advantages that I contest with no one.”

“That of chastity, for example,” replied Louis XV laughing.

“I should like to know, sire, what you would do with chastity?”

“Not bad, not bad.”

“As to that which relates to magnificence, it seems to me that Louis, fifteenth of that name reigning, should see that the woman whom he honors with his favors should hold the first rank everywhere. . . . This appertains essentially to the majesty of the throne.”

“Majesty is not exactly the word. . . . Well, then! you tell me, comtesse, that Francien has

made you a carriage more magnificent than those intended for the Dauphine.”

“Here is the design,” said Madame du Barry, whom I heard unrolling a large sheet of paper. . . . Then she continued:

“Look, sire, is it possible to imagine anything more enchanting: graceful coat of arms on a gold background form the principal ornament of the four panels; the sides represent, one, a basket with a bed of roses, on which two doves lovingly bill; the other, a heart pierced by an arrow, with quivers, torches, all the attributes of love; finally, a garland of flowers like a string of pearls, which runs around the panels to encircle them with its bright colors. . . . Has Your Majesty ever seen anything more fine?”

“It is perhaps too fine, comtesse. . . . The malicious may perhaps notice that one of the doves is well past sixty, and, I do not know if people will not laugh at the roses, the quivers and the torches. . . .”

“Nonsense, sire, do kings ever get old?”

“I know that with you they age slowly, dear heart; but the public figures with the assistance of another calendar, and sometimes reproaches me with mine. . . .”

“Let it talk; it pays and it sings.”

“It lampoons also, my adorable one, and those devils of Parliaments are beginning to join in the chorus.”

“Has the well-beloved lost the whip of the great Louis XIV?”

“Ah, yes, we would have a fine time with all those big gowns if I affected despotic power. . . . Have they not found, under their wigs, I know not what word *patriotism*?”

“Sire, listen to a little story: Your majesty knows that I had a chef who looked remarkably like your minister of Foreign Affairs. I sent away my Choiseul because he made bad sauces; why should you not send yours away, who makes bad government, and allows your parliaments to harden as the other allowed the roast mutton to harden?”

“Comtesse, you are always making the same mistake: I have already told you many times that Choiseul^s was useful to me, very useful. . . . Let us see, could you maintain my policies at the foreign courts, you?”

“Faith, sire, if I took it upon myself. . . .”

“Good! Now we are joking . . . let us continue thus, and especially no longer mention your

'Aiguillon,^o unless it is for fun. By the way, comtesse, I must tell you that I found rather clever verses on my desk this morning, which I must show you."

"Political verses?"

"Maybe. . . . Here, judge for yourself." And Louis XV handed to Madame du Barry a sheet of paper on which were written six lines against her and her support of Aiguillon.

"Sire, what do you think of my carriage?" gaily resumed the comtesse while throwing the epigrammatic verses into the fire.

"I shall express my opinion when I know what you intend to do with your beds of roses, your quivers, and your torches."

"What! Your Majesty does not guess? . . . It will be love's chariot. . . ."

"Ah yes! love's chariot!" . . . and the King went out laughing heartily.

I had just had a sample of the habits of Versailles; I had heard Louis XV speak; Louis XV whose *majesty* was vaunted by all the little *sweet-meat* rhymsters; and I knew specially what words were worth at court. I was beginning to weave, in my brain, a beautiful moral commentary on the subject, when a gentleman in black, a sort of

usher, pushed me into the boudoir which the King had just left through another door.

Madame du Barry was lying on a sofa, her head resting on her hand, so as to show to advantage the prettiest arm in the world; a veritable Cleopatra attitude, according to the antique stones. There were besides a little foot and a great deal more than half of a model leg, exposed with that studied coquetry which cares but little for public opinion.

“Ah! it’s you, young man,” said the favorite with an encouraging smile. . . . “Are you not named Léonard?”

“Yes, Madame la Comtesse. . . .”

“Well, Léonard, you are dressed like a nobleman, and your figure does not belie your dress.”

“Madame la Comtesse is too good.”

“Really, la Marquise de L—— shows very good taste in the choice of her protégés. But it is indispensable that I become acquainted with what you can do. . . .”

“If Madame la Comtesse would condescend to send for me some morning, I should strive to deserve her approbation.”

“Very well, you will find me at *Luciennes*’ tomorrow; at court, experiments are timid, inspira-

tion is embarrassed . . . in the fields art becomes bolder, more daring. . . . Come to-morrow to Luciennes."

"Madame la Comtesse's hour?"

"Noon. . . . Wear that suit: it is very becoming to you. . . . Good-by, Léonard. . . . You will mention your name to my maid: she will have my orders."

While the humble carriage which was taking me back to Paris shook me roughly on its worn cushions, I was mentally building a little story which would dispense me from acknowledging my appointment of the next day to Madame de L. . . . I have already said that I entered society with a notable supply of conceit, and you will agree that my success with the marquise could make me presume a rather agreeable result in my trip to Luciennes. . . .

When I returned home, I found a note from Mademoiselle Guimard,⁸ inviting me to her charming house at Pantin, that evening. Comedies were played there as all the memoirs of the period state. The celebrated dancer informed me that I should have from ten to twelve feminine heads to dress, and that I should come supplied with a varied stock of inspiration. . . .

Madame de L—— received the excuse for my absence with a rather pronounced pout. . . . Fortunately, she had company when I went to notify her or I should not have been let off so easily. . . .

When I arrived at this little house of Thalia, which Mademoiselle Guimard had built under the inspiration of all possible mad-houses, I found, behind the stage, a strange assemblage of actresses from the various Paris play-houses, with their gentlemen admirers playing in the comedy as amateurs, and musketeers who acted as dressers to them. . . . It was the jolliest medley of feminine semi-nudity, of uniforms of the King's Household, and of gallant abbés. . . . Here a gendarme was lacing Nanine's modest corset, and the silk lace broke in his military fingers. Elsewhere one of the cloth was fastening the garter of Lucrece, who could not bend owing to the tightness of her stays. Farther, a chaste Diana, who was to act in the ballet, was pursuing Endymion through the thicket on which the back of the stage opened. . . .

When I had dressed the hair of actresses, dancers and singers, I thought that I should find a little rest while waiting for the performance, in

a salon near the stage; but in there were all the chamber-maids, milliners, seamstresses, flower-girls who had been called to contribute to the pomp of the production; and if one will judge of the morality of these young ladies by the reputation of the times, one will understand that I, a fashionable and rather nice hairdresser, must have felt like Saint Anthony in the midst of these devils in furbelows. Thinking of my visit of the next day, I tried to take refuge in the garden under the thick trees already darkened by the twilight; but I could hardly walk a step without stumbling against something: in this corner it was a small foot in a white shoe, in the other it was a boot. In a word, the gardens of Mademoiselle Guimard were a veritable Elysium, full of beings happy otherwise than in the manner of shades.

Midnight struck when I returned to Paris. While passing on the boulevard du Temple, I saw a light in Julia's apartment. She was now much in love with *le Petit Diable*, and no longer thought of me. . . . I know not what jealousy took possession of me, under the influence of Mademoiselle Guimard's champagne. "I want to prove to her," I exclaimed, "that actors are not the only ones who can do things, and that on

occasion, I can be as much of a devil as her dancer. Julia dwells in that little house with only two female servants; if I break her windows with stones . . . well! one of two things will happen: either these three women deprived of masculine assistance, will bear the attack without stirring, or the mountebank will be there, in which case he will not fail to make a *sortie* against the besieger. But while he looks for me, I shall slip through the door which he will have left open, and become master of the place. . . . Come, to work, Léonard!"

It had been written that other events were, that night, to come out of the urn of destiny. At the first noise of breaking glass, the window opened and there appeared a fine, fat, red phiz, a rejoicing face which being turned showed me the shiny calotte of the commendatory abbé. "Ah! the devil," I cried, "it is the financier, let us withdraw. . . . Honor to the man who pays!" This certainly was a judicious remark; but came too late, because for some minutes I was being watched by the patrol, who, contrary to its habit, happened to be, for the moment free from thirst. Its honorable members had just formed on the sly, a semicircle behind me, and when I faced about to

go away, the semicircle became a complete circle and surrounded me.

“What were you doing there, sir?” asked the sergeant.

“Sergeant, I was gazing at the planets; the evening is beautiful, and I am a bit of an astronomer.”

“I see no harm in that; but I do not believe that love of astronomy authorizes any one to break the windows of the inhabitants of Paris. . . .”

“You are mistaken, sergeant; it often happens that one breaks windows in the practice of science.”

“It may be possible, but the instructions of the chief of the watch do not permit us to suffer this sort of practice, and you will please follow us to the guard-house. . . .”

“For mercy’s sake, Monsieur le Sergent, take me to the commissary of the district; I shall make myself known to him. . . .”

“Monsieur le Commissaire does not receive delinquents at this hour.”

“But his clerk . . .”

“There is no but. I have my instructions, and I am going to take you to the guard-house, where you will wind up the balance of the night on an

oak mattress with a bolster of the same material, may it please you."

"But, Monsieur le Sergent, I am in the service of Madame la Comtesse du Barry. . . ."

At this colossal name, the sergeant's hat came off his head.

"If you belong to Madame du Barry," he said, "this puts a different face on the matter. . . . Still, you were breaking windows."

"It was by order of Madame la Comtesse."

"People of the court have funny ideas," said the petty officer with an important air.

"Not at all," I retorted, imitating the importance of the sergeant; Julia, the dancer, before whose house you met me, has slandered Madame la Comtesse, and it is always thus that she revenges herself . . . the King agrees to this."

"It isn't so bad an idea, it gives work to the glaziers; but Madame du Barry will have to have an understanding about this with the chief of the watch so that he may make mention of it in the rules and regulations. . . . Good night, sir."

TO VINO
ALPACILLA

CHAPTER IV

The next day, at nine o'clock, a cab drew up to my door to take me to Madame du Barry's elegant pavilion.

At exactly twelve o'clock, I climbed the hill which leads from Marly to Luciennes. I gave my name; everywhere I was expected; everywhere I was allowed to pass. At last after having gone through six rooms, each more rich than the other in paintings, arabesques and gilding, after having entered a sort of temple, whose altar was a magnificent bed, still unmade, I found, in a narrow hallway, a young chambermaid, who asked me my name with a rather winning smile.

"Léonard," I replied.

"And you wish to see . . ."

"Madame la Comtesse."

"She is at her bath."

"Madame la Comtesse was pleased to tell me yesterday at Versailles that she would receive me at noon."

“Therefore, she has given me orders to usher you in.”

“Did you not tell me that Madame la Comtesse was at her bath?”

“Madame will receive you.”

And the chambermaid, having opened a small door of which she had the key, introduced me, without otherwise announcing me into the closet of which she was the guardian.

The favorite had left her bath-tub and had just slipped between two nice warm sheets . . . the end of her nose only could be seen.

“Good, Léonard!” said a voice coming from the folds of fine batiste . . . “you are punctual, and I like punctuality. . . . You have never traveled in the Orient, have you?”

“No, Madame la Comtesse,” I replied somewhat surprised at this opening.

“Because a captain of the King’s navy, who is a great friend of mine, was telling me about a singular usage which exists in several countries of Asia; the Orientals have good ideas, sometimes.

. . . I believe this usage to be very healthful, and specially agreeable, and if it were introduced in France it would become a prerogative of the hair-dressers as successors of the ancient bath-keepers.”

"If Madame la Comtesse will kindly explain, I shall perhaps be able to hazard an opinion on the subject."

"I shall tell you then, that according to my captain of the King's navy, the wealthy people of Asia are in the habit of having themselves massaged on leaving the bath. . . ."

"The word itself is new to me."

"It consists, always according to my friend the captain, in exercising, with the hand, a certain pressure on the different parts of the body, as a kind of tonic. . . . It is naturally a hygienic expedient, the more powerful, claims the captain, because it is performed by a person of another sex than the one who is being massaged. . . . At Smyrna, at Damascus, for example, the believers only employ women. It seems to me that there should be no objection to the opposite: this is not a matter of principle, but a medical prescription. . . . What do you think of it, Léonard?"

"But, Madame la Comtesse," I replied, red with all the redness which was missing on the favorite's brow, "I think that the custom is, as you had the honor of telling me just now, very healthful, very agreeable, and that the ladies' hairdressers would acquire in that the most beau-

tiful jewel of their crown. . . . If such happiness were in store for me. . . .”

“Ah! if you speak of happiness, you are going to arouse in me the cohort of scruples; decency, chastity, bashfulness. . . . This is purely a question of sanitary care. Do you wish to try, Léonard?”

“Truly, madame, this is an ordeal . . .”

“Nonsense, child, you will have the honor of having introduced this oriental usage into France. . . .”

I did what the comtesse asked of me. . . . From time to time, she said: “He is right, my captain of the navy. . . . I want to continue this treatment. . . . I must speak of it to the King; the Orientals are very wise.”

I returned to Paris congratulating myself on the improvement of my credit at court. . . .

I arrived at the residence of Madame de L—.

“Léonard,” said Madame de L— as soon as I had begun to arrange her hair, “tell me about your visit to Madame du Barry.”

“The first was rather insignificant.”

“And the second?” asked Madame de L— quickly.

“The second,” I replied, has proved to me that

Madame du Barry is not less a friend of progress in the arts than the late Marquise de Pompadour."

"How is that, Léonard?"

"Madame la Comtesse received me in her bath-room. . . ."

"A well-known habit of the favorite, it is there that she usually gives sittings to her painter."

"Oh! but there was no question of painting this morning. . . ."

At these words, I simply made, to my too open-hearted marquise, the narration of the oriental usage which the comtesse had requested me to try on her.

"And you obeyed her!" exclaimed Madame de L——, giving me the sharpest of fillips with her pretty fingers. "Léonard, I forbid you to return to Luciennes. . . . Come, promise not to return there."

Meanwhile the Dauphine, Marie-Antoinette, who had been expected for a long time, had at last arrived. She had made her entry into Paris in one of the magnificent coaches of velvet ornamented with gold, sent to Vienna through the courtesy of M. le Duc de Choiseul; a splendid carriage, to which Madame la Comtesse du Barry had

not failed to put in opposition her *boutez-en-avant*, her bed of roses, her billing doves and her Cupid's quivers.

On the day of the entry of the Dauphine, there was such a crowd assembled to meet her that, literally, people crushed each other in the midst of this clamorous multitude made up of all classes and of all ages. A jester, who felt his ribs tightly squeezed, exclaimed loudly: "Where is our dear Abbé Terray? Why is he not here to reduce us to one half, as he did our finances?"

The Dauphine reached Versailles on the sixteenth (May, 1770). At the moment that she alighted from the carriage in the marble court, I saw her for the first time. The portrait I am about to draw of this young archduchess will hardly resemble those which the poets have traced with such brilliant colors. Marie-Antoinette was then neither beautiful, pretty, nor attractive. There were only promises of beauty in her. Her figure, well-set, slender, but disparaged by an extreme thinness, still lacked grace, without however being disfigured by that Austrian stiffness, which Her Highness had fortunately left on the banks of the Danube. The hair of the daughter of Marie-Thérèse, which was then a pale blond, seemed to

me very badly arranged; but perhaps people may think that this part of my judgment should be accepted with distrust as that of a rival of Larseneur. The eyes of the Dauphine were azure blue with a quick, witty, but somewhat bold, expression. She had a high forehead, a nose of a too pronounced aquiline shape, a small mouth, thick lips, but of great freshness, a complexion of dazzling whiteness and set off by natural but rather high color.

Marie-Antoinette carried her head high; there was haughtiness in her manner, but a haughtiness tempered by a sweetness of countenance and tone which captivated at the very moment when one was about to feel offended at the pride which this kindness successfully belied.

Madame de L—— was one of the first ladies to be presented to the Dauphine; her winning ways, the quickness of her wit, and her attractive face, soon assured her of the favor of Her Royal Highness, whose disposition sympathized perfectly with that of the marquise. It is therefore to my protectress that I owe the knowledge of the traits which I am going to combine, to sketch the mental portrait of Marie-Antoinette.

The foundation of her character was gentleness;

never was an act of spitefulness nor of offensive malice noticed in her conduct; but one could mistake the imperious movements which escaped this archduchess for outbursts of peevishness. As to the qualities of her sex, the royal princess rendered them perpetually dependent upon her lively inclinations: one may say that she was virtuous as a matter of principle, but frivolous to excess through impulse. . . . To resist a desire appeared to Marie-Antoinette the hardest of effort, and it is known that the great but reluctantly devote themselves to assiduous cares, for the sole and dull merit which results from the practice of private virtues.

The Comtesse de Noailles, a solemn woman, past master of the science of etiquette, was given to the Dauphine as a lady of honor, with the mission to guide Her Highness in all which appertained to the ceremonial of the court. This task presented many difficulties. Vainly and often did the comtesse show the illustrious heedless one that she was too free of royal dignity, and was familiar to an excessive degree; these remonstrances displeased and the Dauphine shunned the maid of honor as she would a troublesome duenna. Madame de L——, on the contrary, a charming

madcap, a little woman of easy morality, as you have been able to judge for yourself, made in a few weeks the conquest of Marie-Antoinette; she declared that she could not get along without her, and that she must absolutely take apartments at the palace.

Madame de L—— generally passed for a frivolous woman and easy of access; her admission into the Dauphine's circle made Madame de Noailles protest loudly, protests which were the more persevering, as Her Royal Highness requested the little marquise to form a society for her. It was composed of women fond of pleasure, enemies of constraint, who laughed at everything, even of the talks regarding their reputations, and who recognized but one law, that of the necessity of spending their lives merrily, behind a thin and often deceptive veil of decorum, hiding badly or not hiding at all, certain caprices approaching scandal.

The lady of honor saw in the invasion of this frolicsome host the early downfall of the monarchy.

Madame de Noailles, who had surprised the Dauphine walking in the park, accompanied by a single lady and without a retinue; Madame de

Noailles, who had seen, a thing until then without a precedent, Her Royal Highness running after a butterfly, and most distressing of all, lose one of her shoes while running, in plain sight of five or six vulgar pedestrians; Madame de Noailles, I say, exclaimed: "All is lost if I do not make a report to the King!"

Actuated by commendable zeal, the lady of honor, one morning, betook herself to Louis XV, and told him gravely that she wished to speak to His Majesty in private, about matters which closely affected the glory of his crown.

"The glory of my crown," replied the King with a smile of doubt, "these are very high-sounding words; I did not think that, in the mission which I gave you with the Dauphine, there would be a question of any other crown than the garland of roses and corn-flowers with which the princess adorns her beautiful blond hair?"

"Sire, princes called upon to ascend the throne have to fulfil duties which may make them revered before they reach the supreme rank."

"And what duties, comtesse, do you mean to impose on a woman a little over fifteen?"

"Dignity, sire; and I think that it is indispensable."

“I am acquainted with your topic, Madame de Noailles; what you call dignity is a succession of wearisome cares; meetings of toothless dowagers dull enough to kill the poor child with ennui; it is a performance put through the alembic of the protocol; obligations which she will have plenty of time, zounds! to practice when she is queen and cannot do otherwise. . . .

“Listen well to this, Madame de Noailles: hereditary princes are witnesses of the reigns of monarchs, as of a play by which they are to profit some day; but it does not suit me that my children should take the least part in it, as actors. The Dauphin hunts with delight; he has a taste for making locks; he is fond of drawing geographical charts; that’s very good. As to the Dauphine, hardly out of the age when girls still play with dolls, do you expect reason from her, comtesse, do you expect a maturity of judgment to be found in a woman of twenty-five? Let her dance, let her fall in love with plays, let her surround herself with gentle madcaps—I like that as much as she does; if my daughter should happen to meddle with ministerial questions, political alliances, parliaments, I should sharply request her to return to her harp and her rags. . . . You understand

me, Madame de Noailles; see that I be no longer disturbed with frivolities more or less real. . . . About me I only want heads who think as I do, and when they do otherwise, I send them, on their estates, to think in the open air, or, to England, . . . as I did some time ago with that fine talker of Lauraguais."

And yet there was very close to Louis XV a woman who not only thought, but said very freely, that the Duc de Choiseul should be removed as minister and replaced by the Duc d'Aiguillon; and this because the former had scorned her charms, while the latter had accepted them. Without His Majesty having perceived it, it was she who had induced him to keep the young Dauphin away from government affairs, while, on the other hand, she strove to slowly turn the Dauphine from the childish frolics of youth to the eager desires of coquetry, while awaiting the coming of the love of pleasures, and, if it could be, the pleasures of love. . . .

Madame la Comtesse de Noailles, despairing of defeating a decision based on political consideration of such importance, bowed low to Louis XV, withdrew with that tactics of etiquette comparable to that which causes a clever general to be still

admired after having been beaten, and hastened to tell all to Madame de Misery, first chambermaid to the Dauphine, who was, after the lady of honor, the most fervent votary of etiquette.

To the great regret of these two straight-laced ladies, the pleasures of butterfly-chasing was continued at the Dauphine's, and the laugh, the laugh not forced, was heard there as hearty as at the home of a bourgeoisie of the Marais.

Meanwhile, the favor of Madame de L—— grew with a rapidity, not extraordinary—this quick crescendo is truly characteristic of courts—but with the power of affection which no one obtained to the same degree as the fortunate marquise. . . . It is thus that, for the marquise, Marie-Antoinette raised the curtain of the conjugal sanctuary and told her of mysteries which have come to me. . . .

“The wife of a king, I shall doubtless be some day, the archduchess told her confidante one evening; “but, as for mother of a king . . .”

Marie-Antoinette finished her sentence by twice turning her pretty head on her alabaster neck.

“Your Majesty will be happily disappointed in this respect,” replied the marquise in a not over convinced tone, for she had heard certain rumors

regarding the Dauphin consistent with the apprehensions of the Dauphine.

“You flatter me, marquise, but the six months which I have already spent in housekeeping are less flattering than you. . . . In short, I am no longer one of those young girls to whom the reading of such or such a page of the book of life is forbidden; I notice, I compare, I read and I confess that nothing, in the experience I am permitted to acquire, seems to belong less to what is called the attraction of one sex towards the other than the Dauphin’s and my life.”

“His Royal Highness is endowed with a serious mind, a precocious reason which, in society, stamps all his person with an air of most imposing solemnity; but when in private with so charming a wife, it is impossible. . . .”

“Impossible is apparently the proper word,” interrupted Marie-Antoinette smiling sadly. . . .

“Alas! madame,” replied Madame de L—— sympathetically, “what shall I say to Your Royal Highness? . . .”

“What you will say, marquise? Commonplace expressions of hope; you will even say that Providence is great and powerful: it is in your part . . . and my sixteen years,” added the young princess,

“will have to build up a happiness on hope and Providence. . . . I shall be obliged” continued Marie-Antoinette weeping, “to tell this heart which beats in my breast, these charms made famous by so many pretty verses: be of marble. . . . I shall know of love only its radiance. . . . I shall see my days spent in alternatives of disgust, of ennui, of anxiety and of tender sentiments, and will not know what to blame! This is my fate, marquise.”

CHAPTER V

Since my interview with the favorite, at Lu-ciennes, my fortune had progressed very rapidly; the comtesse was well pleased with my services. Madame de L——, almost entirely absorbed in her duties to the Dauphine, . . . was satisfied to have her hair dressed in the mixed society of the *petit-lever*, composed of postulant abbés, poets looking for a pension, lieutenants aspiring to a company. . . . In brief, I had all the time and leisure necessary to cultivate the protection of Madame du Barry; a fertile protection, to which I already owed entry into the dressing-rooms of the Mirepoix, Villeroys, l'Hôpitals, Mazarins, and of several other beauties emeritus of the small apartments, who maintained with the King the prerogatives of veteranship.

My talents had been praised to the Dauphine; but she had secured Larsenneur through the Abbé de Vermont, and this abbé continued to be the oracle to which Her Highness was most willing to listen. However, that which the entreaties of

the ladies admitted into the intimate circle of Marie-Antoinette had been unable to do, a few words of Madame du Barry did. . . . One day while walking in the park with M. Bertin, treasurer of contingent funds, she met the Dauphine. The King's favorite, as a woman who knew her court, eagerly advanced towards Her Royal Highness, and bestowed on her the most graceful and respectful compliments. Although Marie-Antoinette did not like this favorite, whom she knew to be the cause of the sort of nullity in which Louis XV held the Dauphin, she received her homage as a worthy pupil of Marie-Thérèse, that is to say with the outward affability which takes the place of all sentiment, in the intercourse of the court.

"Really," continued the comtesse, "I am delighted that the charming chance of our meeting gives me the opportunity to speak to Your Highness about a matter which is very important at her age."

"It must then be a matter of dress?" said the Dauphine laughing.

"Precisely, madame . . . and I do not understand how the ladies who have the honor of belonging to your circle, and above all the Marquise de L——, who has polish and taste, can suffer

that Your Royal Highness disfigure the prettiest head of the court by a head-dress both antiquated and lacking harmony with her enchanting features."

"Those ladies have already been at war with me to take Léonard; but there is some merit in remaining faithful to that good Larsenneur."

"Ah! madame," replied the comtesse with an airiness which was full of ease, "true merit in the realm of taste is to be faithful only to its variable-ness. Constancy is a virtue of the heart, and that which appertains to fashion should not live long enough in our affections to enter it."

"That's true, that's true," said the Dauphine in a sweet resolute tone which announced that she had come to a decision. . . . "Well! we shall pension honest Larsenneur, and I shall take Léonard. . . . Marquise," said she, turning to Madame de L——, "I want him to dress my hair this very evening."

Marie-Antoinette thanked Madame du Barry with the most gracious air; the favorite replied that she was happy beyond expression at seeing Her Royal Highness receive one of her protégés, adding, that besides, he was an excellent acquisition. . . . Then each continued her walk after a

most gracious bow from the Dauphine and one of most profound respect from Madame du Barry.

Madame de L—— dwelt at that time at Versailles; Marie-Antoinette had secured permission from the King that she occupy a small apartment connected with her own: my protectress came expressly to Paris to bring me the good news which she was delighted to announce to me. . . . She thus addressed the note which she wrote me: *Monsieur Léonard, hairdresser to H. R. H. the Dauphine.* When I arrived at the residence of Madame de L——, there was nothing else for me to do than to thank her. . . .

The next day at noon, I was shown in to the Dauphine by Madame de L——. Her Royal Highness, half reclining on a lounge, was reading when I was introduced. She put aside her book, and for a moment cast all over my person that look mingled with grandeur, kindness and something frivolous, of which all authors of memoirs have spoken. . . . Apparently this rapid examination satisfied her, for she said to me with a smile of friendliness:

“Léonard, your reputation as a clever man has preceded you here. Do you know that some-

times it is a task to uphold one's reputation?"

"I can at least assure Your Royal Highness that I shall strive to maintain mine."

"Then," replied Marie-Antoinette, "I shall at once furnish your talents with an opportunity for inspiration. The end of the autumn is approaching; to go out without a hat would be risking a cold; . . . and yet, I must have the open air of the gardens and of the park; my legs need exercise. Bonnets have two opposite shortcomings: either they are too dressy or else they are just the reverse. . . . I should like to replace them by I know not what . . . by some odds and ends of chiffon arranged with art. . . ."

"Your Royal Highness has just uttered a word which will remain in the language of fashion: yes, I apprehend an immense future progress in the art of *poser les chiffons*. Madame, it is a flash of light which Your Royal Highness has just made me see. . . ."

"I am the more pleased at this, that, no doubt, I shall be the first to profit by it. . . ." Then, raising her voice, the Dauphine said: "My dressing service . . ."

Suddenly a page, warned by a glance from Madame de Misery, left the room, and Marie-

Antoinette, Madame de L——, the first chambermaid and I, stepped into the dressing-room.

When I first laid my hand on the Dauphine's forehead, it is probable that she felt a remarkable difference between the weight of that hand and that of Larsenneur.

"Good!" said Marie-Antoinette, "here we have more lightness and that means less fatigue. Let quickness and knowledge now follow, and all will be well! The hair arranged gracefully, better and better! . . ."

"Give me a piece of some fabric," said I to the women in attendance, with an air the more important as I wished to obtain more success in the mind of my illustrious client. . . . "A simple piece of gauze."

"What, only that!" exclaimed the Dauphine.

"The merit of such a head-dress," I replied in respectful tones, "will consist in the execution; and if I am fortunate enough to make a success of it, the features of Your Royal Highness will improve it. . . ."

When the head-dress was finished, Her Highness thought it beautiful; she clapped her pretty hands together several times as a sign of satisfaction and said to me with real effusion, that not

only was I a man of talent, but an artist from whom anything might be expected.

“You need not worry about your future, Léonard,” continued Marie-Antoinette; “you belong to me, to me alone, do you hear, and I shall loan you only to my best friends. . . .”

While the Dauphine was congratulating me, and while I was pouring out my thanks, the Dauphin entered with the Comte de Provence.⁹ I saw these two princes for the first time. So far I had only perceived their youngest brother, the Comte d’Artois,¹⁰ jumping over the flower-beds in the gardens, crushing the flowers and angering the gardeners, who, however, did not smile less amiably at him.

The Dauphin, Louis-Auguste, Duc de Berry, since then Louis XVI, was just entering into his seventeenth year; he was rather tall and slim; he had a handsome leg, short thighs, and head sunk between his shoulders. His face did not lack regularity, but expression and dignity; a habit of blinking spoiled the sight of the royal prince. His manners were vulgar, the tone of his voice was short, his elocution common. Louis-Auguste did not know how to preserve himself from the brutal quickness of his first impulses; but soon as

reflection had come, no one was more prompt to admit his wrongs and make amends. In time, age wrought notable changes in this temper, and the kindness, unfortunately mingled with weakness, which became the dominant quality of this prince, very rarely allowed the return of these rather unhandsome outbursts of youth.

Louis-Stanislas-Xavier, Comte de Provence, who accompanied his brother to the Dauphine's apartment, was then sixteen years of age, and already His Royal Highness, possessed by an extremely premature stoutness, rolled rather than walked. Even then one could prophesy that at the age of twenty it would be necessary to hoist this general of carabineers on his horse by means of a machine.

M. le Comte de Provence, ill made, badly propped on his legs, had an agreeable face, a handsome eye, wit in his look, malice in his smile, and some little pedantry in the manner of expressing himself. His Royal Highness made a pretentious display of knowledge and erudition. This prince's humor was caustic; his character inclined to evasions and craftiness; the young Highness of Versailles promised in the beginning of 1771, the cunning Louis XVIII of Mittau and

Hartwell. All Europe knows my devotion to the House of Bourbon; but I have seen the one who became its head at the end of 1795 for too long a time and too near to make it possible for me to judge him otherwise. . . . I return to the Dauphine's dressing-room.

✕ Marie-Antoinette ran to meet her husband and said to him, jumping:

“Congratulate me, monsieur, I am very happy.”

“And what is the cause of this happiness?” in a tone not very civil.

“Do you not see the charming head-dress which Léonard has made for me? . . .”

“Ah! that's Léonard?” . . .

“At the service of your Royal Highness, if I may,” I replied, bowing very low, although I thought the prince royal's question rather insulting.

“I should rather see you serve in the French Guards. . . . It would be more honorable than to curl chignons; and if the occasion presented itself, you might give the enemy a combing down.” And the Dauphin began to laugh at his rather heavy jest. ✕

“My brother,” said the Comte de Provence, turning towards the Dauphine, “is a veritable

barbarian in matters of dress. . . . In truth, I consider Your Royal Highness' head-dress charming, and I congratulate Léonard for serving in your dressing-room, rather than in the French Guards. . . ." Thereupon, and as if to corroborate his opinion, Monsieur began to recite a Latin quotation.

"Ah! mercy, mercy, monseigneur," exclaimed Marie-Antoinette, "I have fallen out with the Latin authors, for whom I never had a very great affection, and I confess to you that I am decided to continue angry with them."

"Be careful, madame," said the Dauphin, laughing, "my brother is the kind of man to give you extra tasks. . . . Good day, madame. . . . I am going to kill rabbits in the woods of Montreuil."

"And I am going to write an impromptu," said Monsieur with some importance. . . .

"An impromptu begun last week," cried the prince royal from the door . . . and for a minute we could hear the loud laugh with which he accompanied this worn-out witticism.

M. de Provence left the room counting syllables on his fingers.

The piece of pink gauze placed in the hair of

the Dauphine created quite a different sensation, in truth, than that caused by the fairy's head-dress which had been the starting point of my reputation. This chiffon, mentioned in prose and in verse, was a lucky strike for the little rhymesters; it gave rise to songs, acrostics; and thus I saw my glory shine with rays borrowed from the halo of Apollo.

A hundred ladies of the city and of the court called me at the same time, but I was in a manner, kept at the Dauphine's. As it does not fail to happen to those who succeed brilliantly, Her Royal Highness wanted to know my taste on all things appertaining to her toilette, and only decided on the choice of her goods, ribbons, flowers, feathers, jewels, after having asked my opinion. . . .

This infatuation of the young princess crowned my reputation: marquises, countesses, duchesses, wanted me at any price and I could not oblige one of them: Marie-Antoinette sent for me at all hours of the day; I had been compelled to take small, pretty lodgings high up in the palace; I was practically sequestered there; a little more,

and they would have had a sentinel at my door to prevent my going out except by order of the Dauphine.

It was certainly too much glory, and I was beginning to fear the caprices of a fortune too exclusively dependent on the favor of Marie-Antoinette. "What is there more changeable than vogue," said I to myself, "and specially a court vogue! Here I am, as it were, magnificently consigned to the functions of *valet de chambre* of a great lady, it is true; but should I displease her but once, I should be reduced to nothing. You must not, friend Léonard, load all your riches on a single vessel; let us arrange to oblige the clientele which comes from all sides, and which I am unable at present to satisfy. . . . Let us write to Frémont; Frémont is a talented youth; I can enrich my friend, by harnessing him to the chariot of my vogue; let us write to him," and I addressed to that colleague a letter worded about as follows:

"My dear friend, I am sinking under the burden of my laurels and of my reputation; if you do not come to my aid I am a crushed man. Hasten therefore; I am in a position to realize the promises I made to you last year at the Procope café;

come quickly, we shall share like brothers, glory, gold and other accessories; hasten, a hairdresser of *my school* can not fail to reach, borne on the wings of my fortune, the summit of prosperity.

“I expect you for lunch to-morrow; I shall be at home at noon. . . .”

The next day, Frémont arrived at the appointed time. We laid the foundations of our arrangement, a kind of association by which my friend was to have the same advantages as myself, our friendship was our sole notary; nothing was written, and this chivalrous contract, solely cemented by a good lunch, was carried out with a good faith that never flagged.

We remained long at the table; the dishes were fine, the wines exquisite; preferred hairdresser to the Dauphine, warmly protected by Madame du Barry, I was, as you may readily imagine, on good terms with those in charge of the kitchen and the cellar of the palace. Happiness is seldom sober; it becomes elated, it almost always runs away beyond the limits of moderation. . . . Neither Frémont nor I were given to drinking to excess; but that day the enthusiasm which possessed us was such that both our heads were fairly loaded with spirituous vapors, when, raising my glass

filled with fiery liquid, I gave the following toast in a voice more solemn than steady:

“To the foremost and second head-dressers of the universe. . . . France is the metropolis of the world; Louis XV is the foremost monarch of Europe; I dress the hair of the foremost princess of his court; you are my lieutenant. . . .”

I had gone thus far in my speech when a loud ring of the bell stopped this superb sentence. My servant (for I had a servant) opened the door. . . . It was one of the princess' grooms, and all the furniture began to dance before my eyes when I heard this valet say in a resounding voice:

“Madame la Dauphine requests the presence of M. Léonard at once. Her Royal Highness goes to the opera this evening.”

A thunderbolt falling between Frémont and me could not have caused me a fright, a stupefaction comparable to the one I experienced on receiving the unexpected order of the Dauphine. . . . A state head-dress, an opera box head-dress, in the condition in which I was . . . it was enough to upset the strongest Gascon fearlessness. I was what is termed tipsy, that is to say beyond that beginning of inebriation which, far from hinder-

ing the faculties, develops and lends them something like poetical inspiration. . . . Frémont, who shared my anxiety, advised me to drink, one after another, two or three cups of coffee; I did so, and seemed better. I felt more firm on my legs; my head was clearer; I was able to see the objects about me in their natural forms. . . . I left Frémont saying: "Friend, this is the cast of the die wherein I stake my fortune and yours; await my return. . . ." And I rushed into this perilous adventure, which, perhaps, might prove fatal to me.

However, I entered the Dauphine's apartment with assurance: a tipsy man never lacks that; and fortunately it seemed to me that Her Highness did not notice my condition. The three cups of coffee, swallowed suddenly, had produced a rapid revolution in me, particularly in that the extreme redness of my complexion had given place to paleness.

While I slowly separated the princess' hair, while seeking ideas to the noise of the thumping arteries of my temples, Her Highness, as if to excuse herself, in her extreme kindness, for having sent for me unexpectedly, said to me:

"I did not wish to leave my apartment this

evening; Madame de L—— had brought me *La Nouvelle Heloise*, which we were to read together, and I expected to forbid my door to every one. But the prince royal of Sweden and his brother are here; they are going to the opera this evening, and the King sent me word that it would please him to see me there. . . . I have to obey His Majesty, so I find myself compelled to travel five mortally tiresome leagues and to listen to the boring opera of *Pyrame et Thisbé*, wherein love dies and comes to life again . . . as if love came to life again. . . .”

“If your Royal Highness doubts this,” said Madame de L——, “it is because it knows that the love which she inspires cannot die.”

Here the Dauphine lowered her head to whisper to her favorite; but I was able to hear quite clearly:

“I know one at least that will live long, for it takes good care of itself. . . .” Then Marie-Antoinette turning to me:

“And so, Léonard, you must draw on all the faculties of your imagination to-day.”

“You must,” continued the princess, “undertake a transcendental head-dress; I’m to wear a state gown.”

✓ “Does Your Highness wish plumes?” I asked, already absorbed in an idea to which the word transcendental had given rise. . . .”

“Yes, white plumes, and then whatever you may wish. . . . But, I want a striking head-dress, and specially a becoming one. . . .”

I said nothing more: I wrapped myself in my inspiration; toiled with comb and mind. . . . At the end of a quarter of an hour there resulted from this combination a curling which could hold three white plumes, set on the left side of the head and fastened in the middle of a rosette formed of hair, with the assistance of a bow of pink ribbon, in the center of which was a large ruby. This head-dress, which fully covered the beautiful forehead of Marie-Antoinette, became her wonderfully, but in an altogether different manner than the chiffon of my début of which I have spoken. It was no longer a coquettish expression which my work enhanced; it heightened, on the contrary, all that there was of grandeur and majesty in the features, in the bearing of the princess; it seemed as if I had been inspired by that haughtiness of character which sometimes showed through the kindly ways of Her Royal Highness. . . .

When having rubbed my sleeve over the mirror

and placed it so that Marie-Antoinette could see the head-dress, she at first examined it in silence; I saw on her face a faint smile, I even thought I saw displeasure slightly move the eyebrows of Her Royal Highness . . . but her perplexity only lasted an instant, like a flash; and delight suddenly lit up the face of my illustrious client.

"It is perfect, it is admirably planned," she exclaimed; "but, it is remarkably bold; my head-dress is not less than a half an ell high."

"I had but one aim in view, madame," I replied boldly, "it was to satisfy Your Royal Highness. . . . The arrangement is daring, I admit; but you are the foremost person of the court; . . . to-morrow evening there will be found at Versailles and at Paris two hundred head-dresses higher than that of Your Royal Highness."

Madame de L—— told me the next day that she, as well as all the women who saw me dress Marie-Antoinette's hair, had thought my innovation somewhat extravagant, and that she had said to herself: "Léonard is an impertinent scamp."

When I returned home, Frémont, his head resting on my bed, was sleeping to his heart's content. I awoke him.

"Well! what is it?" he exclaimed with that incoherence of ideas natural to a man suddenly

awakened from a deep sleep. . . . "What news? Has your intoxication played any pranks? are we to be sent to the Bastille or Fort l'Evêque? . . ."

"My dear, I have just produced a work which would have caused me to be hanged at the court of Louis XIV . . ."

"And which, perhaps, will send us to the galleys in the reign of his successor."

"The Dauphine at this moment has a head seventy-two inches long, from the lower part of the chin to the top of her head-dress."

"Grand Dieu! we are lost."

"Say rather that we shall be millionaires in less than two years. . . . The Dauphine is in raptures, and I have just opened an inexhaustible mine of prosperity. . . . The field of extravagance is mine, you will see the harvest. . . ."

"Positively, Léonard, the devil's in you."

"The money devil, dear Frémont . . . come what may. Listen, do not fail to be at the bottom of the grand staircase when the Dauphine enters her carriage; examine and grasp, with the quickness of glance for which I know you, the edifice which I have just erected on Her Highness' head . . . to-morrow all feminine Paris will want to copy that head-dress, and you alone will

be able to do it. . . . Can you imagine the harvest of new *louis*. . . . Run to your post, Frémont; do not lose a moment; fortune calls you; answer: 'Here I am!' ”

CHAPTER VI

My happy presentiments were being realized: the pyramidal head-dress of Marie-Antoinette had created a furor at the opera . . . people trampled over each other in the parterre, where they used to stand in those days, to see this audacious masterpiece: three arms were dislocated, two ribs fractured, three feet sprained . . . in short, nothing was lacking to my triumph, and the best of all this was, that the result being exactly as I had foreseen, one hundred *louis*, after forty-eight hours, found their way into the common purse.

Eight days had passed since this luminous ray of my fortune had flashed forth, when one morning a lady presented herself at my apartments, and asked to speak to me . . . "a woman, young pretty and very fashionable," said my servant, who had requested her to wait a moment in the antechamber. Such a visit under the roof of the palace of Versailles surprised my well hardened vanity, however. I hastened to meet the un-

known and found, in fact, a charming person, whose manners and speech appeared at first quite coy. Then my vanity changed its idea: I saw in the visitor a solicitress, who, supposing that I had great credit at court, came to request me to use it in favor of herself or of some relative. I was not exactly mistaken. I had the young lady sit near my warm hearth, and when she was seated, I noticed that she little avoided the opportunity to exhibit the prettiest foot in the world . . . and a pretty foot always inclines a man to listen favorably to a woman.

“You will not be surprised at my visit, Monsieur Léonard,” said this charming person to me, “when you know who I am and why I come to you. I am called Mademoiselle Bertin; a protégée of Madame la Princesse de Conti and Madame la Duchesse de Chartres. I have secured from their kindness the promise to recommend me to Madame la Dauphine as a milliner. But you know those in high places: even when they like you it comes rather hard to press them. No one, certainly, is more obliging than the princesses who are interested in me. But they have assured me that the occasion to introduce me to the Dauphine had not yet presented itself.

“I apply to you, Monsieur Léonard: your position with Her Royal Highness . . . would make it easy for you to speak of me to the princess, and as you are consulted with regard to all which relates to her toilette, my name mentioned by you would be a decisive recommendation.”

“I have often heard of you, mademoiselle,” I replied with the affability of a protector who wishes to encourage his protégée, and I should be more than pleased to do something for you. But my credit at court is very small and I hardly dare to give you hope. Yet, a name mentioned at the proper time may, as you say, serve the interests of its owner. Be assured, I beg you, that if the opportunity offers, I shall not only mention yours but that I shall repeat it as often as possible, adding to it praise of your talent and of the reputation which it has already acquired for you.”

“Ah! monsieur, you are too kind.”

“I am wholly at your service and I am certain that it will not be long before you will be in a position to repay the small favor which I shall try to do for you. . . . At court, vogues are so short-lived, so fickle, that your support may some day be more useful to me than mine can be to you to-day.”

And as Mademoiselle Bertin felt that she could not prolong her visit in a bachelor's rooms, she arose, thanking me in advance for a service which I was not sure to be able to do for her. I courteously took her hand and led her to the stair-landing, repeating to her on taking leave the assurance of using all possible means to have her attached to the service of the princess royal.

The opportunity to fulfil my promise presented itself that very evening: Marie-Antoinette asked me for one of those chiffon head-dresses, which gave her, as she said, her coquettish face. . . .

"Truly, madame," I replied quickly, "it is to be desired that Your Royal Highness order that an assortment of various tissues be made to be used in this sort of head-dress; I have new creations in mind which will necessitate, for example, the use of lawn and of muslin embroidered in white, in colors, sometimes in silver and gold; beautiful laces, Valenciennes, Malines or point d'Angleterre, will be required. For the furnishing of all that, I see no one but Mademoiselle Rose Bertin. . . ."

"Mademoiselle Rose Bertin! You do well to mention her; I now recall that Madame la Duchesse de Chartres and Madame la Princesse de Conti have spoken of her as of a most worthy

person. . . . Madame de Misery," said the Dauphine, turning towards her first lady-in-waiting, "have word sent to Mademoiselle Rose that she be at my levée to-morrow. . . . I shall expect you there, Léonard; it is proper that you present your protégée. . . ." Then Her Highness added laughing: "We shall tell Mesdames de Chartres and de Conti that it is on their recommendation that I have taken this milliner; the lie will be of no consequence since, after all, I shall have done what they had asked me to do."

The next day Mademoiselle Rose was punctual at the appointment which Madame de Misery had made with her. The young milliner was ushered in according to the ways and customs of etiquette; and as I did not wish to offend this proud head of the Dauphine's service, I kept in the background as much as I could.

Mademoiselle Bertin, however, having perceived me in a corner of the dressing-room, smiled at me in a most gracious manner; and she told me since, that as Madame de Misery had affected her most ceremonial tones to receive her, she had been delighted to hear the princess say to her with the kindest grace:

"I am very glad, Mademoiselle Rose, that you

should be presented by Léonard; that already is a guarantee of your taste, and I am truly very fortunate when I am permitted to perceive people of talent, through the thousand and one exigencies of etiquette. . . .” Perhaps the princess noticed, but too late, that she had just shot an epigram of which Madame de Misery naturally found herself the object; but to ease the wound made by this shaft, Her Royal Highness turned to her first lady-in-waiting, with that caressing affability which she could affect at will.

“Do you know, Madame de Misery,” said the Dauphine, “that Mademoiselle Rose is very nice; she is a graceful acquisition, and I recommend my new milliner to you.”

“The good fortune she has in being to Your Royal Highness’s liking,” replied the countess, with a noticeable compression of the lips, “is a title which guarantees to her the full interest of those, who, like myself, madame, are most anxious to be agreeable to Your Royal Highness.”

During the following days, Mademoiselle Bertin supplied twenty thousand francs worth of material.

This milliner played, as every one knows, an important rôle at the court of Marie-Antoinette;

her name was no less popular than mine; one will not read without interest the story of her beginnings. I shall tell it just as I heard it from her own lips in our long and intimate intercourse.

Mademoiselle Bertin came from a trades-people's family of Picardy. She was sent to Paris when very young to follow in the footsteps of her parents; she entered as an apprentice to Mademoiselle Forgel, the milliner, at the sign of the *Trait galant*. This firm had a rare reputation among millinery establishments; it was considered honest, and it is stated that all its working-girls possessed principles of great soundness.

Mademoiselle Rose came to Paris with greater confidence than she confessed in the prediction of an old soothsayer of Amiens, who had told her that *people would carry her train at court*. We shall some day see how this prophecy was realized.

In spite of the fragrance of virtue emitted by the Forgel establishment, it happened, however, that M. le Duc de Chartres,¹¹ shortly after his marriage to Mademoiselle de Penthièvre, sought gentle glances in this haven of immaculate milliners, and it was on Mademoiselle Rose that the young prince cast his choice.

Though one may be chaste, like Genevieve

the saint, one is never sure when one is a pretty woman, to have always carefully avoided to let slip in one's glance, in one's pose, in one's manners, certain coquettish intentions. Mademoiselle Rose has not assured me that on divers occasions she has not had to reproach herself of such matters.

"Madame de Chartres," my friend the milliner said to me one day, in a moment of unreservedness, "honored me daily with new kindnesses; every morning I went to her. In those days bouquets of natural flowers were worn; the little flower-seller of the Palais-Royal brought flowers, and it was I who arranged them."

Now it happened that Monsieur never failed to be in Madame's apartments when Mademoiselle Rose came there, and the rogue, while taking the bouquet which the princess always chose for him among the most beautiful, addressed on the sly to the pretty milliner propositions which she pretended not to hear, as all good young ladies should do. And then he would take her hand, which Mademoiselle Rose, the personified honor of the *Trait galant*, would quickly withdraw, because not for anything on earth would she have given His Highness the slightest hope . . . for you can

readily understand that she was essentially anxious to preserve a reputation without a blemish.

In spite of this most dignified conduct, Mademoiselle Rose did not seem sufficiently imposing to the duke to stop his designs. He sent his valet to this virtuous person, who was requested to announce to her that it only depended on her to replace Mademoiselle Duthé¹² in the good graces of His Most Serene Highness, and to have like her a beautifully furnished house, horses, carriages, diamonds. Mademoiselle replied: "I prefer my virtue."

The Duc d'Orléans did not accept this as an answer; he continued to importune her without any success whatever, as you may readily believe. . . . But life was becoming very hard for the poor young lady; she could not walk a step without meeting the prince or one of his emissaries. . . . She could hardly stand it any longer. . . .

But Providence, which never has failed to be helpful to the chastity of milliners, because they seldom invoke it to preserve this treasure, Providence had a beautiful triumph in store for Mademoiselle Rose. One evening when she had returned some work to Madame la Comtesse d'Usson, she had hardly entered that lady's parlor,

when Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans was announced. Faithful to etiquette, the countess arises, goes to meet His Highness and begs him be seated.

The prince pretended not to notice Mademoiselle Rose: that was the game; but Mademoiselle Rose, who had her intentions, took an arm-chair, neither smaller nor larger than that in which the duke was taking his ease, and sat down at his side. . . . Madame d'Usson, surprised to the greatest degree, made the bold milliner a sign to rise; she did nothing of the sort. The countess looks at her, coughs softly, then coughs more loudly; Rose does not move. Finally, out of patience, the countess decides to speak.

"Mademoiselle Bertin," she says, "you forget that you are in the presence of His Highness."

"No, madame, assuredly I do not forget it."

"And how is it that you act thus?"

"Ah! Madame la Comtesse does not know that if I were willing, I should be Duchesse de Chartres this evening. . . ."

At this bold answer, the duke changed color and made no reply.

"Yes, madame," continued Mademoiselle Rose, "I have been offered all that may tempt a poor girl, and because I refused, they have threatened to

kidnap me. . . . Thus, ladies, if you are short of pretty bonnets, if none of your gowns are ready, and you are told that poor Rose has disappeared, you will ask his most Serene Highness for her."

"What do you say to that, monseigneur?" asked Madame d'Usson. . . .

"Faith, countess," replied the duke, fully recovered from his first surprise, "there is nothing else to do when it is a question of conquering a rebellious beauty . . . one has one's honor to uphold."

"Honor in vice, the expression is strange!" said Mademoiselle Rose with indignation. . . . "Besides, Madame la Comtesse," continued the interesting milliner, "you will agree that the person whom one wishes to make, in spite of all proprieties, one's companion, may act familiarly towards the one who dares it. Let not monseigneur forget his rank and I shall remember the extreme distance which exists between us."

At these words, Mademoiselle Rose made a low bow to the duke, who replied to her, according to the good traditions of the Théâtre-Français:

"You are a veritable serpent." Then the virtuous person took leave of Madame d'Usson and went out.

CHAPTER VII

I begin this seventh chapter of my memoirs at St. Petersburg; my devotion to my legitimate princes has caused me to sacrifice everything: country, fortune, amours, pleasures which one can only enjoy under one's native skies. I owed much to the queen and to the princes of the House of Bourbon; I did not hesitate a single moment to sacrifice for them more than they had given me; for I was already happy before receiving their favors, and I placed all my happiness on the vessel on which their destiny unluckily struggled against tempests, for nearly twelve years. . . . I refer to the destiny of the princes, brothers of the unfortunate Louis XVI; for the world knows of the latter's fate and of that of his illustrious consort.

But to-day there is a sacrifice that I cannot make, it is that of frankness and truth.

It is impossible to conceal it, Marie-Antoinette, from the time of her arrival in France until the deplorable necklace incident, which produced a

profound sensation, showed much frivolity, inconsistency and forgetfulness of the proprieties; the sad events which causes slowly elaborated then accumulated on France, having increased more and more the disasters of the nation, it easily became embittered against a court which seemed to think little of its dreary conditions, and the somewhat onerous indulgences of the Queen made her enemies, who soon became calumniators. She had faults of which to reproach herself; crimes were imputed against her. I have lived more than twenty years near that sovereign, and I shall try to put matters in their true light.

During the first years which she spent in France, Madame la Dauphine saw only women in her private circle; the Dauphin alone and his brothers were the men who attended regularly. The first mentioned used to fall asleep; Monsieur recited verse or tried to improvise some. As to M. le Comte d'Artois, he was in 1770 and 1771 but a noisy and teasing schoolboy. He spent the evening in tickling his sister-in-law's ladies, challenged Her Royal Highness's pages to equal him in various feats and gymnastic games, and when he defeated them he merrily and condescendingly distributed kicks to them.

But in 1772 the young prince reached his fifteenth year; he was tall, already developed and blessed with a charming face. It is reported that Mademoiselle Duthé, a teacher born of the blood-royal, had taught him that it was not sufficient to tickle the ladies to prove to them that one knew how to render homage to their charms. However that may be, several of these beauties showed themselves disposed to convince His Royal Highness that they shared Mademoiselle Duthé's opinion.

Now two things happened simultaneously at the court: M. le Comte d'Artois perceived that the Dauphine, his sister-in-law, whose charms and form had developed in two years, offered an admirable ensemble of physical perfections, which he found in no other woman. On her side, Marie-Antoinette was beginning to see in her youthful brother-in-law one of those gallants whose charms are more often dreamt of than actually met; and the powerful constitution of Madame la Dauphine, but little understood, it must be admitted, by a cold and serious husband, could not remain indifferent to the pleasing perfections of the Comte d'Artois. I hasten to add that I never acquired the right to assert that the daughter of Marie-

Thérèse ever failed in her duties as a wife, so far as to refuse nothing to Charles-Philippe de France;¹⁴ but as to a decided penchant, it would be contradicting an entire generation to deny that it existed.

From that time the prince figured in every one of the princess-royal's affairs. At times he practised driving one of those light carriages called phaetons, in which Marie-Antoinette and one of her ladies would sit, though having but little confidence in their driver. At other times striding Sancho's mount, Charles-Philippe de France accompanied the Dauphine in donkey races, which she liked very much, without even stopping at the consequences of indiscreet falls on the grass.

At that time, M. Dauberval,¹⁵ a celebrated dancer of the opera, had had built in his house a salon which had cost him fifty thousand francs, and which all Paris flocked to see. Nothing like it as to taste, elegance, richness of decoration and furnishing had as yet been imagined. By a happy arrangement, the salon became, if necessary, a performance hall. But what was most admired in this construction, where the art of the machinist played a great part, was a vestibule which could be erected in the court in ten minutes,

to put under cover the liveries of the personages assembled at Dauberval's. This dancer had well reckoned in having this elegant place built: he rented it dearly to high society, to give the kind of balls which one dared not risk at one's residence, however careless of public opinion people were in those days. For example, if a nobleman wished to entertain a dancer whom he protected, he arranged a soirée for her, which almost always degenerated into an orgy. Sometimes a society of wealthy amateurs made use of the stage to play some libertine comedy before a selected audience. It is thus that M. de Saint Florentin, under the management of a certain Marquise de Langeac, presented at Dauberval's *La Vérité dans le vin*, a more than broad play, to which, still, had been added verses of even more pronounced shade, to the great appreciation of an illustrious house. . . .

During the carnival, the salons of Dauberval were the rendezvous of the most gallant masquerades, and God knows what extension one could give to the word gallantry, in relating all that took place in these charming saturnalia.

One day, M. le Duc de Chartres, who had undertaken, as is well known, to guide the first steps of M. le Comte d'Artois in life, after the

manner of *roués*, of course, and who for that reason had given up Mademoiselle Duthé to him; M. le Duc de Chartres, I say, desired to make his young relative acquainted with the haven which Dauberval offered to the pleasures of the fashionable world. Consequently, he brought him from Versailles on a beautiful evening, by slipping away from the guard of the gates, and introduced him in disguise in the midst of a tumultuous crowd of masks which the salon of Dauberval could hardly hold.

It was the first affair of the kind to which His Royal Highness had ever been admitted. Of course, Charles-Philippe had seen, in the Galerie de Diane, other masquerade balls, but at these etiquette maintained, although with great difficulty, a little propriety. . . .

I was saying, therefore, that the young Count d'Artois had as yet no idea of masquerade balls, such as could then be seen at the opera or in some unconventional gatherings, which meant indecent ones. His Royal Highness had a lively imagination; his passions were singularly developed for his age: one would have thought that nature had been pleased to unite in him all that was

lacking in the physical constitution of his two brothers. . . .

M. le Duc de Chartres, past-master in the science of pleasure, gave such an impulse to the desires of Charles-Philippe that before leaving the Dauberval house, he had visited its most secluded apartments with a beauty the more mysterious because she claimed to be most illustrious—a Polish princess descending in direct line from the Jagellons. . . . M. le Comte d'Artois congratulated himself for having entered, although in a manner somewhat irregular, into this illustrious race. . . . The next day Louis-Philippe de Chartres was making merry with his favorite, M. de Genlis, over the Polish alliance formed by his cousin, d'Artois. The great-granddaughter of the Jagellons was a dancer of the opera.

A few days after this adventure I happened to be in Marie-Antoinette's dressing-room, when M. le Comte d'Artois, having solicited the permission to be introduced, entered, noisy as a school-boy, swift as an arrow, Her Royal Highness's room.

"My beautiful little sister-in-law," said he, without preamble, "I must tell you of one of my escapades of early in the week . . . and all of

you promise not to mention it to the Dauphin; my brother de Berry would consider me rash, giddy-headed."

"Tell it, tell it, brother," replied the princess laughing, "we shall not denounce you to the Dauphin."

"Well! learn then that I have been to the prettiest masquerade ball in the world."

"How fortunate Your Highness is!" exclaimed Marie-Antoinette; "masquerade balls! I am dying to know what they are, outside of the court. . . . But the Dauphin will not hear of taking me to them."

"It is a pity, for one could see nothing more amusing, at Dauberval's specially. . . ."

And the prince added to this statement a significant grimace, which I understood perfectly well. I do not know whether Marie-Antoinette interpreted it as I did; she did not seem to do so.

"And may I know, brother, of what the charm of these affairs consists which gave you so much enjoyment?" said the Dauphine.

"First of all beautiful costumes, above all the women's disguises: Dianas, Venuses, Hebes, odalisques, houris, shepherdesses, and then wholly black dominos contrasting with these bright bou-

quets, brilliant-colored ribbons, glistening spangles, waving plumes; black dominos which only showed a pretty little foot, and which left the rest of their charms to the imagination."

"Ah! ah!" said Marie-Antoinette shrewdly.

"Yes, madame . . . intrigues more piquant one than the other. . . . It was charming."

"And how far did Your Royal Highness follow the alluring bait of these piquant intrigues?" asked the Dauphine absent-mindedly.

There was a silence of a minute between that question and the young count's reply. . . . His Highness felt that he ought to pass the incident of his meeting with the descendant of the Jagellons under silence; but at fifteen and a half years old dissimulation still lacks experience, and Charles-Philippe hardly knew what to substitute to the truth. At last he said:

"Ah! all that, as Your Royal Highness no doubt understands, amounted to some witticisms to give point to some pranks. . . . I wished to remain unknown."

"Madame de Misery," said Marie-Antoinette suddenly, to her first lady-in-waiting, "be kind enough to go to Madame de Provence, and to tell her that I shall lunch with her this morning."

Madame de Misery found this mission in accordance with the habits of Her Royal Highness, who was pleased to go and lunch in an unexpected manner with her sister-in-law; she left the room to obey.

“I wished to send *Madame Etiquette* away,” continued the Dauphine, “for I must tell you, brother, that I wish to go to a masquerade ball before a week’s time. . . . Here, Léonard will help you; he is clever, ingenious; he will arrange with Mademoiselle Bertin as to my costume, and I shall go to the Tuileries to disguise myself.”

“Sister,” exclaimed the count d’Artois, “this is certainly a pretty plan; but it frightens me . . . and the Dauphin . . .”

“He goes to bed at nine o’clock,” replied Marie-Antoinette.

“But he may arise at ten . . .” said Charles-Philippe reflectively.

“So you are decided to run away from Versailles to go to a masked ball at Dauberval’s? . . .”

“Certainly,” replied Marie-Antoinette thoughtlessly; “we shall leave at midnight with the little Marquise de L——; Léonard will take the coachman’s seat; we shall be at the Tuileries at thirty-five minutes past twelve. . . . Rose Bertin will

be waiting for us with the costume at the *Pavillon de Flore*; at half-past one we shall reach the ball, and leave at three o'clock, and we shall already be asleep, in our beds at Versailles, when four o'clock strikes. Is n't that well planned?"

"Capital, madame!" said the young prince, prancing around, who, you may be sure, saw in this lark as much innocence as pleasure. . . . "But in order to go to the masquerade ball we lack some little thing."

"What's that, prince?" sadly asked the Dauphine, who feared to lose the charming perspective which she already was constructing.

"What we lack," replied the Comte d'Artois laughing, "is a masquerade ball."

"Ah! that's true," said the Dauphine; "to go to a ball, there must be one."

"I am going to arrange that with M. le Duc de Chartres."

"Oh! no, not with him," quickly replied Marie-Antoinette . . . "that would annoy me. . . . Monsieur de Chartres, you see, is too grown up a man now. . . ."

"Well," said the count, "if Léonard is willing to assist me, we shall, certainly, between the two

of us find a means of organizing our masquerade ball.”

“Monseigneur,” I hastened to say, “my respectful obedience would be acquired by Madame la Dauphine and Your Royal Highness, even though there should be in obeying you more danger than I suppose; this is Monday, before the end of the week there will be a masquerade ball at Dauberval’s.”

“Above all, no members of the court,” quickly said the Dauphine; “we shall be masked to the very teeth; but when courtiers slip in anywhere, there is no secret possible, and I should be very sorry to be recognized.”

M. le Comte d’Artois had said: “My good Léonard, you must promise me your assistance,” but it was well understood that His Royal Highness would do nothing at all, and I took it for granted. I immediately went to the dancer Dauberval.

“Monsieur,” said I to him with an important tone of voice, “I have been ordered by some persons of high rank to engage your quarters for a masquerade ball.”

“What day have they selected, Monsieur Léonard?”



CHARLES PHILIPPE, Comte d'Artois

W. V. S. O.
ANNOUNCING

“When will your salons be free?”

“To-morrow and Saturday.”

“Well! let us say Saturday.”

“It is agreed; the masquerade can be arranged for that day.”

“In that case let us arrange it.”

“What’s that you say?”

“I say, Monsieur Dauberval, that you are going to assist me in getting together the prettiest disguised company that has ever been seen in Paris.”

“I understand you: your persons of high rank wish to give a masquerade ball without being posted as to the company which is to attend?”

“Exactly; it is to satisfy the eye and a simple rendezvous of merry intrigue; some one wishes to know what a masquerade ball is!”

“Do they wish to follow it even to its mysterious consequences?”

“As to that I cannot say; my instructions do not go so far. . . . So, Monsieur Dauberval, you who have within reach the storeroom of the opera, make us up a gay company, very wild, very witty. . . .”

“Very witty! and you ask me for men-dancers?”

“No, but women-dancers. . . . Ah! take note

on the spot that no members of the court are wanted; reasons exist for that. . . .”

“The deuce! that annoys me. I was going to propose to you some titled men and women who would have played their parts well under their masks.”

“And these noble personages are . . .”

“Oh! persons well known in society, I assure you: Monsieur le Comte du Glorieux, the Marquis and Marquise du Joueur, Monsieur le Chevalier du Distrain, and Madame la Comtesse d’Escarbagnas. . . .”¹⁶

“A capital idea!”

“Moreover, I can furnish you Iphigenia, Cleopatra and Didon, with a complete assortment of Achilles, Agamemnon, Ulysses, Augustus, Cinna and other heroes of antiquity who can gracefully dance a chacone or a courant.”

“I leave it to you; but let it be brilliant, let them all vie with each other in intrigue and frolic.”

Before leaving Paris I came to an understanding with Mademoiselle Bertin as to the costume of the Dauphine, who was first to appear in a domino of gray, then in the dress of a Swiss peasant. It was agreed that these mas-

querade outfits would be brought early, on the day of the ball, to an apartment of the *Pavillon de Flore*, at the Tuileries, which was to be prepared in haste, on an order which I had given in the name of His Highness.

All this being done, I returned to Versailles, and I hastened to give an account to the young prince of the carrying out of the orders which he had given me. His Royal Highness jumped about like a child, which he was, on hearing that all would be arranged according to his wishes and those of the Dauphine. Marie-Antoinette herself, whom I saw afterwards, heard my report with delight and I was obliged to give her many more details about the future ball than I really knew.

M. le Comte d'Artois made a secret of the costume which he intended to wear; he wanted, he told us, to surprise the Dauphine, and only show himself disguised at the moment of leaving the Tuileries. As to Madame de L——, her ordinary petulance, her liveliness of mind, her roguishness, made her select the costume of a gipsy, which, moreover, could not fail to show to advantage her graceful figure and her small foot.

As luck would have it, on Saturday monseig-

neur le Dauphin, who had come to his wife's apartment after supper, installed himself, contrary to his custom, in an armchair near the fire. Marie-Antoinette trembled. . . . I say that she trembled, and this was the word of which Her Royal Highness made use, a little later, to describe the anxiety which she had felt.

The fears of the Dauphine were soon quieted: the Duc de Berry, having whistled softly for a half hour near the hearth, given vent to five or six energetic yawns, and gallantly protesting that he was dying of sleepiness, withdrew to his apartments, after having wished the Dauphine good-night.

At a quarter of twelve, Marie-Antoinette, Madame de L——, M. le Comte d'Artois and I, hidden in the double folds of ample cloaks, followed at a distance by two footmen whose discretion was well known, left the château, through a little door opening on the terrace; then we reached one of the park gates, which was usually closed and near which no sentinels were stationed. I had secured the key of it, and, according to the precise instructions which I had given at the stables, a light carriage, without lanterns, awaited us at ten paces from the gate. The Dauphine,

the marquise and the young prince entered it quickly; I pulled myself up by the side of the coachman, the two footmen jumped behind the coach, and we started at full speed.

In less than thirty-five minutes we covered the five leagues which separate Versailles from Paris. We alighted in the court of the Tuileries at the foot of the *Pavillon de Flore*. An old doorkeeper received us on the outer stairs and lighted us, with a large white waxen torch which he held, along a large, cold, and deserted staircase. . . . One shivered while going through that long suite of apartments which had not been inhabited since the minority of the reigning King. . . .

All there, was in a condition of dilapidation which was far from recalling the splendors of a royal residence. Our steps rang sadly through this mournful solitude. "This is," Madame de L—— whispered to me, "the strangest of preambles to a masquerade ball."

At last we reached two connecting apartments which had been prepared to receive their Highnesses. There, things looked different; lights in profusion, improvised furnishings, but arranged with taste, the brightest of fires crackling in the fireplace. Mademoiselle Rose Bertin, the pries-

tess of this little temple of Momus, awaited us with two of her assistants, pretty as she, putting the finishing touches to the Dauphine's disguise. . . .

Time is never more quick than when spent in pleasure. One o'clock was striking at the *Pavillon de l'Horloge*, and the toilette of Marie-Antoinette was only beginning; at half-past one it was not yet completed. It had been necessary to make over the famous Swiss costume two or three times. . . . The princess, then fully developed, had demanded that the waist ornamented with silver lace be cut lower, Mademoiselle Bertin having made it altogether too high. Then the skirt, with a leg like that of Her Royal Highness, should not be so long; it was shortened and all that did not fail to take up much time.

However, M. le Comte d'Artois, whom I had assisted in putting on his disguise, was long since ready; he was knocking loudly on the door which led from one apartment to the other, so as to appear to the eyes of the Dauphine in the costume whose ingenious combination he had been hiding from us for the past days. Tired of the noise which His Royal Highness was making so as to be admitted, Marie-Antoinette ordered that the

door be opened to the prince, who appeared in the presence of the ladies in the garb of a Capuchin friar.

“This is for the entry,” said His Royal Highness; “now change of scenery at sight.”

Then, having loosened the girdle which was around his waist, the prince allowed his frock to fall and uncovered a nimble harlequin, graceful in his movements, lath at his side, leather belt setting off a slim waist, costume covered with spangles. . . .

“It is charming,” said the Dauphine with some little emotion; “this costume becomes you marvelously. And mine, brother, what do you think of it?”

“Capital, madame. . . . Ah! who would not be a Swiss peasant to lay his homage at the feet of so adorable a country-woman?”

“Silence, Monsieur Harlequin,” replied Marie-Antoinette playfully; “your likes have the reputation of being sorry jesters. . . .”

“Beautiful mountaineer, people will say the same thing to you under all costumes.”

“Carnival nonsense, monsieur. Come, Madame de L——, let us be off.”

As agreed with Dauberval, I clapped my hands

three times on entering the salons, which were already filled with most attractive masqueraders. . . . Now nothing could have been more awkward than this precaution; the dancer, a man but little discreet by nature, although he always affected mysterious airs, which seemed to conceal the most important of state secrets, had been unable to reveal the names of the three anonymous masqueraders who had been announced to him; but his hints, his pertinent little smiles, his "*you will see, you will see*" . . . had excited the curiosity of the assembly, more perhaps than a full disclosure could have done. . . . The signal agreed upon, likewise divulged by Dauberval, was immediately followed by an almost general "*there they are, there they are,*" and from that instant our group was examined and studied in its every movement.

The Dauphine and the prince were delighted; never, they said, had they experienced livelier pleasure. The domino and the Capuchin's garb disguised their Highnesses well; but there were in the company several masqueraders who knew the gestures and manners of the Marquise de L—. That little woman was in such great demand! In brief, two or three persons whispered her name to one another. A magician, who

heard it pronounced, dogged her footsteps, made sure of her identity and found himself in a fair way to discover who were the other personages.

At last, Marie-Antoinette and her brother-in-law, anxious to enjoy their second disguise, and not in the least imagining that their presence at Dauberval's could be suspected, let fall, in a somber room adjoining the salon, the Dauphine her pearl gray domino, the Comte d'Artois his Franciscan's garment, and rushed anew into the crowd.

Immediately the magician began to follow the princess, while Harlequin, to whom a charming odalisque had said: "I know you, handsome masquerader," was taken away by this votary of Mahomet, who, being tired, she said, of the tumult of the salons, proposed to him that they go and continue the conversation in a sort of boudoir, where our two masked speakers sat down on a sofa. . . .

"My pretty little harlequin," said the odalisque as soon as His Highness had taken a seat at her side, "when I said that I knew you I was not lying at all, and you are going to be persuaded of this. . . ."

. At these words the odalisque inclined her head

towards the prince's ear and whispered something.

"Ah! ah! beautiful nymph of Mahomet's paradise, does the two or three tailed pacha in whose harem you dwell keep sorceresses?"

"So it seems, handsome masquerader, for I shall tell you another secret which my art has revealed to me. . . ."

And again the fair odalisque whispered to Harlequin.

"You are Mademoiselle Duthé? . . ."

"Yes, prince . . . and"

"Silence! do not utter my name: I am here incognito. . . ."

"Which every one knows."

"Is it possible that it is known that the Swiss peasant . . ."

"Is Madame la Dauphine? . . . No one is ignorant of that . . . the Marquise de L——"

"Silence, Duthé," interrupted the Comte d'Artois. . . .

"I shall simply tell you that Madame de L—— caused Her Royal Highness to be recognized even before she had discarded her domino, and when she appeared in her Swiss costume, everybody knew her. Then a certain great magician

took Madame la Dauphine in hand. . . . Beware of this magician, prince; I know him, he is terribly daring."

"What's that you say, mademoiselle? . . . but the marquise is with Her Royal Highness."

"The marquise! she has just dragged the hairdresser Léonard into a neighboring boudoir, to have an explanation from him she said. . . ."

"But the Dauphine! the Dauphine!" exclaimed the Comte d'Artois . . . and rising hurriedly, he reëntered the ball-room, and anxiously sought his sister-in-law, asking the masqueraders what had become of the beautiful Swiss peasant.

"A great magician seemed to interest her very much a little while ago," they replied; "they have disappeared."

"Disappeared!" repeated the prince. And His Highness rushed in the direction in which the great magician had taken the Swiss peasant.

This is what the Marquise de L—— later told me of a little drama of which I only knew the ending. The magician was a pleasant fellow, quick and even somewhat free in his speech; the Dauphine, I am obliged to admit, rather liked that sort when she thought she was unknown; she enjoyed herself very much at first and laughed

with greater unconstraint than prudence at the merry jests of the sham sorcerer, who, without her noticing it, led her into a region where the art of the ordainer had contrived a diminution of light and shade as well arranged as it was treacherous.

After a crescendo of compliments, in which the magician had risked much, he added in the language of the poet:

“Dans tout jardin, adorable étrangère,
Si le pommier ou le poirier touffu
Laisse effeuiller sa fleur trop passagère,
Sans qu'à sa suite aucun fruit ait paru,
Il faut changer la main qui le cultive
Et faire choix d'un meilleur ouvrier . . .
Si mon conseil jusqu'à ton cœur arrive,
Ah! dès ce soir, prends-moi pour jardinier.”

The truth of the allegory was clear, the jest rather strong, and Her Royal Highness saw that the magician knew very well to whom he spoke. What then was the terror of our sham peasant, when she noticed that she was with this audacious unknown, in the darkest part of the most secluded apartment, and that this man, putting his arm about her slender waist, dared to make a most passionate declaration of love. . . . I do not know what would have taken place had I not entered at this moment. I had met M. le Comte

d'Artois, who, very anxious about his sister-in-law, had told me of it and we had started at once to look for Her Royal Highness. . . . I reached this distant apartment first, but I was about to address the insolent adventurer with my natural vivacity, when I saw two tall black dominos come out from behind a window curtain and exhibit two clubs of frightful size. However, much more quick and courageous than these armed masqueraders, I took possession of one of their sticks, and I easily got the best of both. . . . After having soundly clubbed these two men, I turned to the one whose horrible undertaking they had the mission to protect. . . . He succeeded in jumping from a window of the ground floor, but not before he had felt the weight of a knotty stick two or three times, handled by a twenty-five-year-old arm.

The adventure was not spread about; no one was interested in divulging it; but as everything comes out in the long run, I was later almost assured that in my dark room expedition, I had avenged Mademoiselle Rose Bertin for the insulting pursuits of which she had been the object a few years before. . . . I never obtained the protection of M. le Duc de Chartres.

CHAPTER VIII

At the beginning of the year 1773, a new actress, Mademoiselle Rancourt, created a great sensation at the Théâtre-Français, where she had just made her début. The Marquise de L—— who had witnessed one of her first performances, spoke very highly of it to the Dauphine, and mentioned this tragédienne as a superb woman. Her Royal Highness expressed her desire to see her in the character of *Didon*, which she was to play shortly. Marie-Antoinette returned from Paris delighted with the charms, the beauty and the aptness of the débutante; Her Royal Highness continually spoke of her for several days; finally she ordered me to bring to Versailles and to introduce to her Mademoiselle Rancourt. The lovely débutante withdrew after at least an hour's audience, taking away with her fifty *louis* which Madame la Dauphine had caused to be given to her by the Abbé de Vermont. . . .

The crisis of the Parliaments, that is to say, the dismissal of the former magistrates and the

appointment of a new magistracy of Monsieur le Chancelier's selection, hid its scandal in the talk of Mademoiselle Rancourt's début, and in the noise of some love affairs. . . . But after two weeks public attention returned to the Parliaments; its new officials were dissected, cut to pieces. . . .

Fortunately a comet came to Maupeou's assistance. It is I, Léonard, who succeeded in obtaining the sought for diversion. . . . One morning, on awaking, I said to myself: "Why should I not invent a head-dress *à la comète?*" This was but an expression in which there was not a particle of sense; and yet I risked speaking of it to Madame la Dauphine. Her Royal Highness ordered me to make at once the trial of the invention I had in view. I told her that it was but a vague project which needed to be studied on a head less illustrious than hers; Marie-Antoinette insisted; I could not refuse to obey, and I exerted myself to grasp an inspiration with some common sense. I can affirm to-day that I was unsuccessful; but Her Royal Highness' head-dress, a confused combination in which were entangled locks of hair and fire-colored ribbons, produced a strange effect which pleased the princess. . . . She appeared

that very evening at the château performance with I know not what odd arrangement, which no one, assuredly, would have taken for a comet, had I not taken the pains, with the assistance of officious mouths, to circulate the baptismal certificate of my creation. "It is a head-dress *à la comète*," was repeated from box to box. . . . What a talent that Léonard has! Doesn't it look as if he had studied the phenomenon for a week at the observatory? It is of scrupulous excellence. . . ." and the Lord knows that I had not even looked at the comet of 1773 with the naked eye. . . . If Lalande had heard my panegyrists, how he would have laughed at them, at me, and perhaps at himself.

After this were seen cloths, ribbons, fans, carriages, jewels *à la comète*; the confectioners turned the comet into preserves and jellies; the pastry-cooks molded it into cakes. . . .

At this stage of the fad, a lucky idea struck a Paris tradesman, in whose ears the word comet had not until then been a pleasing one; it was the publisher of Dorat's "*Comètes. . .*" He had expected a quick sale which had not taken place, and three thousand copies remained in stock. . . . The unfortunate speculator was thinking of the

in extremis disposal of the friendless literary composition; he was about to pack the epistle prior to having it taken to the grocer's . . . when suddenly recalling the cakes *à la comète*, he thought of the possibility of an expedient fruitful for himself and at the same time glorious for the poet. For, said he to himself as a positive logician, whether the epistle be sold by the hand of the pastry-cook instead of by that of the bookseller, what difference does it make, so long as it is in demand!

The ingenious publisher called upon several renowned pastry-cooks who willingly lent themselves to the transaction which he proposed to them; the famous cakes were increased ten cents, and their name, united by two interests, was henceforth *poetical cakes à la comète*. . . .

In the space of six weeks Dorat's epistle¹⁷ was sold to the extent of six thousand copies. . . .

The poetical cakes were amusing Louis XV and his favorite very much, when two events of the same time moved them in an altogether different manner: a bookseller of Strasburg, speculating on the love of scandal, which, unfortunately, was the dominant taste of the epoch, published in the

month of May, 1773, a secret history of the Amours of the King and of Madame du Barry, with illustrations of a questionable character in which it had pleased the artist to represent the King and the countess with striking fidelity.

Madame du Barry, promptly notified that this book had just been placed on the market, rushed to M. de Sartines¹⁸ to have its sale stopped, if possible. You will not be surprised if I tell you how the favorite broached the rather delicate question to the police magistrate; I have elsewhere told of the origin of the special kindness of the countess towards me, and her confidence was one of its natural consequences.

"I confess that I did not approach Monsieur de Sartines without some embarrassment," she said to me the day after that visit . . . "the subject of which I came to speak to him, the minute explanations which all police officers always ask of one, and the piercing look of that man made my position perplexing, in spite of the polite attentions with which he overwhelmed me.

"'This, Madame la Comtesse,' said he to me while kissing my hand, 'is one of the altogether too rare moments for which I pray daily. . . . I see

that at last I am to be permitted to render you some slight service.'

" 'Yes, monsieur, but specially to His Majesty, who is essentially interested that a certain awful book, which has just been published, should disappear from circulation without the least delay.'

" 'I hope, Madame la Comtesse, that at this moment it has already been seized everywhere. For,' added the lieutenant of police, taking up a volume from his desk, 'I presume that you refer to this book?' then approaching his armchair next to mine, Monsieur de Sartines continued: 'Perhaps you are not acquainted with that awful book?' . . .

" 'Truly I am not, monsieur,' I replied through my fan, with which I was at that moment covering my face, red to the very ears.

" 'Madame la Comtesse, kindly excuse the extreme liberty which I am about to take in running through this licentious pamphlet; but seizure is not sufficient; like unto the heads of the hydra, the more copies we take, the more will appear; suppressed books spring from the earth. When we shall have run over this book together, I shall send to London the refutation of the most daring features, and the author of the *Mémoires Secrets*,

whom we have bought, will insert all I may wish.'

"That's a good idea, but the illustrations. . . ."

"There is nothing to refute in the illustrations; what they represent is general history. . . ."

"You forget the resemblance?"

"I beg your pardon, Madame la Comtesse, and I am the more sorry because it does not stop at the face . . . the clever artist seems to have guessed, I know not how, some peculiarities which . . ."

"And while turning the leaves," Madame du Barry told me, "that traitor of a Sartines showed me peculiarities of inconceivable fidelity.

"I however beg you to believe, monsieur," I replied in a nettled tone, "that I did not pose for the painter who made those horrible things."

"I believe it readily, madame; such good fortune which angels would covet cannot have been shared by devils."

"And I felt my knee pressed by that of the lieutenant of police; I did not seem to notice it, because this was not the time to anger M. de Sartines, of whom I had a last service to ask.

"It is necessary," I continued, again hiding my face behind my fan, "that I show this book to the King."

“‘Necessary, why?’ asked Sartines with an ingenuousness which I should never have suspected in a lieutenant of police.’

“‘The King is easily worried,’ I replied with some embarrassment; ‘His Majesty’s fears would be greater than need be; it is better that by showing him the work as it is, we prevent him from exaggerating his suppositions.’

“M. de Sartines looked at me with an air which plainly meant: ‘Madame la Comtesse is trying to put me on the wrong scent!’

. . . “I carried the book away from M. de Sartines’ office . . . it only cost me a kiss which I allowed him to steal with rather good grace. . . . A police kiss is of no consequence; and, in this affair, the honest magistrate served me so well, that no copy of the book but mine has reached the court. I showed it to the King yesterday, who at first looked at the book with dull eyes.

“‘Is this the famous book after which you have been running so much, my angel?’

“‘Yes, sire, here it is. . . . See the insolence of the title alone: *Histoire des amours de Louis XV et de Jeanne Vaubernier, Comtesse du Barry, pour faire suite au Portier des Chartreux.* . . .’¹⁹

“‘Bah! that’s ancient history!’

“ ‘You think so, sire; let us look at the book together.’

“We looked at it, and Louis XV enjoyed, like a king which he was, certain details which, in truth, are of great accuracy.

“ ‘In truth,’ said the King through the breathlessness caused by his prolonged laughter, ‘I believe that there are at Versailles people who sometimes repeat the scene of the Comte de Lauzun, lying hid under Madame de Montespan’s bedstead.’ ”

The second anecdote which finds its place here is of a different character; it was also told me by Madame du Barry.

The Abbé de B—— had been petitioning for a bishopric for a long time; but there are many petitioners for such places. The applicant, who had acquired a reputation as an orator, was advised to obtain the King’s permission to come and preach at Versailles at Easter time; this permission was granted.

The first sermons of the Abbé de B——, spirited, vehement, a bit dramatic, pleased the King, and, as I may believe, the courtiers, who had not seen His Majesty yawn during the duration of these sermons, complimented the preacher.

. . . The latter, at a début which had won him praise, resolved to win more, by introducing a little austerity in his homilies. The first darts of apostolic censure, wrapped in generalities sufficient to dull the point, were listened to by the King to the accompaniment of those little smiles which meant: "I see the lesson and I shall strive to profit by it." But one day, unlucky day for the episcopal perspective of the Abbé de B——, he introduced into his sermon, by a laborious circumlocution, King Solomon, and dwelt upon the licentious life of that king. The allegory was already quite transparent; it became altogether diaphanous when the orator added: "At last, this monarch, satiated with voluptuousness, tired of having exhausted all the kinds of pleasures which injure the throne, to arouse his withered senses, ended by seeking a new one in the vile leavings of public licentiousness."

Madame du Barry seldom attended sermons; but without being there herself, she had ears there; she heard that same evening of the virulent attack made by the Abbé de B——; she vowed that he should not be a bishop.

Monsieur de Jarente still had charge of the benefices. So the Abbé of B——, as he was

about to leave Versailles, wishing to know how his prospects were, went to see him, and asked him what place His Majesty had selected for him.

“A place in the post-chaise which you had better take this very day, for the King is not pleased with you, and you may consider your bishopric as lost.”

“Your Grace surprises me more than it grieves me,” replied the poor abbé; “who can have done me an ill turn with His Majesty?”

“King Solomon, of course. Why the devil, did you not leave in peace that Jewish potentate now dead two thousand seven hundred and fifty years? What has he done to you that you should fall foul of him in your sermons? Solomon was a handsome man, Madame du Barry likes that king; she has taken it upon herself to avenge him.”

CHAPTER IX

I write this chapter at Leipsic where I see what are to-day called marvels of literary speculations; and yet this only consists in selling books fraudulently printed either in Geneva or Holland. In truth, people were more clever, more discreet, in this sort of thing, in the course of the eighteenth century. All Europe then knew Morande, author of a lampoon entitled *Le Gazetier cuirassé*. This writer, inspired by the devil, kept himself ambushed in London, like a tiger on a rock, watching all prey of scandal which might come out of society, and then taking possession of it in the interest of his publication, unless it was bought up. . . . It was always French reputation which Morande attacked while in England, feeling strong in the impunity which the rights of nations guaranteed to him. It happened sometimes that a certain anti-diplomatic cane-thrashing avenged on the sly the assailed reputations; but the said Morande had not only made for himself an unblushing fore-

head, but also shoulders which did not feel the blows of a stick, and his venomous libels sold like everything which nourishes human malice; this vile writer saw his purse get fat, without much injury to his safety.

Appetite comes while eating; Morandé, seeing that *louis* came easily enough, figured that by enlarging his sphere of speculation he could pile up banknotes. This is the addition which he made to his business, in February, 1774; he began to write to some of the grand lords and dames of the court, sometimes to tradesmen or wealthy bankers, to advise them that he knew some scandalous matters about them; but that he thought it his duty to let them know of it, and ask if they objected to their being divulged. To this Morandé added that, in consideration of the sum of —, he would spare them this unpleasantness. High officials who had labored too much in their own interests; prelates too careless of their reputation of continency; lady abbesses who wished, in the dusk of the evening, to enjoy the pleasures of the world; the high priors of abbeys who had boxes at the opera; in short, all personages anxious of preserving a bit of cover over their political or private conduct, hastened to settle with the

Gazetier cuirassé. M. le Marquis de Marigny had long since signed a treaty with it; Madame du Barry refused to pass under the caudine forks of a pamphleteer. She complained to M. le duc d'Aiguillon, who, having come to an understanding with the English ambassador, succeeded in having that minister write to his court.

His Majesty George III declared that he would be delighted to have some one tie a stone to the neck of the said Morande and throw him into the Thames, if the thing could be done quietly, so as not to hurt the feelings of the English nation, which is the most sensitive of all nations as to the integrity of its rights. Consequently, M. le duc d'Aiguillon, in the interest of the digestion of his dear countess, sent two agents to London to dispatch the venomous fugitive. But he was warned in time, and the instruments of the French minister, thrown off the scent, discovered, surrendered to the fury of the mob, were hanged to the trees of Saint James Park, in order to prove to the universe that the English knew how to make their nationality respected. Since that time the shares of the *Gazetier cuirassé* went up strangely. It scratched at first; it then began to flay either under the inspiration of anger, or the influence of

covetousness. The princes of the House of Bourbon, the Dauphine, the King himself were not spared in Morande's libels.

During the winter of 1774, Marie-Antoinette acquired a decided taste for balls. Her Highness's figure was now fully developed, and had contracted that delightful suppleness which distinguished it; no one danced with greater grace than this princess.

At first, unmarried women were not admitted to Madame la Dauphine's balls. I have never been able to explain this prohibition to my own satisfaction; perhaps the ladies, all young, all pretty, who formed a part of these affairs, would have been much embarrassed to give a reason for this measure other than a sentiment of coquetry. Among the gentlemen most in vogue at these royal soirées, were, after M. le Comte d'Artois, MM. de Coigny, de Vaudreuil, de Bezenval, de Dillon and de Lauzun; the last four specially formed the quadrille with which Marie-Antoinette danced preferably, and she concealed it too little to permit of any one attaching to this any other idea than the dancing superiority of these gentlemen. As to M. le Comte d'Artois, he was grace-

ful, light; but he was so heedless that he almost always mixed the figures.

Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse de Provence hardly ever attended a ball except to serve as wall-flowers; but it must be admitted that they made capital wall-flowers. . . . Their corpulence was developing with such rapidity that very often they both found themselves compelled to present themselves sideways in an apartment owing to their inability to go through ordinary doors in the usual way. Monsieur, however, enlivened the dances by his sallies and witticisms. As to Madame, she appeared busy enough breathing and digesting under the pressure of her corset. . . .

Madame la Comtesse d'Artois, on the contrary, small, slim, light as a sylph, seemed hardly to touch the floor, and the sound of her pretty little foot did not reach the ear.

When dancing at court had been going on a part of the winter, it occurred to the Dauphine that, as but few people were admitted to her circle, all the marvels of dress which were displayed there were lost to the capital. Her royal Highness asked Mademoiselle Bertin and me one morning, if it would not be possible to revive the

Journal des Dames, which had already died of marasmus several times. Nothing could better serve my interests than this resurrection. I replied to the princess that if she condescended to accept the dedication of this paper, I should undertake to give it life again.

"Do not doubt it, Léonard," replied Marie-Antoinette; "I am not only willing that the new *Journal des Dames* should be dedicated to me, but if necessary, I shall supply funds to back it; it is an institution wholly French which one is astonished not to find in Paris."

"I promise Your Royal Highness that it will exist in a week."

"Under your management, Léonard?"

"No, madame, a pen is necessary to manage a paper."

"A comb might perhaps be better," said the Dauphine laughing. . . . "Besides, pens can always be found when money is not lacking."

Although I had undertaken the foundation of the *Journal des Dames*, I did not consider myself a sufficiently prominent literary character to take up the gauntlet thrown into the republic of letters by Madame la Dauphine.

After Her Royal Highness's toilette we talked

with Mademoiselle Bertin about the project of which our patroness had just given us the idea. I thought that M. Durosoy, whose literary ambition had a hundred arms like Briareus, would not refuse to manage our *Journal des Dames*, in which the milliner and I expected to periodically produce the philosophy of our art. . . . But we needed a lady to lend her name. Mademoiselle Bertin spoke to me of a certain Baroness de Prinzen, who, judging from what she said of her, could hardly lend any more than her name, but who needed very much to borrow some money. We offered her some as a gift; she eagerly accepted, and took up the management of the *Journal des Dames*. . . . It is the same which, I believe, exists to this day.

If a complete collection of this paper has been kept by one of those careful amateurs who collect everything, it is a good book to consult in order to study the customs of the eighteenth century; there one will find either in small verse, or even smaller prose, or shown by the fashion plates, usages, ridiculous things which one to-day could hardly imagine, although, in truth, I do not think our century wiser than its predecessor. Only, the follies of to-day are so far behind those of the

past that the latter are hard to understand.

The *ques-a-co** was the first style which burst out in the *Journal des Dames*, and later in the fashionable world. Mademoiselle Bertin invented this. . . . It was composed of three feathers which the ladies wore back of the head; this style having been approved by the princesses, and specially by Madame du Barry, soon became general.

I liked Mademoiselle Bertin very much; our fortunes trudged along hand in hand like two good sisters, and I continued to go into raptures over the pretty foot of the gentle milliner. Well, shall I confess it, the glory of the *ques-a-co*, which she had acquired without my assistance, burdened my thoughts. . . .

Mademoiselle Bertin's laurels prevented Léonard from sleeping. Fortunately, for our friendship, there came to me one of those grand ideas, which overthrow all pre-existing vogues, and to sit proudly on the ruins of all caprices. . . . I invented the *sentimental puff*. . . . Great things are never boasted of; they are described. I find among my notes the description of the *puff*, worn in the month of April, 1774, by Madame la Duchesse de Chartres. Her Royal Highness had

* "Ques-a-co" (Provençal), "what is that?"

boldly accepted all that the most eccentric fashion had to offer: there you saw a woman seated in an armchair holding a nursling, which represented Monsieur le duc de Valois and his nurse. To the right was a parrot pecking at a cherry, a bird precious to the princess; to the left was a little negro, image of the one whom Her Highness liked very much. In addition there were in the head-dress hair of Monsieur le duc de Chartres, of Monsieur le duc de Penthièvre, of Monsieur le duc d'Orleans. . . . Never had one dared to place on a head such a hotch-potch, such a menagerie, in short, a medley of objects representing three reigns. . . . I myself had been frightened by the shamelessness of my conception; but soon the folly of the period got the better of mine; one saw in the *puffs* the strangest things that fancy could imagine; frivolous women covered their heads with butterflies; sentimental women nestled swarms of Cupids in their hair; the wives of general officers wore squadrons perched on their fore-top; melancholic women put a sarcophagus and cinerary urns in their head-dress. It is hard to believe in this excess of madness, and yet I have not exaggerated the picture.

In the month of May, 1774, the unexpected

death of the King diverted the mind from all which at that time occupied public attention. Too much has been written on this event to leave me anything to say about it, and the name of *Louis le Désiré*, which was applied to the Dauphin for some time past, sufficiently reveals the feeling with which France saw the end of the reign of a prince who, yet, had been surnamed the *Bien-Aimé* by assent of the people.

CHAPTER X

When a star disappears, its satellites, in losing their reflected light, go into obscurity; Madame du Barry foresaw the fate which awaited her. D'Aiguillon, Maupeou²⁰ and all the men of their selection felt that their power was nearing the end; the magistrates of the chancellor's make trembled at the thought that they might have to give up their seats.

Louis XVI and the Queen, immediately after the death of the late King, had withdrawn to Choisy with the princes and the princesses. It is from that place that the monarch called to his assistance M. le Comte de Maurepas²¹ who, for many years, had been atoning for, if not in exile, at least in a retreat, barren of all favors, the famous quatrain in which he had presumed to celebrate *the flowers* which grew in the steps of Madame de Pompadour. M. de Maurepas, an amiable man, but of great mediocrity, was but little fit to guide a king whom his predecessor had carefully kept from the Council. Yet this lord,

from the depth of his retreat, had seen so many men and events pass in the whirlwind of affairs, that he had been able, no doubt, to draw a sort of experience from the comparisons, and to almost sanely judge the actual needs of France. He accordingly arrived at Choisy, with a reform plan in his pocket; and as Louis XVI could oppose no reason, either good or bad, this plan was accepted at first sight. Maurepas made the young sovereign understand that the dismissal of the former Parliaments, made up of rich and influential men, had scattered through the nation germs of discontent which might, at the beginning of a new reign, degenerate into serious troubles, which would be forestalled by the re-establishment of the arbitrarily suppressed courts.

At once, it was decided that Madame du Barry should be politely exiled to the convent of Pont-aux-Dames; which would enable them to dispense with openly exiling M. le duc d'Aiguillon, for it was probable, that in view of his passion for the ex-favorite, he would withdraw rather near that convent. . . .

Government plans, like all other plans, are easily made; but difficulties are encountered when it becomes a question of carrying them out. The

dismissal of the three ministers, MM. d'Aiguillon, de Boynes and de la Vrilliere caused the King no embarrassment: the former had packed up in advance; the other two accepted their orders with resignation. But it was not so easy to get rid of Maupeou and the Abbé Terray;²² they belonged to that class which only goes when driven out. . . . They were driven out. The improviser of parliaments retired to a pretty house which he possessed at Chatou.

The change of ministry was completed on the 24th of August, which caused this coup d'état to be called a Saint-Bartholomew of ministers. On that occasion, was seen the dawn of a pronounced influence which no one as yet suspected, and which until then, had remained hidden under an exterior of charms and attractive frivolity. I refer to the power which Marie-Antoinette exercised over her husband's mind; a power which, unfortunately acted on a feeble character, slow to decide, and more often unable to use its will with determination. The world has seen the effects of this power; these effects may have been exaggerated, envenomed even; but to deny them would be to resist evidence. . . .

Monsieur Turgot,²³ controller of Limoges, and

well known among economists, had at first been given the portfolio of the navy. More was expected from Monsieur Turgot when he had become Controller-general; however, the science of the economist and that of the statesman, even when the latter occupies himself with finances, are not homogeneous; to figure accurately and to govern intelligently, are two different things. As to the Comte de Vergennes, called to the department of Foreign Affairs, and the Comte de Mury, entrusted with the War portfolio, not only were they unable to cause Choiseul to be forgotten, but they came very near causing Aiguillon to be regretted. In brief, all these selections served to prove that honest Maurepas, during his long retirement, might have learned to appreciate delicate dishes and wines, but he had not learned to know men, in seeing two generations pass before him.

In the midst of the coups d'état which had taken place in France since the death of Louis XV, the Versailles cabinet allowed the complete partition of Poland, at the beginning of which the late King had sat as a spectator. Every one recalls that at that time a caricature appeared, representing the sovereigns of the North dividing the

Kings' cake, on which one read the word *Poland*; each one of the potentates pointed, with his sword, to the share which suited him. The King of France alone had neither share nor sword; but the malicious artist had given him the appearance of a beggar; he was saying in woeful tones: "God's share, if you please. . . ." The sharing monarchs answered him: "God help you, my brother."

Monsieur de Maurepas, but little interested in what was taking place on the banks of the Vistula, because he had enough trouble on the banks of the Seine preparing the famous parliamentary restoration which was to crown his policy, Monsieur de Maurepas did not see without some anxiety the approach of the time set for this last turn of the political rudder. As to Louis XVI, he but little thought of the Parliaments; domestic annoyances, sorrows even, rendered the first months of his reign troublesome. For a long time His Majesty had refused to listen to the rumors which came to him regarding the frivolities of Marie-Antoinette; although not approving of what he called the childish acts of Her Royal Highness, acts in which the seriousness of his character did not permit him to take part, it had never occurred to him to suspect the virtue of that princess. For more than four

years his confidence repulsed the painful reports, the reason of which he had himself been able to notice in the too marked unconstraint of the Dauphine with the members of her intimate circle. In August, 1774, the King's confidence at last began to flag. At this time the thoughtless proceedings of the Queen came to the King through pure sources. Mesdames the Aunts and Mesdames d'Artois and de Provence, for fear, no doubt, that the evil become greater, that is to say that the reports become more envenomed, more hostile to the majesty of the throne, informed Louis XVI, not of faults in the truth of which these virtuous princesses did not believe, but of the malignant speeches which were daily based on certain even more malignant suppositions, encouraged by careless behavior.

There had shortly appeared an extremely critical piece of verse, entitled "*la Nouvelle Aurore.*"²⁴ This new Aurora, in the satire of the day, was no less than the queen, taking nocturnal walks in the park of Versailles, with the ladies and the young lords of her personal circle. The fact in itself was quite exact: during the beautiful nights of May and June, Marie-Antoinette enjoyed wandering through the charming groves where Le Nôtre

has sown the magic spells of his fairyland; but what the poet did not say, was that the King himself and his brothers often took part in these excursions by the light of the stars. I must add, however, that it several times happened that neither Louis XVI nor Monsieur were present among the strollers, and that MM. de Coigny and de Vaudreuil took their place. . . .

The report of the nocturnal strolls in which Louis XVI had not taken part, only reached him envenomed by the queen's enemies, and it was in that naturally blunt state of humor that the young monarch received it. He overwhelmed Marie-Antoinette with reproaches, without even assuring himself if the libel which excited his anger deserved any consideration. Of all the means to curb the imprudences, the frivolities, we might say, of the Queen, this one was assuredly the most awkward. Marie-Antoinette possessed all the pride of Marie-Thérèse, . . . and the violent remonstrances of the King, remonstrances of a jealousy ill excused by a love without rapture, struck against the haughtiness of that princess which the universe proclaimed the daughter of the Cæsars. While believing, much more no doubt than he should, in the piece of verses called *la Nouvelle Aurore*,

Louis XVI had the author looked up; he happened to be a certain Abbé Mercier. The Bastille gave satisfaction to the King and Queen for the poetical insolence of that ill-advised rhymster. But that first blot on the reputation of Marie-Antoinette held good.

Yet, it was during the time of the little conjugal storm which I have just described, that this good King had, what was perhaps the sole courteous inspiration, of his lifetime.

One morning, while I dressed her hair, Marie-Antoinette received the following note from Louis XVI: "Madame, I am now in a position to satisfy a wish which you have made known to me; I beg you to accept little Trianon. This beautiful place has always been the abode of the favorites of Kings; therefore, it must be yours. . . ."

The year 1774 ended with a medley of events, prominent among which were the disturbances which had arisen in the King's family; rather frequent and lively discussions between the Queen and all the Royal Highnesses, aunts, sisters and sisters-in-law of Louis XVI; the pregnancy of Madame la Comtesse d'Artois, which was far from recommending Her Highness to the barren

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Petit Trianon—The Queen's Boudoir

to VIII
ANNO 1800

Marie-Antoinette; the reinstalment of the former Parliaments and the court balls.

During the first days of June, we started, Mademoiselle Bertin and I, to go to Rheims, our duties having called us both to that city on the occasion of the coronation. The Queen's milliner asked to travel by short stages; I consented to it: Mademoiselle Rose had such a little foot that I could refuse her nothing.

The coronation of Louis XVI was a subject long used by the chronicle of scandal which, to a few truths, added many lies in reporting the event.

Much has been said about the apartment constructed for the Queen in the interior of the cathedral of Rheims at the time of the coronation. It is true that this retreat, wholly profane, as you will see, erected in the house of the Lord, was in strange contrast to the sanctity of the place. There were to be found a boudoir, a bedroom voluptuously decorated, a dressing-room with all its accessories. . . . Thus the lords of the earth did not wish to renounce, even in the temple of the King of Kings, the sweet prerogatives of their rank. It must be agreed that it was a comfortable way to give one's self up to piety. I had forgotten to say that in the little villa which had

been erected under the Gothic arches of Saint-Rémy, there was included a guard-room where no less swearing was done than in that of Versailles. . . .

Another thing struck those who witnessed the ceremony of the coronation, it was the suppression of a passage of the ritual where the consecrating priest, while uttering certain Latin phrases, turns towards the public, as if to ask its consent to the monarch's election. For many centuries past, this formula had been but a sham in France; but no sovereign had dared suppress this last symbol of the power of the people. . . . The body called *les patriotes* noted in red ink, this new encroachment of the royal power.

When the court had returned to Versailles, the Queen made in her household important changes which she had had in mind for a long time. Her Majesty established a position of lady superintendent, which she gave to Madame la Princesse de Lamballe. This lady, beautiful, gentle and good, was, as is well known, the widow of a young prince whom she had worshiped, without obtaining in return the love which so many combined virtues deserved. The queen had a great fondness for Madame de Lamballe. . . . The lovable

Duchesse de Mouchy had succeeded Madame de Noailles in the duties of lady of honor; a change which the Queen had been meditating for several years. Madame la Duchesse de Cossé gave up at the same time her place as lady of the bedchamber to the Princesse de Chimay, and Madame de Mailly was named first lady of retinue.

At that time there appeared at the court a personage, whose name, set off by I know not what refined and stylish educational establishment, had then reached foreign lands. I refer to Madame Campan,²⁵ who was named first lady in waiting, and who often took the place of Madame de Misery, when the latter's time was up. This change gave great satisfaction to the queen. Her Majesty saw herself rid of a woman, formal and unbending in her heraldic habits, and lacking the slightest taste for all that appertained to dress. When Madame de Misery's hour of duty came, Marie-Antoinette laughingly said to her ladies: "We had better take care, here comes the Empress-Queen," thus alluding to the formal ways of her first lady in waiting, which brought to her mind the sternness of Marie-Thérèse. But our beautiful sovereign acquired in Madame Campan a kindly advisor, initiated in the niceties of dainty affectation

in dress, and made to understand the tastes of Marie-Antoinette, and even follow her whims in their flighty meanderings.

The pretty face of Madame Campan, her playful and fertile wit, a sort of gift of languages which she had received from nature, and which art had perfected, soon won great credit for her with the Queen. The admission of this charming as well as clever woman in Her Majesty's chamber marked an era.

Madame Campan accomplished in the Queen's household the change which Her Majesty wished for: the imposing etiquette of the former court gave place to elegance and frivolity. The new office-holder, always careful to anticipate the Queen's wishes, never figured on the price of things; thanks to her pleasing and numerous innovations, which Mademoiselle Bertin and I seconded with all our might, Her Majesty's expenses soon knew no limit. . . .

In this great change my poor friend, Mademoiselle Bertin, experienced a discomfiture which affected her very much: the queen, without ceasing to be attached to her, but persuaded that the tremendous increase of her wardrobe would be too great a burden for the milliner, gave her a coad-

jutor, or rather a rival, in Boislard. I hardly know if, with regard to the furnishing of chiffons, one can say

Du côté de la barbe est la toute puissance

but in a short time Boislard took to himself what pays most in these furnishings, and later this unequal division did much to disturb the affairs of Mademoiselle Rose. However, I should not like to affirm that there were no other determinative causes. . . .

As to myself, I remained sole possessor of the empire of hairdressing, whose secondary duties I relegated to my prime minister Frémont. The queen was no doubt persuaded that the throne of hairdressing was too narrow to be shared.

CHAPTER XI

The young Duc de Lauzun, one of the handsomest gentlemen of the court, was sent to the Empress Catherine II, on a negotiation in the interest of unhappy Poland. What the young French nobleman came to ask the Czarina was in no way a part of her plan, since it was a question, in some respects, to cheat her ambition; but the Semiramis of the North, still in the flower, if not of youth, at least of strength of passion, was very careful not to discourage so attractive a negotiator as Monsieur de Lauzun. She flattered him, complimented him, admitted him to the intimacy of her private apartments, and finally ended by offering him the sword of field-marshal or of equivalent rank. Up to this time, Catherine II had seemed to the son of Maréchal de Biron²⁶ of powerful beauty still, no doubt, but common and lacking charms. The brilliant offer just made to him changed this aspect, and our young nobleman, who was in France but a simple colonel, decided that

the price which Her Imperial Majesty placed on the offered honor, was not exorbitant.

Still Lauzun did not wish to bind himself without the King's approbation and his father's consent. He returned to France in the course of the year 1775, bringing back a negative answer, as to his diplomatic mission. When the future Russian general reappeared at Versailles, his good looks, his graceful manners, and specially the reputation that he had already taken his place among the favorites of Catherine II, attracted to him the attention of all the courtiers; the ladies wished to know him at any cost, and in this respect the Queen showed herself most eager.

Her Majesty was at that time very friendly with the Princesse de Guéménée; that lady shared, with the Princesse de Lamballe, the good graces of the sovereign.

"Madame de Guéménée," said the queen to her favorite one day, "le Duc de Lauzun is much spoken of at court; he has been presented to me; but how can one judge of a gentleman's qualities in a formal presentation? . . . You will tell Monsieur de Lauzun that I shall be pleased to see him in my circle."

"I shall obey Your Majesty," replied the princess. . . .

Indeed, the duc was brought to the Queen's first game by Madame de Guéménée. Her Majesty received him with a distinction which escaped no one, and it was being said the next day that in the first reception, the favor of this nobleman had equaled, at least in appearance, that of the handsome Coigny. At the following circle, Marie-Antoinette received the duc with a marked eagerness which was noticed; she often spoke to him in the course of the evening. The next day, having met the old Maréchal de Biron, father of Lauzun, Her Majesty launched out into compliments. . . . A few days after, the duc having been a little late in coming, she said on seeing him: "Here he is, at last!" The expression was heard, and you may be sure that it did not fail to be repeated. I do not know if the Duc de Lauzun was able to say without self-conceit: "Soon I became a sort of favorite," as he states in his memoirs; but the rumors of the court had lent some probability to this outburst of vanity. What was there to believe? The duc, who had spoken of returning to Saint Petersburg, changed his mind suddenly, without people being able to know what consid-

eration had made him forego the first rank in the Russian army, and the friendship so open-heartedly offered by Catherine II.²⁷

This took place not long before the coronation; at the time of that ceremony, the queen, before going to Rheims, went on several occasions to visit Madame de Guéménée at her house in Auteuil, and I heard a little later that the Duc de Lauzun was there at each one of those visits, the aim of Her Majesty had been to decide that nobleman to follow the court to Champagne.

Lauzun excused himself claiming that he was compelled to rejoin the Royal Legion, which he commanded. After having vainly urged the colonel to change his mind, the Queen one evening received his farewell . . . but it was not Her Majesty's last word.

The next day, when I reached her dressing-room, she hardly gave me time to enter, and said to me: "Léonard, run to the Biron residence, and tell Monsieur de Lauzun that *I forbid him* to leave to-day. . . . I wish to see him at my circle this evening." I performed my errand with intelligence and dispatch. The duc seemed annoyed by the order I brought him; I thought I saw that he wished to leave Versailles, and I heard him

murmur: "This persistence is tyrannical." Then he added rather bluntly: "Tell Her Majesty that I shall obey her." I do not know what caused me to do so, but on returning to the château, I asked some one who knew Monsieur de Lauzun very much, how long since he had arrived at court. I was told: "Three months."

In the evening, the duc having come to salute the Queen at one of the gaming tables where the Baron de Vioménil was playing, Her Majesty said to him: "Baron, you have charge of the movement of the troops; then order the Royal Legion near Versailles, so that Monsieur de Lauzun will not leave us. . . ."

"I shall obey, madame," replied the baron much surprised at such an order. The Queen's apartments were crowded with gentlemen and ladies, when Marie-Antoinette uttered that strange sentence. At the *grand levée* the next day, the duc's favor made such a great noise in the galleries, that the echo reached the King's ears, and it was being reported in the evening that if Lauzun had not the following day decided to go away, the doors of the Bastille might have closed on him.²⁸

It was said, after the young nobleman's departure, that he had shown himself but little moved

by the too openly expressed sentiments of the Queen, at least after the first two weeks of his favor, because he entertained the most tender affection for a young English woman, named Lady Barrymore. . . . Love does not live on thoughts of pride and the woman one loves, were she a shepherdess, may be more than a queen in the eyes of her lover.

I must add that the attention of the queen towards Lauzun (for Her Majesty was much more eager than the duc) greatly compromised that princess, and encouraged the outrageous reports of her enemies. Yet, I who did not pass a day without seeing her, I who knew, one might say the employment of all her moments, I believe that I may affirm that there was nothing whatever in the relations of M. de Lauzun and the Queen. . . .

This at least inconsistent conduct, was taken up, at the beginning of the year 1776, by some satirical verses whose author was vainly sought. MM. de Lauzun, de Coigny, de Vaudreuil, de Bezenval were mentioned in full in them, as alternating in the Queen's good graces. . . .

During the first months of this year the malicious chronicle added a fifth name to those of the four

noblemen, who were called the Queen's favorites, almost in the King's presence: that name was that of Monsieur de Dillon, whom the ladies of the court had nicknamed "the handsome Dillon." It was in truth towards this charming gentleman that Her Majesty's sweetest smiles were most often directed, during the balls which she gave at carnival time. But this personage's favor, if such favor there was, was not long exclusive. For about the same time there appeared at court Madame la Comtesse Jules de Polignac, who soon won all the affection of Marie-Antoinette. Mesdames de Lamballe and de Guéménée, whom the Queen preferred to all the ladies of the court, suddenly lost a large part of Her Majesty's good graces. She no longer spoke of any one but Madame Jules de Polignac, made her confidences only to her, consulted but her on the subject of her dress and pleasures. In short the sovereign had consideration and attentions only for her new friend.

It must be admitted that Madame de Polignac, by the delicate beauty of her features, by the charming proportions of her figure, by the gentleness and harmony of her voice, and lastly by the happy qualities of her character, deserved to be

loved by all those who knew her. Never, perhaps, had there been seen at court so charming a nature. . . . What a pity it had come there! Since Madame de Polignac's favor had begun, the Queen had paid but little attention to Mademoiselle de Raucourt, whose innumerable adventures had besides caused Her Majesty some disgust. Now, the hand of so powerful a benefactress having been withdrawn, this actress had at once seen the number of her enemies increase. In this state of affairs, the ladies of the Comédie-Française, most delicate in matters of honor, declared that they could not continue in their company a woman whose immodesty knew no bounds, and presented two faces like the head of Janus. In brief, these chaste beauties did so well and made such a noise in what was then known as the "*tripot comique*," that they secured the dismissal of Mademoiselle de Raucourt from the First Gentleman of the chamber.

This disgrace did not determine the expelled actress to reduce her luxury and extravagance, from which resulted that the number of her creditors increased. The new ones awaited the probable appearance of a wealthy protector; the old, tired of having vainly waited for the amount of

their bills, became more or less angry towards the discharged *tragédienne*. One of these, more prudent than the others, had her arrested as she was entering her carriage to go to Longchamp; it was to Fort-l'Evêque, that a polite sheriff, took her in the beautiful finery which she had put on to rival the most elegant women of the capital. But apparently Mademoiselle Raucourt thought that she would find somewhere the "heart recollection" inclined to remember her; a special messenger left Fort-l'Evêque, with a note written in haste on a greasy table. At nine o'clock at night he returned and at once the prison doors were opened for the beautiful disciple of Melpomene. To whose generous hand did she owe her freedom? I could not say positively.

I was speaking just now of the "heart recollection;" a singular example of this occurred in the first days of May, 1777. Madame de Gaya, the octogenarian widow of a major, retired at Compiègne, had been some sixty years before, one of that swarm of beauties which the Duc de Richelieu²⁹ ceaselessly saw flying about him. . . . How long had her reign in the good graces of the French Lovelace lasted? I never found out; but the felicities which she had enjoyed during that

period must have been very great, judging from the piece of folly which their recollection made this eighty-year-old woman do. . . . Madame de Gaya, to the prejudice of an honest and poor family, named Monsieur le Duc de Richelieu her sole legatee and bequeathed to him fifty thousand *écus*.

The notary who had received the will went to Paris, and having betaken himself to the Richelieu residence, asked to speak to the *maréchal-duc*, having to communicate to him most interesting matters.

“Well! sir; what do you wish of me?” asked the old nobleman, at that time in the hands of his valet, who was striving to hide his historical wrinkles under the sides of his wig. . . .

“Monsieur, I come in reference to a matter which Your Highness is certainly far from expecting,” replied the notary. . . .

“Ah! mercy, mercy, no preamble, my dear sir. . . . I preside at the *Académie Française* to-day, and the dose of *ennui* which is in store for me will certainly be more than sufficient. . . . Who are you?”

“The notary of Compiègne.”

“And you come to tell me? . . .”

"That the late Madame de Gaya has remembered Your Highness."

"Madame de Gaya, what's that?"

"A lady who, in her early youth. . . ."

"Was devoted to me no doubt? . . ."

"Exactly, monseigneur."

"Well! what does your Madame de Gaya want of me? I do not recall her any more than I do five hundred other women who might remember me for the same reason."

"Monseigneur, the honest soul wants nothing; for she was put in holy ground two weeks ago."

"Does she ask for my prayers? . . ."

"Not at all, monseigneur; she had been a devout person for the last forty years. . . ."

"In short, what is the object of your visit?"

"It is to announce to you that Madame de Gaya leaves you her entire fortune, by will."

"No, you don't say so!"

"Fifty thousand *écus*, which are deposited at my office and which are at the disposal of Your Highness."

"Excellent woman! I am really grieved not to be able to recall if I deserve this legacy. . . ."

"What are monseigneur's orders?"

"Forsooth, my dear sir, I order you to see that

I receive this money as soon as possible. . . . After having previously deducted, of course, as large a fee as you please.”

“Monseigneur, honesty. . . .”

“No doubt, no doubt, the honesty of public officials and the continency of priests are two virtues which no one thinks of disputing. . . . But send me that soon, gentle notary. If you are in the habit of reading the *Epigrammes* at Compiègne, you must know that I have found myself compelled to pawn my Holy Ghost³⁰ in order to settle my coachmaker’s bill.”

“To-morrow, monseigneur, the funds will be at your disposal.”

“Good! good! . . . But in truth this is a funny thing. . . . If all my lady friends had left me their money, I should be richer than the King. . . . Good morning, worthy notary, I depend on you to free the Holy Ghost.”

CHAPTER XII

Towards the end of August, 1778, there was heard at the court a piece of news which, while overwhelming the King and Queen with joy, caused Monsieur, I was then assured, to make a remarkably wry face. Marie-Antoinette having entered the King's study one morning, addressed him in a manner which at first seemed rather singular to him:

"I come to ask justice on one of your subjects, who has violently insulted me."

"What do you tell me, madame? that is impossible."

"Sire, I may even affirm to you that I have been struck."

"Nonsense! you are jesting."

"Not at all, sire: someone has been audacious enough to kick me in the abdomen. . . ."

If the first information of the queen's pregnancy, thus imparted by her to the King was ingenious, it was given in rather popular form; Louis XVI understood it and enthusiastically ex-

pressed the delight which his tardy paternity caused him.

When Her Majesty had given birth to Marie-Thérèse de France, that princess was held over the baptismal font by the Comte de Provence, representing the King of Spain.

There existed a custom which required the Governor of Paris to dispatch one of his pages to the city, to announce to the municipal magistrates the Queen's first labor pains. Then the magistrates would assemble and await the event with impatience. As soon as definite news had reached the Hôtel de Ville, the mayor of Paris and the aldermen started for Versailles, with majestic pomp and brought to Their Majesties the presents which the city was in the habit of offering on such an occasion. This ceremony only took place for the first pregnancy. It was carried out with much solemnity at the birth of *Madame première*.

The queen kept her bed from fifteen to eighteen days; as early as the ninth she sent for me, to arrange her hair so as to prevent its falling out. Marie-Antoinette would have been disconsolate at such a loss; she therefore had me visit her every morning, to care for her beautiful hair, which was indeed to be counted among Her

Majesty's perfections. This daily task was not performed without some difficulty; there is nothing harder than to dress the hair of a person in bed. I was compelled to almost lie down at full length by the queen. . . .

It was at the beginning of the year 1779 that the display of the *Petit-Trianon* began to spread about society and to provoke from the observers the most indulgent criticisms. Never, I must admit, was the veil hanging over the interior scenes of this country-seat raised before me. Yet people were able during this year 1779, to assure themselves that mistakes were sometimes made in the severe judgment which were rendered against the mysteries of the *Petit-Trianon*. Towards the month of March, Monsieur le Comte d'Artois used to secretly leave the château and betake himself to the *Petit-Trianon*, followed by a single servant. The prince usually returned between midnight and one o'clock, and it was noticed that His Highness looked fatigued on his return from these early morning excursions.

The king had so often heard whispered the account of his young brother's excursions to *Trianon*, and the remarks which they caused, that he finally ordered one of his valets to follow the prince, to

slip behind him into the château, and to discover, if possible, to which part of this country seat His Royal Highness betook himself. Three days after, the King was fully informed.

The valet entrusted with the duty of watching the prince, entered His Majesty's room with a beaming face and said to him:

"Sire, I know all. . . ."

"Speak," replied the King with an unsteady voice and turning pale. . . . "Well, what did you see?"

"Something which Your Majesty is far from expecting. . . ."

"Will you explain yes or no? . . . Why does Monsieur le Comte d'Artois go to Trianon every morning?"

"Sire, he goes there to walk on a tight-rope. . . ."

"What! what do you say? . . ."

"I say to Your Majesty," continued the valet laying a stress on the words, "that His Royal Highness daily practices feats on the tight-rope; it is a man named Placide who gives him lessons. . . . I cannot doubt what I have the honor of telling Your Majesty. I have seen, from a small room adjoining that in which the apparatus stands,

Monsieur le Comte d'Artois dressed in white trousers, a sweater, a pink belt, a small cap with feathers on his head, a balancing pole in his hand, go over the rope with as much daring as grace; I have even seen His Royal Highness fall and like an experienced tumbler, hang on to the rope like a cat, to his master's great satisfaction."

"Well, my brother is certainly mad," said Louis XVI shrugging his shoulders. "But to what end is this ridiculous exercise? . . ."

"To shortly make his *début* before the queen's circle, I believe; for it seems to me that I heard His Royal Highness say so. . . ."

At these words the King dismissed the observing valet, entered his study, and laughing, set about finishing a map of Asia, which His Majesty was coloring.

But all the mysterious scenes of Trianon could not be explained in so lucid a manner as the tight rope walking of the Comte d'Artois. . . .

At the time this was taking place, the family of Monsieur le Comte de Provence was experiencing some shocks, which slightly disturbed its harmony; Madame had unwillingly received near her, as a companion, the Comtesse de Balby, whose husband was honorary colonel in the regiment of

Bourbon. Madame de Balby listened with some pleasure, at least apparently, to Monsieur's small verses; she even pretended to understand the verses of Horace which the prince quoted on every occasion; in short, out of condescension, it may be presumed that the comtesse stepped from literary poetry to real poetry, for the comte, arriving at Versailles unexpectedly, like an ill-bred husband which he was, found that the marital place was fraudently occupied near his faithless half. . . . The colonel was about to perforate, with his trusty sword, both the gallant and the false one, when a small night-lamp caused him to recognize a personage whose assassination would have been punished by the torture of Damiens, in spite of all the reasons which the outraged husband might have alleged.

The mighty are seldom alone. . . . Monsieur de Balby was on the instant seized and bound by powerful hands. But the comtesse so well implored the great personage whom the intruder had dared disturb, that it was decided that it would suffice to turn him over to a physician; that he should, by order, be treated as a lunatic, bled, douched and confined in a cell.

I shall only speak of the war of American

Independence, to mention the head-dress *aux Insurgents* which I invented towards the end of the year 1780, and which, like all which I invented, became a vogue. I must therefore confess without evasion, that during this same year, which I considered as the zenith of my glory, I became important to the verge of insolence, daring to the verge of cynicism. Now that years and ill-fortune have made me wiser, I am going to confess with humility some of the acts belonging to this period, and which I only reveal to show my readers to what degree of folly the society of the eighteenth century descended.

The daring acts had had a still more daring precedent, after which ladies in the highest places considered it quite proper to bear all the insolence which I dared with them; this is the precedent:

One morning, during the queen's second pregnancy, I found Her Majesty in such good humor that I risked the broadest topics. Several times Madame Campan signaled me with her eyes so as to put a stop to this unruly flight; but Marie-Antoinette, whom I caused to laugh until the tears came, said to me: "Continue, Léonard, continue, this is all very amusing."

"You see, ladies," said I laughing, as if reply-

ing to the signs of the first lady in waiting, Her Majesty suffers everything from me, everything absolutely, since we have shared the same bed. . . .”

“What’s that, what’s that!” exclaimed Marie-Antoinette, who ceased laughing for a moment, while still suspecting that there was some merry gasconade hidden in what I said.

“Yes, madame,” I resumed with affected seriousness, “Your Majesty will be pleased to recall that, during her last churching, I daily shared her couch . . . to dress her hair. . . .”

“That is true, ladies, Léonard is right,” said the queen bursting into laughter. . . .

“And I certainly hope,” continued I emboldened by the success of my impertinent jest, “I hope that Your Majesty will soon permit me to again lie by her side.”

“Certainly,” replied the Queen, laughing more loudly.

This strange talk was repeated in the salons; the ladies inferred from it that nothing could be in better taste than to suffer from Léonard all the liberties which might come to his mind, and I did not fail to take advantage of this.

CHAPTER XIII

At the end of the year 1781, that is to say when the queen had given to France that first Dauphin who died in 1789, in the uniform of the Parisian National Guard, Her Majesty was threatened with the loss of that hair, whose soft shade had become a fashion, under the name of *cheveux de la reine*. At the first indications of this terrible catastrophe, I was seized with a general trembling; having returned home, I had a fever-delirium; a crushing nightmare oppressed my breast. . . . With my Gascon quickness, I had at once perceived the consequences of this dread event. . . . With the hair of Marie-Antoinette, would fall my credit, which was loudly called a power, without exaggeration, since it opened to me all purses and all hearts. . . . But I was fortunate enough to ward off the mortal blow which threatened me; you will see how.

“Madame,” said I one day to the queen, shortly after her confinement, and when I saw that the fall of her hair was imminent, “high head-dresses

are becoming very common; it is long since the bourgeoisie has taken possession of it, and now it is the turn of the common people."

"Good gracious, Léonard, what are you telling me? Do you know that it grieves me to hear it? . . . those head-dresses were so becoming to me!"

"And what head-dress would not become Your Majesty! . . . What is most important is to avoid that the head-dress of the queen of France should resemble that of the *grisettes*. . . ."

"Oh, fie, for shame!"

"I have carefully thought over a total revolution in Your Majesty's head-dress; I have even had your portrait drawn with the new arrangement I have in view; and, as I had expected, my august sovereign, by adopting my innovation, would be made younger by six or seven years."

"Do you mean it, Léonard? the head-dress you have in mind would make me look younger?"

"I do not see what Your Majesty could gain in that; for many women of the court would take on years to resemble her."

"Oh, I do not deceive myself, Léonard; I shall soon be twenty-seven, and at that age a style which makes one look younger is always favorably received."

“Well, madame,” I continued quickly, while placing a miniature before Her Majesty’s eyes, “see this portrait; it is a striking resemblance. . . . It is Your Majesty, but ten years younger.”

“What do I see! the hair cut a few inches from the head? . . .”

“Yes, Madame, it will be, if you are pleased to consent to it, a *coiffure à l’enfant*, and you will see it taken up with as much enthusiasm as all those that I have created for Your Majesty.”

“You are right, Léonard; it is charming! In truth, I am but eighteen with my hair dressed like that. . . . But to sacrifice my beautiful hair! . . .”

“Your Majesty will have the satisfaction of seeing all the ladies of the court, all the ladies of France sacrifice theirs also.”

“But if the style changes . . .”

“Who would dare to adopt a new one without Your Majesty having first set the example? If some ambitious hairdresser amidst the myriad of weaklings which swarm in Paris, should dare undertake such a change, I would have him reduced to atoms by the *Journal des Dames*; he would be a ruined man.”

“But I prize my hair very much,” said the

Queen with an air of hesitation, still looking at the portrait. . . . "Yet, I am dying to have my hair dressed *à l'enfant*. . . ."

"Well, madame, since I have been so fortunate as to find a style which pleases Your Majesty, I must tell you all. For the past two weeks all my waking hours have been devoted to the making, for the service of my sovereign, of an agreeable thing of imperative necessity. . . ."

"What do you mean, Léonard?"

"Your Majesty was saying a little while ago that she prized her hair, and I can easily understand it; but, unfortunately, her hair does not prize her. . . . before fifteen days it will have entirely fallen out, if, this very day, we should not apply the infallible remedy. . . . the scissors. . . ."

"Grand Dieu! what's that you say?" exclaimed the Queen, with veritable fright.

"The least painful of truths, madame, since what I propose to Your Majesty, while forestalling a great misfortune, is entirely to her taste."

"Come, Léonard, no more deliberation, cut it; but do not cut it too short. . . ."

"Just enough, madame, to give back to the roots of the hair the vigor it was beginning to lose."

The Queen's beautiful hair fell under my regenerating scissors, and two weeks after, all the ladies of the court had their hair dressed *à l'enfant*. Let any one now say that there is no diplomacy at the bottom of all human combinations!

We have now reached the time when the slanders, the epigrams, the songs against the Queen no longer knew any bounds; each morning saw a new critical dart, and the sources of these blows, fatal to the reputation of Her Majesty, could not be discovered. . . . A censure as bitter as it was circumstantial tore the veil, unfortunately covering, it must be admitted, the private life of the Petit-Trianon; the freedom with which comedies were played there, the choice of actors, always selected among the young gentlemen who were loudly proclaimed Her Majesty's favorites, the exclusive admittance to this charming place of the most discredited women of the court, all these things gave to the slanderous tongues and pens the assistance of appearances and the kindly disposed observers hardly knew where their indulgent interpretations should stop. Up to the end of the year 1781, the chronicle had only honored with the name of favorites of Marie-Antoinette, MM. de Coigny, de Vaudreuil, de Lauzun, de

Bezenval, and de Dillon, but at the beginning of the following year it increased this fatal list prodigiously. I shall not here give the names which public wickedness added to those. . . . I repeat it again, all these names, as well as those of the ladies who were called favorites, have sounded in my ears for sixteen or seventeen years, without my ever having found the Queen in one of those convincing predicaments which the women of that epoch hardly spared to the detractors of their virtue. I may say that I entered Her Majesty's apartments at all hours, that I did not lose sight of her during one entire day, and if, during so long a space of time, I did not happen to see even the appearance of a wrongful act, I am well authorized, it seems to me, to firmly believe that Marie-Antoinette was innocent, at least of the majority of the faults with which her life has been charged and her memory tarnished. But, unfortunately, too disdainful of the changes of opinion with regard to her, that princess was not sufficiently careful of her fame; contenting herself with despising her enemies, she never was on guard against appearances which could give them weapons against her.

An incident which occurred in the month of

November, 1780, added much to the blame which the frivolities of the Queen drew to her conduct. Monsieur Arthur de Dillon, surnamed at court *le beau Dillon*, and singularly protected by Her Majesty, had the misfortune of breaking his arm, while hunting with the King, on Saint-Hubert's day. Their Majesties asked to be present at the first dressing of that gentleman's injury; the interest they had in him, specially in this circumstance, was a most natural evidence of their feelings, and the tears which Marie-Antoinette shed in the presence of the wounded man over so deplorable an accident, were taken in very good part by Louis XVI. But it was noised about that that evening and the two following days Marie-Antoinette, accompanied by but one of her ladies, had betaken herself, wrapped in a large cloak, to the handsome Dillon; this appeared to all the courtiers as over-stepping the bounds of ordinary compassion towards a man who was not related to Her Majesty.

My good friend, Mademoiselle Rose Bertin, got herself in a rather bad scrape, towards the end of the year 1781, and had it not been for the Queen's protection, I really do not know how she would have got out of it. She had as head mil-

THE
GALLERY



LOUIS XVI

NO. 1100
APR 11 1910

liner a certain Julie Picot, a very clever hand, but much of an intriguer, and who had, it was said, more than one string to her bow. For some time past Mademoiselle Picot had been taking the addresses of her mistress's wealthy customers, and called on them, offering her services and seasoning her offers with uncomplimentary remarks about the business standing of my friend, and on the expenses, not very lawful, she said, which had brought on this condition. . . .

As for myself, I should not have believed a word of her tale, if Mademoiselle Picot had dared to tell it to me, because I had the greatest faith in my friend; but the ladies to whom it was told believed it so well, that they left the Queen's milliner to take her rival, who immediately cast off the mask and established herself.

Mademoiselle Bertin had profited by her frequent trips to court, and had acquired fine manners; she was, besides, gentle and good; but indignation makes people forget themselves. . . . One day she met Julie Picot in the gallery of Versailles; furious at finding this girl in the midst of the apartments of the Château, and almost at the Queen's door, Mademoiselle Rose was unable to control her exasperation, and having approached

her opponent, she spat in her face. Mademoiselle Picot, a robust wanton, who had not yet forgotten the punches given by her late mother, during her lifetime a fishwoman at the Halle, Mademoiselle Picot was no doubt about to give a few slaps to her ex-mistress, forgetting to open her hand, when some body-guards who were walking about the gallery, came to put a stop to the quarrel of the two milliners.

But the guards could not dispense with making a report to the provost of the building, who hastened to investigate; . . . the offense was manifest, the Queen's milliner was fined twenty francs and the costs for the benefit of the poor. . . . The punishment could be considered slight if compared with the insult and the place in which it had been committed, but it was reported at the time that Marie-Antoinette had interceded to somewhat mitigate the severity of the provost's justice.

The Queen, with regard to all things which related to the choice of objects of dress, always had confidence in the taste of Mademoiselle Bertin and in mine; but Her Majesty learnt, I do not know through whom, that independently of dress, there were other mysterious processes that a woman

more than twenty-five years of age, must of necessity know; processes which do not belong to the province of the hairdresser nor to that of the milliner, but are a part of the habits of coquettes trained to set off their charms by all the resources of art. Consequently, Her Majesty's adviser pointed out as additions to the committee composed of Mademoiselle Bertin, Boislard and I, Mademoiselle Montansier, directress of the theater of Versailles and Mademoiselle Guimard, a dancer of the opera.

The influence of Mesdemoiselles Montansier and Guimard did not affect the credit of Mademoiselle Bertin nor that of Boislard, nor mine; these advisers, when they *worked* with Her Majesty only increased our chances of prosperity, by seconding, and even exciting the variable tastes of Marie-Antoinette. In the course of the year 1782, we created, Mademoiselle Rose and I, reputations for the furnishing of articles of dress; our protection brought out the fame of Venzel, who was first to introduce the fashion of artificial flowers, invented in the convents of Italy, and made it possible for us to substitute it in ladies' ornaments, to the natural flowers, used until that time, and whose freshness an evening in the bright light of

the chandeliers of our salons, caused to disappear. Soon this new vogue of artificial flowers and feathers became such that twenty rival houses started to make the most of it. . . .

At the début of the reign of this flora of batiste and taffeta, diamonds and pearls were neglected; jewels even lost their value. The women who were no longer young, thought to make themselves look so by crowning themselves with roses, by covering their clothes with garlands of brilliant hue; in society nothing was seen but nymphs decked with flowers, and deceiving themselves as to the first signs of winter, which they hid under the fragrant gifts of spring. While the young ladies excessively fond of their appearance were admitted to the private council of the Queen, Monsieur le Duc de Chartres was thinking of forbidding them the shelter which they had found for many years under the trees of the Palais-Royal. His Highness was adopting the plan of a large structure which was to inclose this garden in the vast parallelogram of edifices which we see to-day.

CHAPTER XIV

The court was disturbed towards the end of 1782 by domestic trouble. Madame Elisabeth, sister of the King, still a child when the Dauphine had arrived at Versailles, had been brought up by Madame d'Aumale, assistant-governess of the children of France, in profound piety, if not in thorough devotion. The young princess, endowed with angelic sweetness, with a patience that nothing on earth could change, grew up in the whirlwind of caprices, frivolities and pleasures in which lived the Dauphine; but she never felt the slightest inclination towards that tumultuous and giddy life. It may be that Madame d'Aumale, wishing to save a child so ingenuous and pure from the whims, if not vices which prevailed at court, described them in rather somber colors, so as to render them more hateful to her? The fact remains that the openness of heart of Madame Elisabeth, combined with her beauty, which as to regularity of features, clearness of complexion, and gentle expression of countenance, triumphed over that of Marie-

Antoinette, inspired a sort of jealousy to this princess. This feeling must have become stronger when the King's sister, having reached nubile age, presented by her modest conduct a constant comparison to the incessant frivolities of her sister-in-law. Vainly several persons, in so-called historical Memoirs, have endeavored to deny the aversion of Marie-Antoinette for Madame Elisabeth; a fact which the evidence of years has confirmed cannot be denied.

Madame d'Aumale, who, from the very beginning of the reign of Louis XVI, foresaw that the Queen would rule that good prince, understood that the position of her august pupil at court could not fail to be perplexing, perhaps unhappy. It was therefore, according to all appearances, with the best of intentions that she proposed to Her Royal Highness to imitate Madame Louise by becoming a Carmelite nun.

But this advice was not given to the young Princess suddenly; the assistant governess suggested it with caution and even with ingenuity. However, the great youth of Her Royal Highness did not allow her of exercising a will of her own, and for fear that Louis XVI might oppose her entering a convent, it was agreed between her and

Madame d'Aumale that she would not open her mind to Their Majesties before she had completed her eighteenth year. But, in spite of the mystery attached to this plan, the careful observers of all that took place at court finally suspected it. Not only did Madame Elisabeth carefully avoid taking part in the noisy enjoyments which succeeded each other without interruption in the Queen's circle, but it was with reluctance that she attended any of Her Majesty's affairs, and particularly kept aloof from the fêtes given at the Petit-Trianon. That which was specially displeasing to Madame Elisabeth in the Trianon society, was the influence which the Queen allowed her creatures to assume and which tended to no less than to the making of ministers and statesmen calculated to sympathize with the tastes of that sovereign. Sincerely devoted to the true interests of France, though still very young, Madame Elisabeth too well foresaw that the Adhémars, the Vaudreuil, the Bezenval and the ladies de Polignac, authors of those political intrigues concocted in the midst of a careless and improvident life, could only advise bad selections to Marie-Antoinette, who, unfortunately, always made the weak Louis XVI accept hers. For it cannot be concealed, the greatest fault of that

monarch, the one from which sprang all his misfortunes, was a lazy disposition, a pronounced dislike for all information which, by showing him the deplorable management of public affairs, would have obliged him to arm himself with the powerful will of kings. Madame Elisabeth was acquainted with her brother's unfortunate tendency; she knew that the more often he wished to be ignorant of evil. Was it for her to reveal it to him? Was she to violently tear away the curtain behind which moved the ambitions or the cupidities of the Petit-Trianon? This would have upset the King's repose, it would have caused a sort of separation between that Prince, so happy at the birth of a Dauphin, and the Queen who had presented it to him. . . . She allowed the King to remain in ignorance of the harm which the alleged friends of the Queen did to the State by their depredations and the immorality of their conduct. But, urged on the one hand by her conscience, which reproached her for her silence, and on the other by her vocation, which called her away from that center of intrigues, Madame Elisabeth in 1782 concealed but little the desire to leave Versailles and to withdraw to a convent.

It was then that this project reached the King's

ears; he seemed deeply grieved at it, and without inquiring whether or no the young Princess had a taste for a religious life, he attributed her determination solely to the advice of Madame d'Aumale, against whom His Majesty once again displayed one of those fits of bluntness which no longer belonged to his character.

Louis XVI hastened to the Queen to inform her of what he had just heard, and, according to his habit, to consult her as to what decision he should take.

When Louis XVI entered the Queen's apartment to tell her what he had heard about his sister's plans, that sovereign was not ignorant of them; she had even been informed of them before the King, and the advice which she was to give the King was already settled in her mind.

"Well," said the King on entering, "Madame d'Aumale has done fine things with her religion; what do you think?—Elisabeth wishes to leave us to become a nun!"

"Mercy!" exclaimed the Queen, "you must not consent to it."

"I therefore intended to let her know that this will not be before she is of age."

“But,” resumed the Queen, “did she speak to you of it?”

“No, not yet; I heard of this ridiculous project through some one in Elisabeth’s service.”

“Well, if you will take my advice, you will not mention the matter to her, and you will continue to make her life so happy that she will forget this sad whim.”

“But what shall I do to accomplish that end?”

“You will not wait until she becomes of age to present her with her house. Thus she will be free to devote herself to the sort of life which may suit her best, without going to bury herself in a cloister. . . . And then, that kind Elisabeth is so fond of doing good, that having her own house, her servants will give her continuous opportunities, and I hope that she will be turned away from the project of leaving us.”

The King considered this a good idea and was delighted at having on this occasion, the opportunity to conform with the Queen’s opinion, while adopting a decision which he presumed would be agreeable to Madame Elisabeth. His Majesty advanced by three years the date on which Her Royal Highness was to have her house; at the same time, the King purchased a pretty château

close to Montreuil, where she could give herself up to her taste for solitude. The young Princess spent the greater part of her days there, reading much, writing more; but she returned daily to sleep at Versailles.

In spite of this change made in her mode of living, and which dispensed her from taking part in the pleasures of the court, Madame Elisabeth continued to sigh after the cloister, and did not conceal it from her brother. The King told her one day that she would be permitted to become a nun at thirty, but that, until then, he would not allow her to come to a decision of which she might repent later. . . . Thirty years! the unfortunate Princess was never to complete them. . . . Before her thirtieth year, that eternity of the just towards which the vows of all recluses arise, from the bosom of a long life of penitence and mortification, was to be obtained by her through martyrdom.

One morning when I was coming to the Queen's toilette, before all in the service of the chamber had assembled, Her Majesty called out to me:

"Léonard, are you bringing me the new novel?"

"Which one, madame?" I asked with eagerness.

“Where do you come from, *littérateur* of the *Journal des Dames*, if you are not acquainted with the *Liaisons dangereuses*?”

“I beg your pardon, madame, I have read that book, which is, in truth, creating quite a sensation by the allusions which people pretend to guess and the malice with which each reader applies the portraits it contains to well-known persons. . . . But I must admit to Your Majesty that I should not have dared to bring you M. de Laclos’ novel.”

“Ah! that’s the author’s name; I recall now that there was attributed to him in 1773, *l’Épître à Margot*, which roundly censured the favorite; that will make me indulgent towards M. de Laclos. Do not fail to bring me his new book to-morrow.”

The next day the *Liaisons dangereuses* was on the Queen’s dressing-table.

Two things disturbed the minds at court towards the end of 1782; they were the obstinacy with which, in spite of the Queen’s entreaties, Louis XVI refused to grant *brevets de dames* to the young ladies who were presented, and the tremendous bankruptcy of Prince de Guéménée. On the first subject the King objected, with much reason, that that sort of emancipation granted to young persons, who were to be presumed chaste,

had been taken so seriously by a good number of these, that their conduct had turned out to be consistent to that of the ladies of the court; that is to say, free from the laws of modesty to the point of compelling several of those young ladies to disappear for three or four months, for a reason of which every one was aware.

The King, who was always opposed to anything which might encourage disorder, persisted in his refusal, and if the young women of the court played the ladies to the advantage of sin, it was at least without *brevet*.

As to the bankruptcy of the Prince de Guéménée, it was impossible to conceal its scandal, and the Princess, who held at court the position of governess of the children of France, increased the trouble by allowing rather ugly circumstances in her conduct to be discovered. For instance, it was learned, that when Madame de Guéménée drew money from the Royal treasury, to meet the expenses of her department, she kept the cash and gave to the creditors deeds of life-annuity. This discovery not permitting of her position being continued to her, the King compelled her to hand in her resignation.

While clamors arose all around against Prince

de Guéménée, who ruined a multitude of small private individuals, Louis XVI heard that Cardinal de Rohan, grand chaplain of France, and brother of the illustrious bankrupt, spoke of the shameful catastrophe with all the lightness of a red-heeled fop. The King sent word to His Eminence that he would have to abstain from such language, adding that it was quite enough that the disorder of his own affairs should be such as to prevent him from coming to the assistance of the stained honor of the Rohans.

The conduct of the Prince de Soubise was very different; he made great sacrifices to ease as much as possible, the sufferings of the unfortunates whom Monsieur de Guéménée had ruined, and several members of his family followed this generous example. One morning when the Prince was seeking, with his steward, for reductions which he might still make in his expenses, to follow up the outburst of so praiseworthy a generosity, he received a letter, which had just been brought to his residence by a special messenger. His Highness opened it, and the steward who was watching him, soon saw tears come to his eyes.

This letter, signed by several dancers of the opera, among others Mademoiselle Guimard,

former acknowledged mistress of Monsieur de Soubise, was as follows:

“Monseigneur, accustomed to seeing you with us on each performance day, we have noticed with the bitterest regret, that not only you were depriving yourself of the pleasure of our plays, but that none of us was being called to those little suppers, where we had, by turns, the good fortune to please and to amuse you. Rumor has but too well apprised us of the cause of your solitude and of your righteous grief. Until now we have feared to disturb it, making sentiment give way to respect; we would not even now break the silence, without the urgent motive which our delicacy suggests to us.

“We had flattered ourselves, Monseigneur, that the bankruptcy (for we are forced to make use of a term with which the homes, the clubs, the gazettes, all France re-echoes), that the bankruptcy of Monsieur le Prince de Guéménée would not be so terrible as reported; that the wise precautions taken by the King to insure to the claimants the payment of the money owing, to avoid the expense and the depredation, more disastrous than the failure itself, would not disappoint the gen-

eral expectation; but confusion has doubtless reached such a point, that no hope remains.

“Therefore, Monseigneur, we would consider ourselves guilty of ingratitude, if we should not imitate you by seconding your humanity, if we did not carry back to you the pensions which your bounty has lavished on us. Apply these sums, Monseigneur, towards the relief of so many suffering soldiers, so many poor men of letters, so many unfortunate servants whom Monsieur le Prince de Guéménée drags to disaster with him. As for ourselves, we have other resources; we shall have lost nothing, Monseigneur, if we continue in your esteem; we shall even have gained, if, in refusing your favors to-day, we compel our detractors to admit that we were not totally unworthy of them.

“Done at the dressing-room of Mademoiselle Guimard, this Friday, 6th December, 1782.”

This generous proposition did not surprise M. de Soubise; he knew that the young ladies of the Opera practiced generosity in the full acceptance of the word. . . . But His Highness did not accept the sacrifice; the pensions he had granted them were the reward of a legitimate and sustained activity; their arrears continued to be paid. . . .

The trouble which M. de Beaumarchais was experiencing, about the middle of the year 1783, in order to have his *Mariage de Figaro* played, promptly caused the money trouble to be forgotten. The new comedy of the author of *Le Barbier de Séville* had appeared so licentious to the royal censors, that they had agreed not to allow its performance. The French actors would willingly have risked the acting of this obscene work, quite in accordance with the taste of the times, and which promised a good harvest of *écus*; but the prohibition was there: it could not be passed over. What did Beaumarchais, the most wary of intriguers, the most supple to turn around, and to live in a sphere of action where any one else would have perished? He requested Madame la Duchesse de Polignac, the Queen's favorite, to witness a performance of his famous play in private, flattering himself that that lady, who was rather inclined to take broad jests for simple flashes of wit, would speak of it to Her Majesty, who would order the acting of the play. Beaumarchais was disappointed in his expectations, the duchess did not dare to consider the work a proper one, and refused to speak of it to the Queen. Having failed with the lady favorite, the author of the

Mariage de Figaro hoped to be more successful by applying to a gentleman favorite; the play was produced, after a few mild corrections, at the residence of Monsieur de Vaudreuil, in the presence of Baron de Breteuil,³¹ who said to the author after the performance: "I believe that your comedy could be presented as it is now." Hearing this, Beaumarchais went to the comedians, told them of his conversation with the minister, leading them to believe that the prohibition had been withdrawn. The actors who were to have parts in the play meanwhile concerted with one another; two rehearsals took place on Monday and Shrove Tuesday, and it was rumored that the work would be played the following Saturday.

But, Monsieur the lieutenant of police, apprised of the hopes entertained by Beaumarchais, sent word to him and to the comedians to come, and reprimanded them for having dared to take advantage of the minister's kind word, in opposition to His Majesty's explicit order. This reproof was sharp, humiliating and did not allow of any explanation. The author's only reply to Monsieur Le Noir was a deep bow.

However, Beaumarchais, convinced of the truth of his favorite maxim: "*médiocre et rampant, et*

l'on parvient à tout," did not retreat before the obstacles opposed to him; to some extent through Madame de Polignac, more through Monsieur de Vaudreuil, a great deal through Monsieur le Comte d'Artois, but specially through having taken proper advantage of the anger of the Baron de Breteuil, aroused at the presumption of the lieutenant of police, the crafty dramatist finally obtained permission to produce his witty turpitudes on the stage.

The work appeared on the bill-boards of the Comédie-Française on the 27th of April, 1784, to the satisfaction of the author; an immense satisfaction for so vain a man; for he had the honor to drag along in his wake, not only the ordinary amateurs and spectators, but all the court, the princes and princesses of the blood-royal, with those of the Royal Family. He received in the course of the day two hundred letters from persons fervently asking for tickets, and promising to act as a *claque*. The Duchesse de Bourbon had her footmen besieging the box-office as early as ten o'clock, to await the distribution of those blessed tickets which was only to begin at four. Knights of the Holy Ghost, lost in the crowd, elbowed, wrangled, even fought with the vulgar

to reach the office. Women of quality, like many others, defying public opinion, locked themselves in the actresses' dressing-rooms since the morning, dined, dressed with them, in the hopes of being favorably seated, through the protection of these ladies.

A short time before the opening, the guards were scattered, the doors smashed open, the gates broken by the efforts of the crowd; it was a veritable attack. . . .

CHAPTER XV

Towards the end of the year 1784, the only subject of conversation was the considerable wealth left by Mademoiselle de Beauvoisin, a celebrated courtesan who, it was said, had been one of the odalisques of the Parc-aux-Cerfs. Ruined in her youth, by admirers whose expenses had exceeded the bounties of her protectors, that lady, having reached the autumn of her life, without having lost all the charms of its summer, took it into her head to start a gambling-house, in which fortune returned to her . . . as it comes to all gamblers who know how to assist it a little. But that which specially made Mademoiselle de Beauvoisin rich, was the mad fondness for her superannuated charms, of Monsieur Boudard de Saint-James, treasurer of the navy. It is stated that he gave her, in the space of a few years, jewels to the value of 1,800,000 francs, independently of 20,000 *écus* income which he guaranteed to her. The very remarkable sale which took place in the month of November attracted a

tremendous multitude composed of all classes. In the sale were to be seen three hundred rings, one more beautiful than the other, and diamonds to a considerable amount. The wardrobe contained one hundred and eighty dresses; people spoke of batiste sheets made of thirty ells of that fabric, and of so fine a quality that the Queen herself had none such. . . .

The year 1785 witnessed the great vogue of de Calonne,³² the controller-general, a natty minister sprung from a Petit-Trianon combination, and who showed himself inclined to second all the projects worked out in that center of intrigues. Calonne was a man of parts, but frivolous and superficial, qualified at best to turn to account that parlor nonsense which is called elegant manners.

The elect of the Petit-Trianon was one of those men who make their fortunes by witticisms; here is one of these which I told the Queen one day while dressing her hair, and which I had heard the evening before. Monsieur de Calonne was playing backgammon in a salon, while the Vicomte de Ségur, whom he rather liked, owing to a certain similarity of character, was humming behind the minister's armchair:



MONSIEUR de CALONNE
Minister of State

“Voulez-vous savoir le souverain bien?
 C'est de manger tout et de ne laisser rien
 Voir les fillettes
 Boire du bon vin,
 Envoyer ses dettes
 A colin-tampon.”

“My dear vicomte,” said Calonne turning to him, “you will do me a favor by giving me that gentleman’s address!”

Marie-Antoinette, who would willingly have sent her creditors to the same address, thought the minister’s witticism delightful, and complimented him on his next appearance at her private circle of the Petit-Trianon. It was, I believe, on the day following this compliment that Monsieur de Calonne received so exorbitant a demand, that his blind obedience to Her Majesty drew back in fright.

The Queen, alone in her boudoir, seated on a sofa, her harp drawn towards her, was practicing some prelude when the minister entered.

“Ah! here you are, Monsieur le Contrôleur-Général,” said Her Majesty, greeting the statesman with a smile and a slight nod; “be seated; I am very glad to have you hear a new variation which Garat brought me last evening.”

"Your Majesty's talent must lend new charms to it. . . ."

"No, I am getting rusty; I suffered so much during my last pregnancy."

"Your Majesty will forget the past sufferings, I hope, while caressing the second prince who has just fulfilled the wishes of France."

"Well, yes, Monsieur de Calonne; but I must secretly confess to you, that my whims and fancies increased so much during my sufferings . . . you understand . . . the whims and fancies of a pregnant woman," said the Queen, "they increased so much in spite of all my efforts. . . ."

"That Your Majesty has perhaps contracted some debts?" de Calonne obligingly interrupted.

"Mon Dieu, yes, Monsieur le Contrôleur-General. . . ."

"And the amount is? . . ."

"Not very great, about 900,000 francs . . . at most. . . ." And the Queen played a few notes on the harp to give the minister an opportunity to get over the announcement of the *not very great amount*.

"Madame," replied de Calonne stammering, "I shall always be at Your Majesty's orders; but at this moment it would be impossible for me to

draw 900,000 francs from the state treasury. . . .”

“But, I can wait . . . there is no hurry; provided that the check can be signed within a week, that is all I ask. . . . Ah! you will admit, I hope, that I am very reasonable, and to-morrow, at the Council meeting, you will not fail to tell the King.”

In truth, the minister spoke to Louis XVI before the whole Council of the Queen’s extreme moderation; the excellent monarch, already fully submissive to the caprices of that princess, considered this act very wise and congratulated his controller-general on the *firmness* he had shown on the occasion. Before the end of the week, the 900,000 francs were granted to the Queen.

The good people of Paris did not notice the copious bleeding of its finances, done to clear off the Queen’s small debts, as she herself called them. . . . Three things kept the Parisian idlers busy: a new opera entitled *Panurge* and the aëro-nautic trips of Monsieur Blanchard. The opera occasioned rather malignant criticism, because of the nullity of Monsieur de Morel’s poem, which the pretty music of Monsieur Grétry was unable to save. The piece was kept alive, it was said, only by the ballets, and especially by a most re-

markable *pas de quatre*. As to Monsieur Blanchard, his experiments were not all successful. A wag, who had attempted to follow on horseback, this aëronaut's balloon, and who was asked if it went very fast, replied: "*Il va ventre à terre;*" in truth, Monsieur Blanchard had had a hard fall that day.

Now, the epigrammatic muse, combining the misfortunes of the said Morel with those of the said Blanchard, although the latter had just crossed the strait which separates France from England, composed the following quatrain:

"Voyez à quoi tient un succès:

Un rien peut élever, comme un rien peut abattre;
Blanchard était f . . . sans le Pas-de-Calais,
Et Morel sans le pas de quatre."

It was impossible that the affair of the necklace,⁸³ which agitated France since the middle of the year 1785, should pass through the empire of fashion without leaving some traces. Accordingly, vogue had to make an entry of hats *cardinal sur paille*, a rather bad allusion to the ruin of the Prince de Rohan. These hats were made of straw, with the edge of flame-colored ribbon. Other observers of His Grace's suit, conceived snuff-boxes *au cardinal blanchi*; they were of ivory,

with a black dot in the middle, which seemed to indicate that he would not come out of his suit entirely white.

The fame of misfortune and even that of ignominy, are not always without advantages to those who pass through them. It appeared certain, as early as the month of March, 1786, that Mademoiselle d'Oliva, that woman whom some intrigue or other had caused to play the part of the Queen, would come out victorious from the too notorious case in which she was implicated, and already admirers hastened by hundreds in the footsteps of the accused, to whom not one of them would have addressed the slightest compliment before her strange celebrity. There took place a sort of challenge among the richest libertines of the court, as to who would become the protector of this courtesan after her imprisonment; she was put at auction, and each sought the *honor* of having her first, when she came out of the Bastille.

While these projects were being formed, two intriguers likewise implicated in the affair of the necklace, Cagliostro and the Comtesse de La Motte, were exchanging a volley of papers, more or less abusive, more or less untrue.

I shall abstain from all other details on the

necklace affair, of which everybody knows the ending, but I must mention another episode which took place while the unfortunate suit was going on. . . . It was, doubtless, this truly fatal coincidence, which specially gave great consistency to the outrageous suspicions which continued to hover over the Queen, after the decision of the Parliament.

There appeared at Versailles a foreign colonel who, owing to his noble and regular features, his Apollo-like figure and grace, surpassed all that the court could offer in attractive cavaliers. All the women sighed, more or less mysteriously, for this young nobleman; all the gentlemen were jealous of a man so generally sought after. Every day he had a duel, from which he always came out victor, and when he had wounded his adversary, he said to him coldly: "I am sorry, monsieur, to have been compelled to fight with you; I never thought of winning the woman with whom you are in love." "But, monsieur," was the usual reply, "why did you not say that before the duel?" "I would have done nothing of the kind; it would have been eluding the explanation which a man of honor should always be prepared to give. . . . Now it is part of my duty to complete it."

In truth, people were soon convinced, that Monsieur le Comte de Fersen, colonel of the regiment of Royal-Suédois (such were the name and title of the handsome stranger), did not love any of the women of the court, and that a lady of more exalted rank, a rank to which the love of the greatest lords could not aspire without temerity, filled the mind of that brilliant officer. Among the inhabitants of the north of Europe, love is a sort of worship; the customs of chivalry, set off by all that civilization has to offer in exquisite politeness, have been preserved in those hyperborean regions. Monsieur de Fersen, admitted to the Queen's circle, had such control over himself, that nothing, either in his countenance, actions or speech, betrayed his secret. . . . It was said, at that time, that Marie-Antoinette, captivated by the rare combination of perfections in this Swedish officer, could not help but love him, and that her looks, her words even, had been so encouraging that the comte had determined to confess to her, that she alone, for a long time, filled his thoughts with a love which doubtless would cause his death, since it was to be, alas! hopeless.

The colonel (added the version which I quote) was possessed of too many perfections to be

doomed to the death of unsuccessful lovers; the Queen responded to his love with that warmth of affection which she knew not how to conceal; a note, brought to Monsieur de Fersen by one called *d'Esclaux*, opened to him the secret doors of the Petit-Trianon, and then was seen repeated for the comte all the imprudence shown by Her Majesty at the time of the Duc de Lauzun's favor.

In reporting this episode in the life of Marie-Antoinette, I always strive to assure that nothing took place between her and Monsieur de Fersen which could affect the honor of Her Majesty.

To conclude with this Swedish wooer, as well as to guide opinion through conjectures, I must say that in 1791 and when almost all the French nobility had abandoned the throne of the children of Saint-Louis, Fersen was at the Tuileries to take charge of the stealthy departure of the Royal Family, in the night of the 20th and 21st of June. The comte disguised as a coachman, directed the illustrious fugitives through the dark capital towards the barrière de Clichy; and it was not without a formal order of the King that this Swede renounced forming part of the feeble escort which accompanied the sovereign, his wife and his children. . . .

CHAPTER XVI

The Meeting of Notables, the unfortunate notion of an honest monarch, who was not acquainted with the weakness of his government nor the power of a nation, came in time to divert public attention from the sad affair with which the Queen's name had been connected for so long a time. But nothing was less calculated than this meeting to dispel the memory of the equivocal explanations which had been given during the debates, on the non-interference of the Queen in that long succession of intrigues.

The first meeting of notables was set for the 29th of January, 1787, and as early as the 11th, jokes began to circulate regarding this great governmental measure which, better managed, might have prevented the Revolution. On that day, there was found posted on Controller-General de Calonne's door, a placard worded as follows, which, passing that way, I copied with my pencil:

"You are hereby notified that M. le Contrôleur-General has organized a new company of come-

dians which will begin to play at Versailles, before the court, on Monday the 29th of this month. The first play will be, *Les Fausses Confidences*, and the second, *Le consentement forcé*. These will be followed by an allegorical pantomime-ballet, composed by Monsieur de Calonne, and entitled, *Le Tonneau des Danaïdes*."

The Notables were spoken of with interest, even with enthusiasm, for from eight to ten days; before the end of the fortnight their vogue was dead and was replaced by that of a vender of roasted chestnuts who exercised his industry in a manner much more lively than the meetings of the French Notables. This vender, established at the Palais-Royal, was dressed in a sort of a black frock, resembling to some extent those of the Franciscans; in this strange guise, he gravely roasted and distributed his chestnuts. He arose on his smoky stand, and delivered this speech, too witty a parody of what was actually going on at Versailles, not to have been prompted to him:

"Gentlemen: I have taken the liberty of assembling you here to present you my respects, ask you the continuation of your favors, and advise you that I have further perfected my talent, of which you have been kind enough to think well. If I

were taxed with temerity for daring to open my mouth before all these orators by which I am surrounded, who occupy chairs (professorships) of the lyceum, of the museum, of the societies organized in the divers parts of this palace, I would reply, that though inferior as to eloquence, I do not give in to them on the side of zeal: they speak, and I act; they beat the air with vain sounds, and I give realities; they caress the ear with harmonious sentences and I tickle the palate with the taste of an exquisite fruit; in short, they adorn the mind, and I strengthen the body.

“Yes, gentlemen, I present to you a wholesome, substantial, succulent and not expensive food. If like the manna of the desert, it does not take all tastes, it has at least one of which one never tires: it suffices to the sustenance of entire peoples, who feast on it all the year around.

“To please all tastes, gentlemen, and to be able the longer to satisfy your wishes, I have increased, extended my connections; besides chestnuts from Limousin and la Marche, I have some from Luciennes, Lyons and le Luc.

“But while I speak, gentlemen, there they are crackling in the pan; they have reached the point

of excellence; approach, taste, open your pockets and your purses.”

That evening, in the streets in the neighborhood of the Palais-Royal, the speech delivered by Monsieur de Calonne at the opening of the Assembly of Notables and the speech of the chestnut-vender were being hawked; the latter sold much better than the former; apparently people had more confidence in the wares of the Lyonnaise tradesman than in those of the controller-general.

The chronological order of my revelations brings here the account of an event which grieved me very much. Since Mademoiselle Bertin had shared with Boislard the department of fashions, the large supplies, as I have said elsewhere, had been made by this tradesman, whose credit, if not his finances, had allowed of his extending his business in a manner which Mademoiselle Bertin had found impossible, owing to expenditures and a display much beyond her means. Besides, my friend, a rather bad reckoner, often deceived herself on the importance of her profits, and took a large sale for a paying one, without considering sufficiently the expenses occasioned by her establishment, her frequent trips to Versailles, and all the sacrifices

which her zeal for the Queen's service imposed on her.

However that may be, Marie-Antoinette's milliner, to crown her misfortunes, supplanted by Mademoiselle Picot, with many of the titled ladies, found herself compelled, in 1787, to become bankrupt with debts of no less than two millions. I am obliged to repeat it, the constant attendance of Mademoiselle Bertin on the Queen, the prolonged stays which she often made at Versailles, more than anything else jeopardized her interests, compelling her to leave her business in the hands of young women, either too frivolous or too busy with their love affairs to properly attend to their duties. I therefore wish that I were not forced to add that when Mademoiselle Rose, a few days after her calamity, presented herself at the palace to work with Her Majesty, admission was refused her. . . .

It was proven to me at that time that two hundred thousand francs would again have set Mademoiselle Bertin afloat; six months before, I should have been in a position to lend them to her, and I should have done so with all my heart, because I had a great liking for this traveling companion of my fortune; but I had just invested all

my capital in an enterprise in which, alas! I was not to gain. His Royal Highness Monsieur, a great lover of Italian music, had had the desire for a long time to have, in Paris, a theater devoted specially to performers from Italy. His Majesty had permitted him to grant the privilege to open a theater; but it was necessary to build, and His Royal Highness did not wish to furnish the required funds for such a construction.

I was foolish enough to take a fancy to this project, believing that I had a magnificent speculation in hand. I caused to be built, almost entirely at my expense, the theater known as that of *Monsieur*, situated in the rue Feydeau. . . .

I had therefore the regret of being unable to assist Mademoiselle Bertin in her calamity. . . . The Queen was generally blamed for having abandoned, in this circumstance, a person attached to her service for seventeen years; and specially for having added to the discredit which was naturally to follow, by dismissing her.

Marie-Antoinette, so good, so generous, was apparently badly advised at that time; Madame la Duchesse would not have allowed her to commit this fault, for it was one.

But Madame Jules de Polignac saw, for some

years past, her favor with the Queen decline. Had the duchesse, governess of the children of France, been guilty, as it is said, of tardily advising the Queen of an ailment of the Duc de Normandie? or else had she complained bitterly, as it was also rumored, of the extraordinary favor obtained, in the intimate life of the Petit-Trianon, by Mesdemoiselles Montansier, d'Ossun, d'Orvat, and even the Comtesse de la Motte? I myself believe, that neither one of these was the real reason. . . .

In the meantime the Notables, though much ridiculed and criticized, nevertheless brought up in their meeting great reform projects, and the court, who foresaw them, did not wait for them to go into effect, but caused divers grievances to be redressed. The Queen herself made changes with regard to gambling. Marie-Antoinette declared that in her circle no more than twelve francs should be played at backgammon, and four *louis* a card at *lotos*. MM. de Belzunce, de Vaudreuil and de Talmont, taking this reform in the light of a joke, continued to play their former stakes; all three were exiled to their regiments by the King.

The Parisians busied themselves a little with

politics in 1787, but they continued to be interested in the recitals of scandal.

Then they again returned to the Assembly of Notables, and were much amused at the caricatures to which its labors gave rise. On one of these, which was soon seized by the lieutenant of police, could be seen a rich farmer at the table; but nothing as yet was served before him. His servant, a large knife in hand, seemed ready to lay violent hands on a multitude of animals of three species, pigs, turkey-cocks and sheep. Below, the servant was made to say: "The owner would have the right to slaughter you without saying a word; but he is kind enough to allow you to choose the sauce with which you are to be eaten."

In the midst of all the intrigues, more or less lampooned, more or less caricatured, to which the Assembly of Notables had given rise, the Queen had succeeded in having called to the helm of the government Monseigneur de Brienne, archbishop of Toulouse, who was devoted to her. His Grace was not long in offering to the sovereign the tribute of gratitude which he owed her, for this high favor; in a speech at the close of the Assembly of Notables, delivered on the 25th of May, Monseigneur de Brienne announced that the

Queen had already ordered great reforms in her household, and that she daily gave orders to those in charge of her expenses to reduce them as much as they could, even though they had to retrench on necessities. The day following the closing meeting, Her Majesty was holding a copy of the speech of the obliging archbishop when I entered her apartment; she had a worried expression on her brow. "Monsieur de Toulouse said too much in speaking of the economies made on my necessities," exclaimed Her Majesty in a tone of marked ill-humor; "with a man like Necker,³⁴ whom he will not fail to give us, I shall soon be compelled to have the controller's permission in order to buy chemises."

When the Queen was violently agitated, she was not choice in her expressions. I can guarantee the literal accuracy of her speech. What particularly annoyed Marie-Antoinette in the excess of zeal shown by Monseigneur de Brienne in proclaiming her projects of economy, was that His Grace had provoked this sharp sentence in the speech of Monsieur Nicolai, the head president: "We must congratulate the Queen for showing herself *to-day* such as should be the august wife of the King and the mother of the Dauphin."

This congratulation, addressed to the present, was a grave charge against the past. As to the future, it did not as yet seem quite clear that Her Majesty would submit to the severe reforms which she had caused to be promised to the Assembly of Notables. At the time that these worthy deliberators were returning home, Marie-Antoinette was approving the plans of a fête which she was to give at Fontainebleau and which alone was to cost from five to six hundred thousand francs.

However, the Queen was diverted from that project by an event which appeared to arouse in her the greatest anxiety. For some days past Her Majesty had been sleeping at the Petit-Trianon, where I betook myself daily to dress her hair. One morning I found her about to enter her carriage, in the greatest *négligée*, and seemingly much worried. . . . "You will not dress my hair this morning, Léonard, but wait for me at Trianon, I shall perhaps have some orders to give you in the course of the day." At these words Marie-Antoinette jumped into her carriage; the horses started at a gallop, and I hardly had time to hear one of the footmen shout to the coachman: "To Versailles."

As soon as I had entered the château, I heard

that the Comtesse de La Motte, held at la Salpêtrière, had escaped during the preceding night. The rumor was circulated that the escape had taken place with the King's sanction, and that a gray-nun, attached to the establishment, had assisted in it, without however telling her that it was the desire of the government that she should leave the Kingdom, for it seemed quite natural to think that she did not intend to remain. . . .

The disclosures made to me at the Petit-Trianon regarding this event, apprised me that if the escape of Madame de La Motte had taken place with the consent of Louis XVI, the Queen did not in the least appear to second the King in the matter. Her Majesty, still in bed when one of her women had informed her of the news, had hurriedly jumped out of her bed, exclaiming: "Quick! let me be dressed, and see that an equerry leaves this minute, this second, to notify Madame de Lamballe that I shall be with her in a quarter of an hour. . . ."

On Her Majesty's return, it became known that the lady superintendent had left for London a half hour after the august visit she had just received, and it was already known that Madame de La Motte was making her way towards England.

The suppositions on the coincidence of these two trips were different as to details; but people were agreed in believing that Madame la Princesse de Lamballe was commanded to enter into negotiations with the fugitive, with regard to certain circumstances, of which Her Majesty feared the revelation abroad. . . .

Marie-Antoinette, after her friend's departure for England, appeared to have recovered her peace of mind, which had been so disturbed in the morning. But, at the end of a week, she evidently relapsed into the anxiety which had possessed her before Madame de Lamballe went away. Her Majesty received no one and locked herself up almost all day, alone, in her apartment, and several times I thought I noticed that she had wept.

One morning, when I had found the Queen more agitated than usual, I heard her murmur, quite distinctly, this broken sentence:

"Attachment, doubtless. . . . I cannot doubt it . . . a thousand proofs. . . . But no intelligence . . . a silly frankness. . . . What I needed was some prudent person, cunning even. . . . Ah! poor duchesse. . . . I have wronged her. . . . I shall have to make amends. . . ."

Then suddenly raising her voice, Her Majesty said to me:

“Léonard, are you man enough to go to London? . . .”

“To London and anywhere, madame, for Your Majesty’s service. . . .”

“I know it. . . . Well! I wish to intrust you with a mission . . . a delicate one, do you understand, Léonard? . . .”

“Your Majesty may be pleased to recall that I know how to conduct affairs with some ability. . . .”

“I am going to think over the one for which I shall require a clever person. . . . Be ready to start off. . . .” And the Queen, suddenly correcting herself: “But no; it is impossible . . . susceptibilities would be aroused . . . she would feel humiliated . . . there would be endless jeremiads. . . . You will not go . . . I am sorry . . . let us drop the subject.”

“I am much grieved to be unable to serve Your Majesty on this occasion.”

I had guessed that the Queen had at first intended to send me to London, to assist Madame de Lamballe in the secret mission with which she had been intrusted, but after that Her Majesty

had thought that the lady superintendent would consider herself humiliated by the adjunction of a common hairdresser. . . . Where is the grand lord or lady who does not believe that he or she has received all qualities together with an illustrious origin? Is it not well known that the Creator has select minds for the mighty of the earth?

Nevertheless, Madame la Princesse de Lamballe returned from London without having succeeded in the negotiations which she had gone to attempt. This failure later necessitated the Duchesse de Polignac's trip to England, which was not much more successful. As long as the absence of the lady superintendent lasted, I strove to enliven the Queen a little, by telling her the rumors of the city and the curious anecdotes which I had heard.

While the Queen, lying comfortably on her bed at Trianon, was resting from the fatigues of a ball which had ended at the first rays of dawn, the King was taking his place in a less pleasant manner on his Bed of Justice of the 6th of August: "It does not behoove my Parliament," said His Majesty at that solemn meeting, "to doubt my power, no more than *that which I have*

intrusted to it. . . . It is always with regret that I decide to make use of my full authority, and turn aside from the ordinary forms; but my Parliament compels me to do so to-day, and the welfare of the state, which is the first of laws, makes it my duty. . . ." This was, it must be admitted, rather a rude preamble to pass two acts as hard to swallow as were the *Stamp act* and *Land tax*. Monsieur the keeper of the seals Lamoignon, by a speech hard and flat, contributed towards the dissatisfaction of *Messieurs*; and their indignation reached its height when the King, having risen to withdraw, said: "You have just heard my wishes; I expect you to act accordingly." *Messieurs*, called from elsewhere to Versailles for the session of the Bed of Justice, while the King, according to the ways and customs of the monarchy, was for that solemn occasion to *convey himself into the midst* of his Parliament, saw in this unusual measure a lack of consideration which hurt their feelings, specially when it was proven to them that the court had made it a point to fill the hall only with the chambermaids of the Queen and of the Princesses.

In spite of these harsh forms, MM. d'Aligre and Séguier moved for the registry of the decrees,

but with reservations, from which it could at once be predicted that the registry would not take place.

In truth, the next day, the 7th, during a meeting which lasted eleven hours, the Parliament protested against all that had occurred at the Bed of Justice. The following passage was noted in the resolution passed by *Messieurs* on this occasion: "The said Lord King is aware that the *constitutional principle* of the French monarchy is that taxation be consented to by those who have to bear it; that it is not in the heart of a gracious king to alter this principle; it is a part of the laws of the state, which insure authority and guarantee obedience."

Such was the real starting point of the French Revolution; for, although the session of the Bed of Justice had seemed to indicate a resolution taken by the court, the registry on the authority of the decrees, at the *Cour des aides* and at the Chamber of Accounts, did not take place, as was the usual practice in case of refusal on the part of the Parliament; Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois then declined to have recourse, in the King's name, to that extreme measure.

Now things having remained *in statu quo*, the resolution of the Parliament adverse to the session

of the Bed of Justice not having been reversed by the court, the minutes of the Bed of Justice remaining still without promulgation, it was evident that the decrees were powerless, and the opposition of Messieurs was preponderant. Accordingly, the authority of the throne was in jeopardy; accordingly, the constitutional right of the nation prevailed. . . . The revolution was manifesting itself in the fundamental institutions of the state.

During this excitement, the Queen was practically imprisoned at Trianon, from which she dared not come out. The people were much wrought up against this princess, whom the mischief-makers reported as having contributed more than any one else to the depredation of the finances. The hatred which the Parisian had for Her Majesty at that time declared itself with such violence that the lieutenant of police thought it well to warn the Minister of Paris that he did not consider it prudent that the Queen should show herself in that capital. This minister not daring to transmit this warning to Marie-Antoinette, gave an account of it to the King, who having immediately betaken himself to his august wife's apartment, said to her without preamble:

“Madame, I forbid you to go to Paris until further order.”

To these signs of fear, which more than revealed the terror of the court, others no less positive were added. Until then, the economies recommended by the Notables had been the subject of jests among the princes; but on the 13th of August, that is to say, at the time when the most energetic resistance of the Parliament was taking place, the King ordered that his regulations of the 9th August, regarding the economies to be made in the expenses of the crown, be published and posted in his palace. . . .

In spite of these promises, popular excitement was such, that virulent placards were posted in Paris, in Versailles and on the trees of the road leading to the royal residence. Insults were even placarded in the Palais-de-Justice, during the meetings; while the crowd filled the *Galerie*, the *Grande Salle* and all parts of this vast edifice; posters appeared as if by magic; during one single sitting of the Parliament as many as ten were seen; they were specially directed against the Queen.

Her Majesty was driven to despair at being exposed to the animadversion of the people; she began to see that if better advised, she would have

abstained from the balls and fêtes which, of late, had made a striking contrast to the financial exigencies necessitated by the distress of the state. Since the Bed of Justice, all pleasure had ceased at the Petit-Trianon; the Queen retired there with her intimate circle, and even deprived herself of the performances of the *Bouffons*, which Her Majesty enjoyed very much. As to the King, constantly locked in his study, he was wrapped in profound sorrow, and more than once, during the parliamentary crisis, was found weeping.

But this had to end; the Parliament, at its session of the 13th of August, had emphatically refused to register the decrees; a *coup d'état* alone could give satisfaction to the King for the disobedience of Messieurs; they were exiled to Troyes by *lettres de cachet* sent during the night of the 13th to the 14th, and the Chamber of Accounts and the *Cour des aides*, were again turned to for the registry, the King's two brothers presenting the appeal. Monsieur le Comte d'Artois had declared, that in case of any trouble with those limbs of the law, with whom, he said, it was always necessary to dispute, six francs worth of rope be purchased with which to hang them; but Monsieur de Malesherbes³⁵ objected that after

having hung the Sovereign Courts, it would be necessary to hang the nation, and that this would certainly not be a very easy matter.

Since the Queen saw herself a prey to the daily insults of the Parisians, she had been living very privately at the Petit-Trianon, which was no longer a place of enjoyment, but a kind of hermitage, where Her Majesty yielded to sorrow, reflected and often wept. It is probable that Marie-Antoinette, already very unhappy at what was going on in France with regard to her, trembled that the winds of the north might blow towards her other accusations, new calumnies. Already Calonne, in a justificative document from Holland, where this disgraced minister had withdrawn, had just insinuated that he alone was not responsible for a deficit of a milliard, claiming that the names of the Polignacs, the Coignys, the Dillons, the Bezenval, and of many others written in the red book opposite rather round sums, could lead any one to guess how, and by whose orders, the funds of the state had been squandered.

The Queen, fearing that another document, announced for some time past, would come from England, sent Madame la Duchesse de Polignac, with whom Her Majesty was reconciled. A cer-

tain number of gentlemen, devoted favorites of Trianon, accompanied this favorite, and all seemed to be making a pleasure trip to the British Isles. People have generally been mistaken as to the aim of this voyage: it was untrue that Madame de La Motte had in her possession letters which could have compromised the Queen; it was no less untrue that the duchesse had by turns made use of entreaties, caresses, threats, finally violence to secure this correspondence. . . .

This evidence of an alleged intrigue between the Queen and the Cardinal de Rohan has never existed except in the minds of that princess' enemies. But in the perplexing position in which she was in 1788, she was right to fear the publication of the announced documents; at that time all the slanders circulated against Marie-Antoinette would have exercised as much power on prejudiced minds as the truth could have done. Madame de Polignac's mission was therefore limited to securing from the intriguing fugitive the promise to abstain from circulating the accusing romance of which she meditated the publication. The duchesse was successful, at least for the moment. But later the documents appeared.

During the London negotiations, the Queen

was, as I have said, extremely sad; vainly I did my best to amuse Her Majesty, hardly could I bring a smile to her pale lips, with the aid of numerous jests and anecdotes which formerly would have made her laugh heartily.

So long as the court had to dispute only with Assemblies of Notables and Parliaments, it hoped that a *nous le voulons*, strengthened if need be by a few companies of French guards, and Swiss guards, would finally return everything to order, that is to say, into passive obedience. But towards the end of the year 1787, certain deliberating societies had been organized, without any other investiture than that of opinion, and which were called *clubs*. There were several specially at the Palais-Royal, and these were not the ones which the court feared the least, their serene neighborhood rendering them, it was said, more dangerous than all the others. As evidence of that danger, I quote a letter which these same clubs addressed to the Baron de Breteuil, who had ordered that they be closed.

“Monsieur le Baron, a short letter from Monsieur de Crosne, lieutenant-general of police, informs us that the King’s intention is that newspapers be no longer read around a circular table;

and this has sufficed to upset the table and disperse the readers. This short letter, Monsieur le Baron, is a great mistake: for it warns us that in the salons as well as in the cottages, the barons and the peasants are no longer anything, and the only ones free, in France, are the King and his council.

“If you and your colleagues served the King and the nation well, Monsieur le Baron, what would you have to fear from the meeting of a few honest people who would prefer to talk of your talents and virtues, than of your deplorable actions? But if you pretend to always govern us with phrases from the Koran, it is not sufficient to prohibit clubs; you must, without delay, cast into the Bastille all the French who know how to read, burn the books, the printing-houses, and set about among yourselves to a new division of the land; you will be its masters, and we its tillers.

“The depredations and the impudence of Monsieur de Calonne have drawn a first cry of indignation from the nation; become real oppressors to-day, and we shall be free to-morrow. . . .”

Was ever court, treading towards the open abyss of revolutions, better warned? But of what power are warnings against fatality!

CHAPTER XVII

The inextricable embarrassment in which the court was plunged could not be settled by the ordinary means which were at its disposal; it was no longer a question of untangling, it was evident that cutting was necessary; the States-general were convened; the States-general, that sheet anchor of sovereigns who do not know which way to turn. They had not been convened since the minority of Louis XIII.

While the members of the States-general were proceeding towards Paris, the Duchesse de Polignac was returning from London, having obtained the satisfaction which she had gone to seek there, that is to say the suppression of the *Mémoires dits justificatifs*, which the Comtesse de La Motte intended to publish at that time, and which, I repeat it, hardly contained anything but slanders. Every one could understand that at that moment Her Majesty should seek to diminish as much as possible the mass of grievances, real or imaginary, which had been lavishly and maliciously imputed

to her; and it was, on the part of the creatures who were about her, a great blunder to attach another motive than the real one, to the favorite's trip. . . .

Under the sway of the passions which agitated the public in 1788, one half, perhaps, of the French believed this mass of atrocious calumnies and accepted them without examination, on the authority of the double voyage made to England by Marie-Antoinette's two favorites. . . .

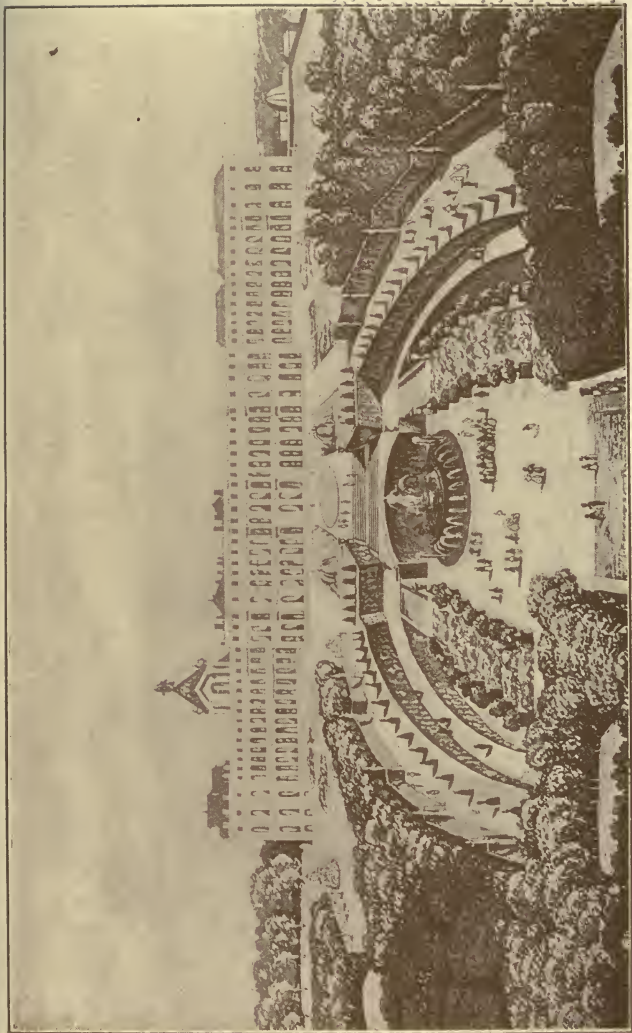
It was in the midst of all the troubles which the monarchy had allowed to combine against it, in the midst of all the bitterness with which the King and Queen were filled, that the terrible winter of 1788-1789 set in, as if to complete the calamities accumulated on our unhappy country.

The winter of 1789 put the finishing touch to the development of the revolutionary principles which, for two years, had been fermenting in all heads; add misery to any political oppression, and you will soon have a revolution. That which perhaps contributed a great deal to the breaking out of ours, was the luxury which the nobles displayed at the very time when the people were overwhelmed with calamities, under the influence of the cold gone down to seventeen degrees. All

things are subjects of amusement for the rich; the court of France became a Northern court, it adopted the Russian and Polish customs. Magnificent sleighs glided in streets through which superb carriages could no longer pass; our mighty lords, our dames, wrapped in immense fur-lined velvet cloaks ornamented with gold braid, seemed to insult the shivering nakedness of the poor.

On those drives, where all magnificence seemed to glide on the icy ground, no more footmen in livery heavy with braid, no more jockeys *à l'anglaise*, no more runners; all have become Cossacks or Moujiks. The fad went so far as to fasten a long Russian false-beard to the chin of the drivers of sleighs. . . .

During that hard season, which was called the great winter, Paris presented the most singular and novel aspect. These sleighs in the form of dragons, of sirens, of hippogriffs, the rich trappings of the horses which drew them, the silvery tinkling of the bells with which the teams were covered, the flash-like rapidity with which all these passed by, presented a picture as lively as it was picturesque, which delighted the eye of the rich beholder, but which added to the irritation of the suffering masses.



The Palace of Versailles

70 1111
ALBERTA

The Queen was wise enough not to adopt what she termed the Polish folly, and the King was grateful for this.

The moments of the royal family were devoted to pious excursions in the environs of Versailles; the King and Madame Elisabeth daily left the palace on foot in the morning, and, followed by a small number of gentlemen and ladies attached to their service, visited the huts to distribute the gold of charity. The detractors of this illustrious family have seen in these acts only an envious emulation of the House of d'Orléans. It is true that at this time, the d'Orléans actively assisted the poor of the capital; but all those who knew Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette, know that their bounty did not require stimulation.

I do not mean to belittle the merit of the charitable acts done at that time by the house of Orléans, but if, while judging good deeds, it is permissible to see the *arrière-pensée* of the motives which prompts them, Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans could be suspected of obeying something of the sort. In truth, it was to the great advantage of his fame that this prince, at one time exiled on account of his patriotic views, returned among the

Parisians to carry out the popular sentiment which he had formerly expressed in principle.

This growth of popularity bore its fruits in the spring of the year 1789. The groups, which as early as the preceding year had formed themselves in the garden of the Palais-Royal, reappeared there more compact, and, I must confess, more animated. In 1788, they had been content with murmuring complaints against the court, in 1789, orators were to be found there, speeches were made; the garden of the Palais-Royal became a club, a center of hostile opposition, where the acts of the King and Queen were criticized to the verge of insult.

The States-general had not yet been assembled, and the legislators of the Palais-Royal boldly set forth the conditions which that great assembly was to restore. There was not the least hesitation in the advice expressed by the speakers, not the slightest doubt as to their excellence; the perfumer spoke of legislation and finance with all the assurance of a statesman, the pastry-cook handled diplomacy with all the ease with which he handled his paste, and armies of a hundred thousand men weighed no more in the hand of the grocer than a half ounce of pepper.

The Queen had given me orders to watch these tumultuous gatherings, where the garden chairs became as many speakers' stands, and I gave an account of what was going on to Her Majesty, disguising with my jests, as much as possible, the grave conditions which I foresaw would grow out of all this.

I must no longer neglect to say that at the time the Revolution broke out, a total change had come, not only over the habits of the Queen, but also in her character and humor. . . . At times deep sighs escaped Her Majesty, sighs full of painful recollections and even of regrets. . . . I easily guessed these innermost impressions by the Queen's habitual sadness, by the broken words murmured between her lips; she often repeated: "Ah! if I had known . . . if I began my life anew! . . . how thoughtless is youth! . . ." Then, as if to escape from this internal torture, Marie-Antoinette would say to me: "Léonard, tell me some story, some anecdote." And her eyes seemed to add: "That I may be rid of my gloomy thoughts."

CHAPTER XVIII

The States-general had been convened on the advice of all the wise men who were sincerely devoted to the monarchy, but in realizing the necessity of this great step, they had forgotten but one thing: that was to take into consideration the development of public opinion. One hundred and seventy-five years had elapsed since the last meeting of the States-general; during this long period of time the feudal pretensions shown again under Louis XIII, and whose strain had been feared under the following reigns, had given place to other ideas, to other influences. The nation, now enlightened, weighed not only with all its physical strength, but with all its moral power, on the side of the political scale, opposed to that which the nobility loaded down with titles, privileges, and gratuitous prerogatives. And this in particular was what the councilors of the throne had considered too superficially. Out of twelve hundred deputies on the way to Versailles at the call of the sovereign, six hundred represented the *Tiers-Etat*:

six hundred men belonging to the lower magistracy, to the bar, to all the professions which necessitated knowledge and exercised the art of oratory. . . . The chances of discussion, whatever their object, were not to be for the *privileged*. . . . It looked as though Louis XVI wished to throw himself, without reserve, into the arms of his people. Unfortunately it was nothing of the sort.

All the members of the immense deputation were gathered near the court in the last days of April; the opening of the Assembly continued set for the 5th of May. The King desired that this great national solemnity should be announced by imposing demonstrations; display has always been one of the necessities of monarchies. His Majesty decided that there should be, on the 3d of May, at Versailles, a procession, like the one of the *cordons bleus*, and that all the princes and the princesses should follow on foot, in their apparel of the Beds of Justice.

The Queen, who was to wear a state gown, sent for me on the morning of the 3d. I found Her Majesty very pale; she told me that she was very ill and that this ceremony annoyed her terribly.

“Ah! Léonard, I sometimes have sad thoughts followed by gloomy presentiments! . . .”

“Banish such thoughts, madame, the clouds will pass away and fair weather return.”

“I doubt it,” said the Queen shaking her head . . . “fair weather on the throne is forgetfulness or *l'insouciance* of all the cares which cruelly pay for sovereign grandeur . . . as soon as one feels them, it is no longer possible to get rid of them. . . .

Come, dress my hair, Léonard; I must go like an actress, exhibit myself to a public that may hiss me.”

When the queen was dressed, the change in her struck me; she seemed sadly changed not only in features, but in her entire person. I noticed that Her Majesty's bosom was sunken, her arms had become thin; she complained of extreme weakness that morning. Mesdames de Lamballe and de Polignac joined me and Madame Campan in begging Her Majesty not to take part in the procession of the States-general; the lady superintendent offered to see the King at once and obtain from him consent that the Queen's presence be dispensed with at that ceremony.

“You do not know what you are about to solicit,” replied Marie-Antoinette dreamily, “It is now too late to countermand the procession, and

not to take part in it would be for me a State crime. There are times, you see, when sovereigns cannot be ill, and this is my case this morning. . . . For a long time I only saw in the scepter a rose-bush stem covered with flowers; now the winter of our reign is beginning, the roses are falling off, the thorns appear and make themselves felt.”

This outburst of somewhat romantic sentiment was, if my memory serves me faithfully, the first gush of that German melancholy which grief from that time brought forth from the Queen's character, and the sad impressions of which produce themselves more and more frequently as time passes. It is in truth a well known fact to all those who approached Marie-Antoinette since the end of the year 1788, that they could not notice in her a single trait of that frivolity of which she had been reproached in the past; not a single sign of those tastes which too much imprudence had, unfortunately, revealed to the world. . . . All the affections of Her Majesty become profound and touching; the tender solicitude of a wife and mother occupy all the spare moments of a sovereign which nothing heretofore could fix. . . . Was this moral metamorphosis a happy one? Did it serve the interests of the crown, by substituting,

in the influence which the Queen continued to have over the feeble Louis XVI, the power of a belated reason to that of caprice and frivolity? . . . A negative answer is but too well agreed upon to-day. . . . At the beginning of his reign, the condescension of the King towards Marie-Antoinette consisted in letting her have her way; at the end of that same reign that good prince made the greater mistake of acting through the suggestions which he received from her. It must be added that the Queen never had in mind to betray the country; but she had conceived the idea to stop the chariot of the Revolution, and unfortunately this reflection, this experience, born but late of her mistakes and of the misfortunes it had brought her, were too feeble resources to control the events which were dragging the monarchy with them. If, recognizing at last the insufficiency of her power and the awkward weakness of her agents, Marie-Antoinette thought of the assistance of foreign armies, it was through an error of the mind, not through the inspiration of a hating heart. The judgment of that princess in political matters had formed itself too late for it to calculate the consequences of such an act. She saw in the entry into France of the Austrian and Prussian armies

only that of a watch-patrol on a large scale. "The sovereigns," she said to herself, "will do police duty here, they will put everything to rights and then will return home." Those were the Queen's ideas in 1790, 1791 and 1792. . . . This digression has led me away from the procession of the States-general: I return to it. X

† Although truly indisposed, the Queen persisted in her wish to take part in the ceremony, leaning on the arm of the Princesse de Lamballe and on that of the Duchesse de Polignac. Her Majesty betook herself to the Galerie de Diane, where the King, the princes and the princesses of the royal family, as also the princes and princesses of the blood, were assembling.

I shall always have before my eyes that long line of deputies, dragging in their wake, through the streets and cross-roads, this King and Queen on whom only the year before, the inhabitants of Versailles would no more have dared to gaze than on the Holy Sacrament. Never had I beheld so strange a sight: the representatives of the nobility in cloaks ornamented with gold, wearing hats in the Henri IV style, the members of the clergy in their clerical gowns; the deputies of the *Tiers-Etat* dressed as theater ushers; all those princes

awkwardly wearing the clothes of the middle-ages with the head-dress of the eighteenth century, then all those princesses, all those ladies of their suite, sweeping the dust with their long trains; the dense crowd which followed this political masquerade, astonished both in eyes and imagination by this new solemnity.

But sad my heart is in writing what I do here! As the King passed before the populace which filled the streets or the windows, a mournful silence greeted His Majesty; and worse still, violent murmurs, sometimes insulting imprecations, arose from the multitude when Marie-Antoinette appeared. . . . I did not lose sight of the unfortunate princess; I slipped through the crowd, I followed Her Majesty with an anxious eye, and I saw on her careworn features the progress of the harrowing impression which everything contributed to increase. . . . I saw her leaning on the arms of her two friends, without being able, even with that aid, to stand straight. . . .

And as an awful contrast, the public, that same public which insulted the King by its silence, the Queen by its murmurs and its imprecations, that public greeted with transports of enthusiasm the

affectionate smiles with which Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans saluted it as he passed by.

Near the middle of the rue du Réservoir, the Queen almost swooned; Mesdames de Polignac and de Lamballe supported her with difficulty; their strength was about to fail them, when two of the body guards who stood in front of the crowd perceived Her Majesty's condition, and sprang towards her. Without the assistance of their arms, to which Marie-Antoinette clung for an instant, she would have fallen. . . . The Queen of France would have been seen lying on the pavement. . . . But this weakness passed away like a flash. . . . Marie-Antoinette, straightening herself with a convulsive movement, said to the two soldiers: "It is nothing, gentlemen, return to your ranks." Then, speaking in a lower tone to her friends, she added: "Be without anxiety henceforth, courage and indignation have given me back my energy. The daughter of Marie-Thérèse will find strength to go through this horrible situation." In truth, from that moment, the Queen appeared to be fully recovered; she walked with firmness and the smile upon her lips seemed almost natural. X

CHAPTER XIX

What the wise heads of the council had not foreseen, and yet what should have been considered an infallible consequence of the meeting of the States-general, is that the deputies of the *Tiers-Etat*, forming at least one-half of the representation, saw at once the sway that such a majority would give them over the other two orders. The latter understood it also; they tried to evade it by the use of tricks. . . . But the *Tiers-Etat* in possession of the magnificent premises in which the first meeting had taken place, reasoned something as follows: "Let us constitute ourselves into a *corps délibérant*, even in the absence of the nobility and of the clergy; there will occur, we may be sure, a defection in the aristocracy: many of its members will join us, if not to support, at least to legally combat our motions; and as to the clergy, we are certain to attract all who are not members of the nobility."

After this reasoning, which future events justified, an ever memorable resolution consecrated

the sovereignty of the nation, and the chair of the president of the *National Assembly* rose to the level of the throne. . . .

When the terrible début of the national representation became known to Louis XVI, the court was at Marly, where Their Majesties were mourning their elder son, who had just died. The Queen's heart had experienced a frightful blow, but when she heard of the daring act of the representatives of the *Tiers-Etat*, she suspended her maternal grief with great power of resolution, and hastened to the King's apartment in her night robe. Louis XVI was still in bed. Informed the evening before of the attack against his crown, his face was inflamed, his eyes swollen and filled with tears. . . .

"Sire," said the Queen, "it is not by tears that you will dominate this national vulgar herd . . . it is energy that you require, and I come to set you the example."

"Well! what can I do, madame, against the deputies of the *Tiers*; is not the entire nation behind them?"

"There is a way open to you: throw yourself in the arms of your Parliaments. . . . Order the mighty of your kingdom, your nobility, to gather

around the throne; and by a good decree, which the Parliament will register, without doubt, dissolve the States-general without considering the title of *National Assembly* which they have adopted. . . .”

“Ah! madame,” said Louis XVI, sitting up in bed, “your advice seems rather good. In truth, by considering this assembly simply as a States-general, I have the right to dissolve it.”

“After all, what matters the title!” resumed the Queen excitedly: States-general or National Assembly, these people must not continue assembled against your will. . . . I have sent for the Maréchal de Broglie. . . . The troops must be called out. . . .”

“A moment, madame, let us not go so fast. . . . First of all I wish to come to an understanding with *Messieurs*. . . . For the past six weeks they pursue me with their promises of submission. . . . They vow that they will henceforth register all that I may wish.”

“Do not doubt their sincerity in those promises, sire; it is a question of their very existence; one need not be a statesman to see that: if the Assembly remains the parliaments are dead. Therefore, this very day, call *Messieurs* to your aid, they will

serve you well; you have their interests as a guarantee."

"That is so true, that d'Espresmenil,³⁶ who formerly so warmly opposed the registry of my decrees, is to-day allied with the nobility against the system of deliberation of the three orders in common. . . ."

"I should say so, sire; d'Espresmenil is first of all a member of Parliament."

"Then, madame, this is settled," said the King resolutely; "I am going to call my Parliament of Paris with the peers of my kingdom and we shall come to a decision."

I was in a neighboring room when this conversation between Their Majesties took place. I heard it without missing a word of it, and although many years have elapsed since then, I do not believe that I have changed its form to any extent.

The world knows the failure of the attempts made by the court to disperse the representatives of the nation; the tumultuous "Tennis court oath" has been converted into a brilliant *épopée*; all the echoes have repeated the reply made to the Marquis de Dreux-Brézé by a deputy who was not Mirabeau; and all the historians have told how

the martial display organized at Versailles, by the Maréchal de Broglie, compelled the Assembly to appeal to the people. I pass on to the consequences of this appeal, about which I may be able to give some novel details.

Necker had just been dismissed, I mean exiled, but quietly, for having told the King that he had nothing to fear from the masses, if he gave them guarantees of the sincerity of his popular intentions. But the people of Paris soon heard of the disgrace of its favorite; signs of revolt were manifested on the evening of the 11th of July, by the closing of the theaters. . . . I was a witness of this unfortunate measure, I hastened to Versailles to inform the Queen, who invited me to enter her bed chamber and sit near her bed to tell her about what I had seen.

“Léonard,” said Her Majesty, after I had spoken, and raising herself on her elbow, “go at once to M. de Bezenval, who must be at Versailles, and request him to come and speak to me immediately.”

“I hasten to obey, madame.”

I went to M. de Bezenval's, who was not yet abed; he at once seemed to understand the Queen's intentions, and followed me to her. . . . I had

discreetly remained at Her Majesty's door, but having noticed it, she called to me to enter. . . .

"Come, my friend," said Marie-Antoinette to the Baron, extending her hand towards him, "we need you; the time has come when our true friends must gather closely about us."

"Ah! madame," replied M. de Bezenval, taking Marie-Antoinette's hand, which he kissed, "how grateful I am to Your Majesty for having called me first among her devoted servants!"

"My choice could not hesitate. . . . You will leave at once for Paris, and you will, at break of day, take command of all the troops already assembled or who are to arrive in that capital."

"But, madame, M. le Maréchal de Broglie . . ."

"I shall tell him that you have received the orders direct from the King; leave the matter to me . . ."

"Then Your Majesty condescends to choose me. . . ."

"But if I choose you, monsieur . . . Do you not wish to do anything for me? . . . Since when does my wish appear insufficient to you? . . ."

"Ah! madame, God is my witness that nothing on earth can make me more proud and at the same time more happy than Your Majesty's confidence.

. . . But, the circumstances are great and the responsibility . . .”

“I, Monsieur le Baron,” interrupted the Queen with emotion, “have accepted a more painful one, to which you were not a stranger . . . and I did not complain. . . .”

“Pardon, a thousand pardons, O my sovereign!” exclaimed M. de Bezenval, falling on his knees at the head of the Queen’s bed. . . . Then he arose and said with cold determination: “Madame, I have only to obey you.”

And the Baron immediately left Her Majesty’s chamber, saying that within an hour he would be in Paris. I could still hear his footsteps in the neighboring room, when Marie-Antoinette ordered me to call him back: it was to tell him that the next day, early, she would write to the Prince de Lambesc, so that he would place at his disposal the regiment of Royal-Allemand, which this prince commanded. M. de Bezenval bowed and went away.

“My intention, Léonard, on this occasion, was to give you a proof of my confidence,” said the Queen with a kindly smile; “it is the just reward of the devotion you have not ceased to show me for the past nineteen years.”

“Ah! madame,” I exclaimed with rapture, “this reward is a thousand times superior to anything I may have done for Your Majesty; it is for me the price of twenty more years of zeal and of assiduous services.”

“Let us not speak of the future, Léonard,” replied Maric-Antoinette with a thoughtful air . . . “who knows how far one may go when walking on the edge of an abyss? . . . But I do not keep you any longer, your evening has been a busy one, go and take a rest. . . . Good-night, Léonard.”

I shall never forget this nocturnal conversation nor the ineffable kindness shown me by the Queen; but the Baron de Bezenval, what a difference of expression when speaking to him! It must be admitted, it was tenderness, or at least a sentiment very much akin to it.

I do not presume to write the history of the Revolution; I skip many events a thousand times described, culling those connected with my life. The terrible day of the 14th of July had just placed the scepter in the hands of the National Assembly, and the next day I heard the military bands in all the quarters of Versailles, in the courts of the château, on the terrace of the *Orangerie*, in the park. Everywhere I met body-guards in

parade dress. I could not understand this strange contrast with the frightful events which were taking place in the capital; from the neighboring heights could be seen flames devouring several of the Paris gates, while in the palace everything was dress. All the ladies of the court were clamoring for my services, even Mesdames the Aunts, whose hair I seldom dressed; I could hardly believe it.

I first hastened to the Queen, who had sent me to Paris the night before, to study the conditions, and to whom I had nothing consoling to tell. The merry mood with which Her Majesty received my report, which I had delivered sadly, seemed to me even more inexplicable than all that I had seen before reaching her apartment.

“You are surprised at my good humôr, Léonard, but be reassured, great things are in preparation. The Parliament of Paris has come back to us; the other eleven sovereign courts are going to imitate it, and we are going to have on hand the power which we have been lacking since 1786.”

“But, madame, all Paris is in arms; Your Majesty is aware that M. le Baron de Bezenval, the most zealous of the King’s servants, has been compelled to retreat towards Versailles, and ĩ

fear that the combined efforts of the court and the Parliament will be unable to stop . . .”

“Oh! but troops are coming to us from all over,” interrupted the Queen quickly; “to-morrow, this evening, perhaps, the capital may be suddenly attacked by superior forces, and at the same time we shall cause the Assembly to be removed by our faithful body-guards, assisted by the regiment of Royal-Allemand and the hussars of Berchigny. . . .”

At this moment the Baron de Bezenval entered; his features seemed careworn; with the greatest effort he affected that pleasant air, that smile of etiquette which one must always have in the presence of sovereigns.

“Is it not true, my dear Baron, that our affairs are getting on nicely?” asked the Queen, who had rushed to meet the general, and had seized his hand. . . . “I have given orders to all our ladies to make themselves even more beautiful than yesterday, to encourage, by their kind attention, the brave soldiers intended for our *coup de main*. . . . Even Madame has promised me to be pretty.”

“Madame,” said the Baron gravely, “has the prince, her husband, promised you to be sincere?”

Marie-Antoinette, thoughtless in her hopes as she had formerly been in her actions, had flattered herself of the success of a plan of anti-revolution drawn up by some superficial minds; but Bezenval did not for a moment hope that the court could gather together a sufficient number of partisans to enable it to dominate a popular movement seconded by the National Representatives, and which was already casting off its appearance of a rebellion for that of a revolution. . . . The Baron took no share of the cajoleries with which the ladies of the court overwhelmed the soldiers by whom the château was surrounded. He stayed away from the almost sacrilegious dances which took place on the terrace of the Château, while the feet of the Parisians were slipping in the blood of Delaunay, Flesselles and Losme-Solbray. This general had been an eyewitness of the uprising of the 14th of July; he had found himself face to face with it, he had heard it grumble even in the ranks which he commanded against it. . . . He therefore saw clearly the emptiness of the court's hopes, although he was not aware that an honest man, Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, had demonstrated its danger to Louis XVI during the night just past.

Yet, at the very moment when the swarm of graces, of which Madame Jules de Polignac was the leader, was dancing with the soldiers and officers, Louis XVI, in frock coat, his hair un-combed, his face blanched by insomnia, was entering the Queen's apartments to confer with her. M. de Bezenval had left it for some time, and Marie-Antoinette, whose hair I was about to dress, was requesting me with a laugh to make her very beautiful. The King, who did not recognize me at first on account of his short-sight, looked at me with blinking eyes and with a sort of anxiety.

"It is Léonard," said the Queen to him. . . .

"Ah! good. . . . I can then speak in his presence. . . . He is with us. . . ."

I bowed respectfully.

"Madame, we must change our plans; we must temporize with those people; we are not now strong enough to master them."

"Who told you that, sire?"

"A man whom I know to be sincerely attached to the monarchy and to my person."

"But who is he, I pray; who is he?" exclaimed the Queen, stamping her foot in a manner which showed her impatience.

"It is the Duc de La Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, who sought me out during the night and gave me a true picture . . . a true one, do you hear, madame, of what is going on in Paris?"

"Your Majesty knows that La Rochefoucauld is a *patriot*."

"Well! madame," said the King roughly, "I wish to God that I had listened to the advice of those *patriots*; I would not now be exposed to receiving lessons from them."

"Well! what did that duc tell you?" asked the Queen in much the same tone.

"Confident of his loyalty, I asked him what we should do in the critical position in which we are; this is what he answered me: 'Sire, my opinion is that Your Majesty, so as to quiet the uneasiness, should act in such a manner as to dispel suspicion, by sending away the troops, specially the foreign ones. You must then hasten to give back to the people the man whose dismissal is the immediate cause of all this.' "

"Ah! I see," exclaimed Marie-Antoinette, "M. de Liancourt quite naturally proposes to you to give back the power to the Genevese Necker, thus authorizing the two *beaux esprits*³⁷ of his house-

hold, his wife and daughter, to insult me in their triumph."

"That is not the question, madame; it is only suggested that I reinstate Necker to his place of controller-general, and that in fact is the only thing to do for that National Assembly, if we do not wish the state coffers to continue empty."

"What else, monsieur?"

"M. de La Rochefoucauld added: 'Move now with a revolution badly begun, and which would not have gone down into the streets, if, instead of running foul of it when it existed only in principle, your Ministers had taken it by the hand and led it to the very bosom of the Assembly of the States-general. It was then still in your power, sire, to be the arbiter of this revolution, when ill advice did its utmost to convert you into its enemy. . . . I beg you, sire, in the name of your own safety, stop in this wrong road; appear to-morrow at the National Assembly, alone, with your straightforwardness, with the purity of intentions that has always characterized Your Majesty, when you have followed only the inspirations of your heart. . . .' That, madame, is what M. de La Rochefoucauld said to me."

“And what use do you expect to make of that beautiful advice? . . .” asked Marie-Antoinette ironically.

“I wish to carry it out, at least for the present.”

“And so you surrender the monarchy to rebels!” exclaimed the Queen. . . .” Then escaping from my hands, she rose with petulance and began to walk excitedly about her room, her hair loose and hanging in long curls about her neck, which, combined with the flash of her eyes gave Her Majesty a terrible expression.

“Well,” continued Louis XVI, “what project, what plan, not deceptive illusions, do you offer me to replace that of La Rochefoucauld! for when one wishes to oppose a revolution, it does not suffice to listen to blind animosity . . . there are required, not only troops to combat it, but principles to quiet it.”

Here the Queen, in a diffuse and disconnected speech, explained the plan of removal of the National Assembly, the march of the army against the population of Paris, the efficacious assistance of the Parliament and all that vague lucubration of dreams with which the courtiers tried to delude Their Majesties. . . . This was all that Marie-

Antoinette was able to oppose to the wise counsels of La Rochefoucauld.

The King shrugged his shoulders, arose and left the room without saying a word.

That same evening the Queen heard that Louis XVI had promised.

CHAPTER XX

The reconciliation between the throne and the French people could have been positive on the 15th of July, if Louis XVI had continued in the sincerity which no doubt guided him, that day, to the presence of the National Assembly; unfortunately he allowed himself to be led to trick this same revolution, and he was the most awkward of men at correcting political fortune.

But what is hard to understand is that Louis XVI, whose judgment was honest, whose heart was pure, and who had had no reason to repent of his profession of faith of the 15th of July, could have allowed himself to be deluded with the hope of again seizing absolute authority, behind such bulwark of institution such as the abolition of rights, titles, prerogatives and privileges, announced on the 4th of August, freedom of the press and of religious opinions, proclaimed on the same day, the decree which declared the Assembly to be permanent, rendered the 9th of September, and the declaration of the rights of men pro-

claimed and accepted by the King in the course of the same month.

And to regain the arbitrary power in spite of all these, of what means did the court make use? Ministers of genius? talented legislators able to cope with the Assembly? generals fit to curb the revolutionary spirit which showed itself in the army and to oppose it to the popular masses? Nothing of the sort was at the disposal of the monarchy: its resources consisted in balls, concerts, banquets given frequently to some hundreds of body-guards and officers, who could only promise the devotion of the foreign regiments. . . .

The National Assembly saw all this royalist frisking and only laughed at it; the representatives could not believe that the King, nor even the Queen, would accede to this bacchic and libertine trickery, whose only pretext seemed to be an impossible thing, a counter-revolution. . . . But the dinner to the body-guards, which all historians have described, and whose excesses were seemingly sanctioned by the presence of Louis XVI and his august spouse, this meal opened the eyes of the Assembly; more unfortunate still, it excited the indignation of the Parisians. The balance of this chapter will be devoted to the revealing of a few

details of the consequences of this fatal banquet; I was a party to these events, I am able to speak of them as a witness and as an actor.

On the 4th of October, people heard that several of the court carriages were secretly commanded to the King's stables; people heard that the troops whose officers had been sumptuously feasted at the château, during the preceding days, had gone away at the request of the National Assembly, but that they had received orders to draw up in echelons on the road to Metz, as far as the gates of that fortress. These dispositions, revealed by covetous men, gave rise to a more careful investigation; it then became known that in the apartments of the King and in those of the Queen, everything was in motion preparing for a departure. These details, which divers authors have mentioned as dubious, were entirely true. I noticed them myself in the Queen's apartments, and I was astonished that Her Majesty, who honored me with her confidence, had not spoken to me of the intended trip. . . . I then suspected that an escape was being planned. . . .

The 5th and 6th of October were the result of the indignation which the banquet of the bodyguards excited in the Parisian population, and still

more, perhaps, a precaution against the departure of the Royal Family.

However that may be, eighty thousand Parisian men and women of the lowest classes proceeded towards Versailles, on the 5th of October, 1789. . . . Poetry, history, romantic literature, the stage, have left nothing unsaid about that day and the night following. . . . Nothing, except what the traditions have kept from them. Here is a new fragment of that catastrophe, where death hovered so near the head of the unfortunate Marie-Antoinette. . . .

It was seldom then that I happened to sleep at the château. I knew the hours at which the Queen, the princesses and some of the grand dames of the court had their hair dressed, and I had plenty of time to perform my court duties, the only ones I retained since I was rich and interested in great enterprises. But I had seen, on the 5th of October, the hideous gatherings which had assembled and I had learned without trouble that they were on their way to Versailles, without being informed of the motive of their excursion.

I returned to Versailles in the evening to warn the Queen and to tell her, with all possible caution, that she must take precautions for her personal

safety. Nevertheless I should not have told her that her name, accompanied by horrible epithets, had struck my ear a hundred times; my prudent recommendations appearing to me to be sufficient. But, having reached the château rather late in the evening, it was impossible for me to see Her Majesty who, since the morning, so I was told, had been in conference with the King.

I had, however, been informed of the weak means possessed by M. le Duc de Guiche for the defense of the château; I also knew that, in spite of the numerous bands which surrounded the palace, the King had refused to admit M. de Lafayette, who had hastened over with the Paris National Guard, to defend, if need be, the Royal Family. . . . This distrust, the result of the coldness which the Queen had always had for this officer, grieved me because it was unjust; and the refusal for which she was responsible worried me, because I saw the King and Queen surrounded by perils.

Preoccupied by a danger for the Queen personally, without, however, being able to define it, I resolved not to go to bed. . . . I began to read near my fire, for that threatening night was colder than usually are those of the first days of October.

. . . The book which I held interested me but little; the far-off clamors of the hostile mob which was camping at the gates of the château, the great glow which arose from the bivouac fires which they had lighted; the powerful cries of "*Vive la Nation!*" to which replied a few weak cries of "*Vive le roi!*" uttered by the faithful devotion of the body-guard—all these combined to divert me from my reading. . . .

I had just heard three o'clock strike at the château clock; tired of sitting, I had arisen and I was walking through my two rooms, when on approaching the door leading outside, I thought I heard, in the hall, a great number of voices, but whispering. . . . I placed my ear to the thin panels of my door and I distinctly heard the noise of muffled footsteps, but which revealed the presence of a certain number of people.

The mysterious way in which they were speaking and walking made me at once suspicious; either those whom I heard belonged to the outside bands or there was treason among the servants of the court. Nevertheless, the idea of a duty to be performed possessed me, and, without considering the danger which threatened me, I opened the door. . . . The hall was now deserted and silent;

the conspirators had disappeared. . . . Candle in hand, I went to the end of the hall, and I saw, what I had not yet seen in the eighteen years during which I had lived at the château of Versailles, a door leading, I had been told, to the stage-hall, wide open. . . . I then saw clearly how a detachment of the Parisian crowd could have been quietly admitted by traitors from within. I return to my room, I take my pistols and I wend my way, without the slightest hesitation, towards the Queen's apartments, not by the main entrance, but by a secret one, known to me. . . . Breathless I glide through the turns of several side halls. . . . Everywhere chambermaids, servants of the wardrobe, who are fleeing crying that the brigands are in the château, that the body-guards posted at the main door of the Queen's apartments are being massacred, and that Her Majesty has perhaps already fallen under the poignards of the assassins. I knock against, I brush aside everything which opposes my passage. . . . At last, by the light of a lamp about to go out, I see a woman almost nude, her hair disheveled, walking barefooted. . . . I recognize the Queen. . . . At the sight of my pistols Her Majesty mistakes me for one of the brigands and utters a fearful cry.

“Be reassured, madame, I am Léonard.”

“Ah, my friend, save me,” exclaims Marie-Antoinette, throwing herself into my arms and clinging to me. . . . “The body-guards have been killed,” continued Her Majesty in a broken voice, “my door was opened. . . . I saw horrible faces. . . .”

“They will no longer be able to reach you, madame. . . . I answer for Your Majesty’s safety. . . .”

And I throw my coat which I have just taken off, over the Queen’s naked shoulders; I put my shoes on her feet. . . . We reach the King’s apartment. . . . Lafayette and his principal officers had just entered, to save the Royal Family, by infringing the humiliating orders which His Majesty himself had given. The sovereign’s shamefaced expression was sufficient revenge for the general.

Alas! the month of October was to be fatal to Marie-Antoinette: saved from the daggers on the 6th of October, 1789, her head fell on the scaffold on the 16th of October, 1793. . . .

CHAPTER XXI

I have seen Louis XVI, his wife, his sister, his children, taken away from the palace where twenty descendants of Henri IV were born, and conducted, almost captive, to Paris, under the escort of eighty thousand drunken, ragged pretorians. I have seen that court, not long ago so sumptuous, establish itself at the Tuileries, where everything, at the beginning, was lacking. I have seen the most sensitive princess in the world, her eyes red and tearful, seated near a smoky hearth, in which flames had not appeared for sixty-six years. I have seen her chambermaids nailing up strips of cloth (and striking their fingers with the hammer while doing it), to the doors of the apartment, so as to prevent the wind from blowing through the cracks.

My heart filled with pity . . . with pity excited by the King and Queen of the most beautiful empire in the universe. I returned to Versailles to hasten the arrival of the various branches of the service, to gather together a multitude of objects

without which Her Majesty could not get along.

When I reached the château, there remained only a small number of servants, delayed by the slowness of age, perhaps by the regret to leave a palace where they were born, and where they expected to die. . . . And everywhere silence and forlornness, everywhere traces of a hurried departure, which terror had rendered forgetful. . . .

In the Queen's apartment, I gather objects precious for the remembrances attached to them: portraits, papers whose contents will die in my secret memory; I had orders to look up everything, to take everything, to read everything, because Her Majesty knew that Léonard could forget everything. . . . Nothing was changed in Marie-Antoinette's room since her nocturnal flight; the dress which Her Majesty had worn on the evening of the 5th of October, the fichu beneath which her heart had violently beaten on the approach of the Parisian bands, the half-turned silk stocking which she had taken off on going to bed, and under Her Majesty's bed I found the slippers which the daughter of Marie-Thérèse had not had the time to put on . . . for in truth the unfortunate princess had escaped the assassin's dagger by only a few seconds. . . . I saw the gilt panels of the

door broken and fallen in splinters on the floor. . . . The wind blew through the large opening by which the brigands had entered. With the butt ends of their muskets they had pulverized the mirrors of the room, no doubt to punish that inoffensive glass for having reflected the features of a woman whom they had been unable to assassinate. . . . And their rage had satiated itself on Her Majesty's bed: furious at finding it still warm with the warmth of Marie-Antoinette's body, they ran the quilts, sheets, mattresses and curtains through and through.

Before entering my carriage to return to Paris, I stopped, sad and thoughtful, in the middle of that immense court where, for one hundred and twenty-five years, had stood in line, brilliant with embroideries, gold lace, bullion, the noble companies composing the King's household; this court filled at all hours with an eager crowd, moved by ambition or greed. . . .

Now it is an immense deserted space, empty guard houses, sentry boxes without sentinels, gates open to all comers . . . and beyond, that imposing group of galleries and pavilions, that colossus of stone, which Louis XIV, the magnificent, erected at great expense; that Versailles of *louis*

d'or, as Saint-Simon used to say, presenting a picture of solitude, mournful, somber, silent. . . .

I knew that the Queen was awaiting my return with impatience and I repented having prolonged, by at least a half hour, Her Majesty's anxiety. I made up a part of the delay by hurrying the horse of my cabriolet, and covered in less than an hour the distance separating the château de Versailles from the Palais des Tuileries.

I found Marie-Antoinette walking back and forth in her room; she was waiting for me. . . .

"At last, here you are," she exclaimed, running to meet me . . . "and you have everything . . ."

"All that I could find, madame." \

"Let us see . . . let us see."

I laid before Her Majesty's eyes all that I had found in her apartment. She examined these objects with an agitation which she did not try to disguise; then I saw an expression of sweet serenity reappear suddenly in the Queen's face and she said to me with a smile:

"Good, good, Léonard; all is here. . . ."

"How happy I am, madame, to have been so favored by destiny, as to be able to satisfy your hopes!"

"They are more than satisfied; here are jewels

I did not expect to see again after the invasion of those brigands."

Marie-Antoinette was not a moralist; I considered it quite natural that the men who had broken into Her Majesty's apartments that morning should not have taken those diamonds . . . it is seldom that two great desires possess the human heart to the same degree. The assassins of the 6th of October were prompted by vengeance and vengeance seldom if ever allies itself to any other desire and least of all to greed.

The Queen spoke to me of her reception at the Hôtel de Ville, where Their Majesties had been conducted on arriving from Versailles. That day she praised M. Bailly very much. "Although a *patriot*," she said, "I believe him to be an honest man: he repeated with a great deal of feeling to the people, assembled under the windows of the Hôtel de Ville, that the King always found new delight in being among the people of Paris. . . . They shouted: '*Vive le roi!*' M. Bailly then said: '*And Vive la reine also!*' . . . The people repeated: '*Vive la reine!*' . . ." Léonard, it is something to have an honest man as mayor of Paris."

I come to the year 1790. . . . It was towards the end of that same year that the Queen, even

more than Louis XVI, understood the absolute necessity of winning over, in the National Assembly, several deputies who waged a persistent war on the court, specially Mirabeau.³⁸ But, besides the art to handle such a mind, which was neither in the faculties of the statesmen of the council, nor within the reach of the feeble creatures, by whom, unfortunately, Their Majesties were surrounded, it was generally rumored that the star of the Constituent Assembly sought to undermine the throne occupied by the descendants of Henri IV, only to erect, with its ruins, the throne of the House of Orléans. However, nothing positive was known regarding the understanding of Mirabeau with Philippe d'Orléans and his agents. . . .

The Queen had received, through Madame Campan, Mademoiselle Bertin and through me, some information regarding the admission of Mirabeau into the Duc d'Orléans intimacy. How could the veil which concealed the frequent interviews of the duc and the adversary of Maury³⁹ be further raised? . . . It is I whom the Queen charged with the undertaking of casting more light on these mysterious meetings.

I soon learned that, as soon as he had ceased to

thunder in the Assembly, Mirabeau hurried his dinner and betook himself to an isolated house, sometimes in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, sometimes in Belleville, outside the Roule gate. At first this did not put me on the track, but more assiduous watching put the agents whom I employed in a position to learn that every day, in the dusk of the evening, M. le Duc d'Orléans left his palace and regularly went in the same direction taken by M. le Comte de Mirabeau.

But my secret observation, which the intention will always honor in my memory, stopped at the door of that fatal house, or rather of those houses, between which our conspirators alternated. Vainly did I start out myself to make the prince's servants or those of the great orator talk. I succeeded in entering the mysterious houses under various pretexts and disguises, and lured the servants to the neighboring tavern. All I acquired through my efforts was an awful disgust for the atrocious beverage which I was compelled to swallow almost as liberally as I bought it, so as not to excite the suspicions of the menials.

One evening, alas! I acquired a little more, and it was not to the advantage of the cause I served. I had enticed a tall and stout servant of Mirabeau



MIRABEAU

to a wine-seller's; I had been watching that man for a long time, for I knew him to be rather liked by his master and better informed than his comrades about the comte's private life. The trusted lackey was fond of drink; I succeeded in getting him tipsy, but that scamp did not lose his wits. . . . My frequent and insidious questions, the less prudent because I considered my man intoxicated, excited his suspicions; he took me for what I was, that is to say, a secret agent. Before I had the time to explain that I held my mission from a high source, and that I was able to strengthen my means of bribing by some ten *louis* or more, the brute struck me a blow on the left eye which caused me to unseasonably behold the most beautiful display of fireworks ever beheld by mortal man.

CHAPTER XXII

It was plain to Mirabeau that Louis XVI had not ceased to meditate a plan of escape, and that his timidity was the sole cause of its delay of execution. His Majesty's design was at first, to simply reëstablish the ancient régime, with more power allowed to the Parliaments. The year following, this plan was modified, and Louis XVI adopted the idea of a granted Constitution. But the departure of the King was the event which, in the opinion of Mirabeau, was to serve as a motive for a change of dynasty. The empty throne of the Tuileries would be considered vacant; Mirabeau would proclaim it as such in the Assembly; he would immediately propose the prince who had understood the Revolution well enough to associate himself with it, and who consequently deserved to lead it.

This plan, based on the supposed absence of Louis XVI, would infallibly have been carried out, for the departure was more than probable, as Mirabeau thought. But to gather the fruit of such an event it was necessary that Philippe

d'Orléans should develop an energy which might reassure the French Demosthenes; it was necessary that he should assist in placing himself on the throne, and not remain content with allowing himself to be made king, leaving in doubt his courage to continue so. Unfortunately for Philippe d'Orléans, Mirabeau noticed that he was risking his head in a game in which the indifferent and clever pretender might possibly allow him to lose that too precious stake; he expressed his disgust to the prince's confidants, and plainly told them that he would before long cast aside the clay which he intended to mold into a king. . . . The tributes of gold were increased, but they were unable to again warm the cooled zeal of the impetuous tribune. From that time on that league of creatures which had until then been called the Orléans party, deprived of its head, wandered aimlessly in the political course, abandoned to the weak leadership of the Comte de Genlis.

Such was the information on the alleged Orléans Conspiracy which I obtained, in the middle of the year 1790, with the aid of an actress of *Monsieur's Theater*. This was precious information for the court: Mirabeau was waiting for an opportune moment to abandon the Duc d'Orléans.

The Queen learned, with great satisfaction, of the chances of success which the court might hope to have with Mirabeau; she clapped her pretty hands together and exclaimed: "That man is ours; leave him to me."

"Now!" continued the Queen after a moment's thought, "let us, without loss of time, put the irons in the fire to secure Mirabeau; no matter what price he may set on his conscience, it will be cheap if we succeed in taking him from the Duc d'Orléans, and I count on you to make the first attempt towards that end."

"Your Majesty knows my devotion; but do you not think, madame, that the names of Mirabeau and Léonard, rather jar next to each other?"

"Why so? M. de Mirabeau will not consider it extraordinary that, in a confidential mission, we should make use of a person who deserves more confidence than all the statesmen by whom we are surrounded."

"I have never nor shall ever have the thought of refusing to obey Your Majesty! What must I say to that haughty orator?"

"Nothing direct from me, and less from the King; it is possible that we fail with a man so

difficult to handle, and we must risk the least possible."

"I think that I understand Your Majesty's intentions: I am supposed to have heard from good sources that the King regrets being deprived of the assistance of M. de Mirabeau; that daily His Majesty speaks with admiration of the talent which he displays in the Assembly, and that more than once he has repeated that only through M. de Mirabeau could the monarchy form a strong and lasting agreement with the Revolution."

"Do not forget to add that, through indirect information, but worthy of credence, which has reached you, the sincerity of the King's opinions are the more believable as they are shared by the Queen. . . . For you know, Léonard," continued Marie-Antoinette smiling, "that all the oppositions of the court to the measures dictated by the Assembly's patriotism, are supposed always to come from me."

I promised the Queen that I should see M. de Mirabeau the following morning. I knew that he spent almost all his nights in drinking and eating with courtesans, and that he remained in bed all the morning.

It was while there that he received the deputies, the magistrates and even the women who wished to speak to him, without in the least changing his cynical habits in the presence of the latter.

CHAPTER XXIII

When, having left the boulevard, you have followed the rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin for about a third of its length, you perceive on the right, a modest house, with a court-yard gate, however, which, up to a few years ago could be recognized by two horses' heads sculptured in the façade.

It was towards this house that I wended my way on a beautiful summer morning of the year 1790. I had in advance woven my speech with all the subtleties I had been able to find in me, so as to fulfil my mission without exposing the Queen to the disgrace of a refusal.

I rang the bell. . . . It is impossible for me to express to-day the effect produced on me by the sound of the little brass bell which I had just pulled. . . . I could hear my heart palpitate, my temples in throbbing raised my hat, and my legs trembled under me. . . . The door was opened; a man-servant, as gentle as a girl, smiled pleasantly at me while asking what I wished.

I answered that I wished to impart to M. le

Comte an important communication, and that, if he were engaged at that moment, I should wait until he could hear me in private. . . . The valet said that M. Mirabeau was alone, that I would be admitted at once because his master's habit was not to keep the *patriots* waiting when he could help it. The servant added, with some affectation, that it was not the custom *here* to ask the names of the persons who were received, all Frenchmen being equal before M. Mirabeau, as before the law.

The representative's bedroom door opened; I saw his large pimpled face, crowned by a calico handkerchief, resting on a rather natty pillow; and I confess that my courage almost abandoned me, when I heard a formidable voice coming from that unattractive face, say to me:

"What do you wish, sir?"

"Monsieur le Comte . . ."

"My name is Mirabeau; omit the titles. . . ."

"Monsieur, I come to you because I know that the constitutional monarchy must recognize in you its most sincere as well as most eloquent supporter."

"Oh! oh!" ejaculated Mirabeau with some surprise. . . . "Be kind enough to take a seat, mon-

sieur, and inform me to whom I have the honor of speaking."

"Monsieur," I replied timidly, "I am Léonard. . . ."

"Léonard the poet?"

"No, monsieur. . . ."

"Ah! I see, Léonard the . . ." and Mirabeau, drawing his two bare and muscular arms from under the covers, imitated the action of curling a tuft of hair.

"Exactly," I replied with a rather forced smile, which was not unaccompanied by a blush.

"Well, Monsieur Léonard," boldly resumed Mirabeau, "the Queen had beautiful hair ten years ago."

I confess that this ingeniously bitter criticism of my political intervention rather abashed me, and that my southern inspiration failed me . . . but it was not for long.

"Yes, monsieur," I replied without affectation, "the Queen had beautiful hair ten years ago, and I was kept rather busy taking care of it. But that beautiful hair is beginning to get white, and I thought that at a time where the distinction of professions has disappeared in the eyes of the law, and when the contempt with which certain pro-

fessions were at one time looked upon has to-day no reason for existing, I thought, I say, that I also could exercise my share of the rights of men by coming to speak with the deputy of the nation who has shown himself the most ardent promoter of these rights."

"Fine! Monsieur Léonard; I should have suspected by your accent that I had to deal with a man of parts. Do not go and ally yourself against me with the Abbé Maury . . . I am listening."

"You readily understand, monsieur, that I have continued some relations with persons attached to the court; I may even tell you that these relations are such, that reports of the most intimate conferences have sometimes reached me."

"Ah! diable!"

"To such an extent, monsieur, that I know from excellent source, that you are often mentioned by the King and even by the Queen. . . ."

"I mentioned! and what do they say of me?" asked Mirabeau, who eagerly raised himself on his elbow.

"Many complimentary things. . . ."

"You don't say so! That astonishes me."

“That’s because you are not acquainted with the present mind of the court. . . .”

“Which is . . .”

“To throw itself into your arms. . . .”

“Monsieur Léonard,” said Mirabeau looking in my face, “have you been sent here by the Queen?” In speaking these words, he sat up straight in bed. . . .

“The Queen is totally unacquainted with my visit of this day, Monsieur Mirabeau; but I am quite certain that Her Majesty would attach great value to your accession to the interests of the court.”

“What’s that you say, monsieur? Have I ever shown myself opposed to the court’s interests? I have only attacked the court in its mistaken policies and when its awkward changes tended to destroy the monarchy itself. . . . Thus you will readily comprehend that, standing on this conservative principle of the rights of the crown, I shall never refuse to come to an understanding with the sovereign; *I* have not deserted him, it is *he* who has left me. . . .”

This uncompromising speech of Mirabeau’s proved to me that the great orator took me for what I really was, that is to say, an agent of

Marie-Antoinette. . . . He therefore did not hesitate to add: "I desire that the King and Queen should know that I am, and always shall be, their most faithful servant."

The Queen was awaiting the result of my overture with impatience; she was delighted when I told her of Mirabeau's good inclinations. Her Majesty considered, by the circumstantial details which I gave her, that she could now make an appointment with the orator, and I was sent to him the following day to arrange for it. The first interview between Mirabeau and the Queen took place on the same day, at nine o'clock at night, in the garden of the Tuileries, under the tall chestnut-trees on the left of the château. All the memorialists have mentioned that, but they have also woven many falsehoods into this historical episode. Several of these have been pleased to make of Mirabeau, in this interview and in another which occurred at Saint-Cloud, a sort of sentimental lover, sighing by the side, some have even said at the feet, of Marie-Antoinette and carried away by his feelings to the extent of asking a kiss of Her Majesty. . . . Nothing of all this is true.

Mirabeau saw Louis XVI himself and only pro-

posed to him measures proper to aid him in controlling the Revolution without changing its principle; and he expressly urged the King not to leave France. It may have been this great orator who gave the monarch the idea of withdrawing to an intrenched camp, from which he could have sent to the Assembly a granted Constitution, based on the same principles as that on which the legislative body was then busy.

It may be that Mirabeau suggested Montmédy as a suitable place. . . . But it can be stated positively that Mirabeau never for a moment acceded to the project of the escape abroad of Louis XVI. This legislator hated emigration; he spoke of it as an act of downright cowardice, and, on the part of a sovereign, he would have considered it a crime.

After Mirabeau's death, Louis XVI, who, in spite of that superior man's advice, had never given up the idea of leaving France, carried it out unfortunately, and this was the cause of his downfall, for it was easy to see that the trip to Montmédy was but a pretext. But I am anticipating; let us return to the year 1790.

After having signed with the court a pact in which equitable impartiality could perhaps only

find fault with one thing, its venality, it was not long before Mirabeau noticed that the roads of salvation which he had opened to the monarch would not be followed; the despotic habit was firmly established in Louis XVI; his nature returned to it, ceaselessly, and the great orator soon despaired of driving away the storm which hovered over the throne. . . . But his conscience was sold; he was obliged to deliver it in the Assembly by palliating the wrongs of the monarchy, by repulsing imputations, often too unjust, uttered in the Legislative Chamber, against a two-faced royalty, whose private acts perpetually belied its official protestations. . . . I do not hesitate to say it, because it is the indisputable truth, Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette never openly attacked the new order of things established against their wishes; if people conspired for them, it was not, at least I believe firmly, with their participation. . . . Their system was an inert resistance, an opposition of thoughts, a succession of unworthy intrigues, which without any prospects of success, led them, by an incline more and more steep, to the precipice which was to swallow them. . . . Mirabeau wore out his popularity in a deplorable manner, tarnished his brilliant renown in defend-

ing these monarchical puerilities. . . . It would have been a beautiful thing on his part, since he had sold himself to the court, to reconquer by dint of eloquence, that preponderance of executive power which the monarch had allowed to drop out of his hand. . . . The death of Mirabeau forestalled that of his fame. . . .

On the 12th of June, 1791, at ten o'clock at night, I was in my bedroom. I opened a note which had just been delivered to me; it contained these few words:

“Monsieur Léonard is requested to come to the Tuileries at once. He will present himself at the little door opening on the passage leading to the Feuillants: the doorkeeper Parent will let him in. At the door situated at the foot of the *Pavillon de Flore*, on the side of the garden, a footman will wait for M. Léonard and will lead him to the place where he will be received. . . . No delay.”

Admitted to the Tuileries with all the mystery that the note had made me anticipate, I was led, through the dark and deserted apartment, to the Queen's boudoir. I found there the King, his august spouse and Madame Elisabeth.

The King was seated on a small sofa; he was at times oppressed after meals, and had taken off his

collar; nevertheless his face appeared to me more high in color than usual, which I attributed to some excitement, of which, no doubt, I was going to learn at least a part. The Queen and Madame Elizabeth were seated in armchairs, on the right and left of the sofa, respectively. It was Louis XVI who first spoke to me.

“It is long, Léonard,” said His Majesty with a softness of voice which, for some years past, was habitual with him, “It is very long since your zeal and faithfulness have been known to us, and you have therefore seen that, on several occasions, our confidence has rewarded your devotion.”

“Sire,” I replied bowing, “I am overwhelmed by Your Majesty’s kindnesses and those of the Queen. . . .”

“To-day, Léonard,” resumed the King, “I expect from that same devotion, a proof of great importance, and I shall tell you without evasion, that for the mission with which I am about to intrust you, requiring both intelligence and zeal, I do not know of a better agent than you.”

Here the Queen and Madame Elisabeth confirmed the King’s compliment in a most flattering manner.

“Certainly! certainly!” said the two princesses

together. . . . Then Louis XVI continued: . . .

“You must know all, sir; listen to me carefully.”

“Sire, all my interest and attention follow Your Majesty’s words. . . .”

“You know better than anyone else, the amount of courageous resignation I have displayed in these late days; when my wife, my sister, my aunts, all those about me were possessed of the greatest fear, I was calm and tranquil, because I had nothing for which to reproach myself. . . . My friends, well or ill advised (I do not yet know which), my friends urged me to leave my kingdom; but I always answered: a father must not leave his children when passion carries them away from their duty. . . . To-day without entirely consenting to this advice, I have decided to follow it in part, by conforming myself to the plan of a very regrettable man for us . . . Mirabeau. In a few days I shall go to a camp which the Marquis de Bouillé is going to receive the order to form at Montmédy; that order, my dear Léonard, you are going to carry to the general, with the commission and insignia of Marshal of France. . . . You appreciate the full importance of such a mission. Bouillé has on hand sufficient troops, which he has carefully selected among those not yet possessed of the spirit

of revolt. . . . But he must be notified with scrupulous exactness, so that he may have time to operate his movement of concentration, first, then to come and meet me. . . .”

“Why does Your Majesty not say to meet us?” exclaimed the Queen quickly. . . .

“Madame,” continued Louis XVI, “you will later know my will; allow me to finish what I have to say to Léonard.” And the King continued: “A gentleman of my household, had I known one whose capacity equaled yours (profound bow from me), would have been much less fit for the duty I wish you to perform. . . . I do not want a man of effeminate habits, a sybarite able to travel only in a post-chaise with flexible springs. . . . I need a robust fellow like you, sure-footed, able to walk through fields and swim a river if necessary, to avoid falling into a patriots’ ambush. . . . To reach Montmédy almost as the crow flies, in less than three days, that is the aim of your mission; do you accept it, Léonard?”

“With joy, sire; I leave in an hour, provided with baggage as light as that which I carried with me on entering Paris twenty-two years ago, and I reach Montmédy before the expiration of the limit set by Your Majesty.”

"I do not doubt it," said His Majesty with a kindly smile. . . . And do not forget, Léonard, that a King of France can make a noble of a messenger who serves him to his satisfaction."

These words had been said with a laugh; I saw that the King's promise was a serious one. I suddenly felt as if a life-giving elixir flowed through my veins. . . . Ah, vanity!

The King then drew a dispatch from his pocket; this dispatch was as small as could be and without address; the King handed it to me, saying:

"You know for whom it is intended . . . that's enough. . . ."

At the same time the Queen, who had risen to take something from her desk, returned holding in her hand an object measuring from fifteen to sixteen inches, which she gave to the King.

"Here is the marshal's *bâton* for the Marquis de Bouillé," said the King handing it to me. And as His Majesty probably read in my face an expression of embarrassment, he continued: "You think this object somewhat voluminous, perhaps?"

"I confess to Your Majesty that in view of the mystery with which I am to surround my trip, it would have been well not to have feared to see it

revealed by the insignia of the highest military rank."

"I had thought of that," said Madame Elisabeth hesitatingly. . . .

"Sister," replied the King, "Léonard is clever enough to conceal this marshal's *bâton* from all eyes. . . . Besides, at the last extremity, he could hide it under some bush or throw it far from him if danger pressed. . . . But only at the last extremity, do you understand, Léonard? . . . It has always been the custom during the reign of the kings our ancestors, that the distinctive mark of the highest military rank be handed to the incumbent by the sovereign; to act contrary to this established custom would be to make an attempt against the prerogatives of the throne. . . . We are essentially anxious that M. de Bouillé receive the marshal's *bâton* which we bestow on him. . . ."

Madame Elisabeth began to smile; and I thought I read on that beautiful countenance something like this:

"And so as not to make an attempt against the prerogatives of the throne, His Majesty causes the marshal's *bâton* to be handed to M. de Bouillé by a hairdresser."

But if the princess had studied my features at

that moment, she might in turn perhaps have read an answer nearly as follows:

“The King grants the said hairdresser a great token of his confidence, because he has been unable to find about him a nobleman sufficiently intelligent and devoted to deserve it.”

“And now, Léonard, good luck,” said Louis XVI holding out his royal hand, which I respectfully pressed to my heart. . . . “Think that on you rest to-day, not only our hopes but perhaps the sole chance of salvation of the monarchy. . . . I no longer detain you . . . go. . . .”

The Queen and Madame Elisabeth gave me their hands to kiss and I took leave of the three illustrious personages, proud of their confidence and after having solemnly promised to fulfil their expectations at the risk of my life.⁴⁰

LÉONARD AUTIE.

NOTES

¹ According to Soulavie this was said by Dagé to Madame de Pompadour referring to Madame de Châteauroux, one of the former favorites of Louis XV.

² The Cracovie tree was an elm which stood in the great lane of the Palais-Royal and under whose branches it was customary for all the newsmongers of the period to assemble. It was felled at the time of the rebuilding of the Palais-Royal by the Duc de Chartres.

³ Barry (Jeanne Bécu, *comtesse du*), a favorite of Louis XV, born in Vaucouleurs, beheaded during the Terror (1743-1793). Her motto was: *Boutez-en-avant*.

⁴ Arnould (Sophie), singer of the Paris Opera, celebrated for her beauty and wit; born in Paris (1744-1802). Duthé (see note 12). Adeline (Marie-Madeleine Rombocoli-Riggieri, *called*), a celebrated actress and dancer; born in Venice in 1760.

⁵ Choiseul (duc Etienne François *de*), Minister of Foreign Affairs under Louis XV (1719-1785).

⁶ Aiguillon (Emmanuel Armand, *duc d'*), Minister under Louis XV (1720-1782).

⁷ Luciennes (also called Louveciennes), a summer-house presented by Louis XV to Madame du Barry in 1769.

⁸ Guimard (Marie-Madeleine), a celebrated dancer of the Paris Opera; born in Paris (1743-1816).

⁹ Provence (*comte de*), later Louis XVIII (1755-1824).

¹⁰ Artois (*comte d'*), later Charles X (1757-1836).

¹¹ Chartres (*duc de*), also Duc d'Orléans, known as Philippe-Egalité, played an important part during the French Revolution and voted for the death of his cousin Louis XVI. He himself died on the scaffold (1747-1793).

¹² Duthé, (Rosalie Gérard, *called*) one of the most celebrated courtesans of the eighteenth century.

¹³ Orléans, see Chartres, note 11.

¹⁴ Charles Philippe de France, see Artois, note 10.

¹⁵ Bercher, Jean (called Dauberval), made his début at the Paris Opera in 1742.

¹⁶ Monsieur le Comte du Glorieux, etc., fictitious names.

¹⁷ Dorat (Claude Joseph), a French poet born in Paris; a type of the affectation and frivolity of the eighteenth century (1734-1780).

¹⁸ Sartines, lieutenant of police from 1759 to 1774.

¹⁹ This book is said to have never existed.

²⁰ Maupeou (René Nicolas *de*), Chancellor of France, whose administration was distinguished by the banishment of the Parliament and the institution of the "King's Councils" (1771). The *Parlement Maupeou* fell under public ridicule and Louis XVI recalled the former Parliaments (1714-1792).

²¹ Maurepas (Jean Frédéric *de*), Minister under Louis XV and Louis XVI; born in Versailles (1701-1781).

²² Terray (*abbé* Joseph Marie), Controller of Finances under Louis XV (1715-1778).

²³ Turgot (Anne Robert Jacques), a French economist; born in Paris. Minister of Finances under Louis XVI, he undertook great reforms, but was unsuccessful, owing to the opposition of the privileged classes; was soon out of favor (1727-1781).

²⁴ The correct title of the book was: *Le lever de l'aurore*.

²⁵ Campan (Jeanne Louise, *Mme.*), a celebrated teacher; born in Paris. She has written a *Journal Anecdotique*, *Memoirs*, etc. (1752-1822).

²⁶ The Maréchal de Biron was the uncle and not the father of the Duc de Lauzun.

²⁷ Lauzun never went to the Russian Court; all his diplomatic dealings were with agents.

²⁸ Marie-Antoinette was but a flirt towards Lauzun.

²⁹ Richelieu (Armand *duc de*), Marshal of France; born in Paris, grand-nephew of the great cardinal. A witty man but

of doubtful morality, he played a brilliant part at the court of Louis XIV, under the Regency and under Louis XV (1696-1788).

³⁰ The Order of the Holy Ghost set with diamonds.

³¹ Breteuil (*baron* Louis Auguste *de*), a French diplomat, Minister under Louis XVI (1730-1807).

³² Calonne (Charles Alexandre *de*), a French statesman. Controller-general in 1785, he proved himself improvident and extravagant, and was compelled to convene the Assembly of Notables in 1787, lost favor and fled to England (1734-1802).

³³ The affair of the Necklace, the scandalous affair which created a tremendous sensation towards the end of the Ancient Régime (1784-1786). The Cardinal de Rohan, anxious to gain the good graces of Marie-Antoinette, who showed a certain dislike towards him, allowed himself to be duped by intriguers, among whom was la Comtesse de La Motte. The comtesse made the cardinal believe that the queen was anxious to possess a certain necklace valued at 1,600,000 francs and which the king had refused to buy for her. The cardinal purchased it and gave it to Madame de La Motte to be presented to the queen, but the necklace disappeared. Rohan was unable to pay the bill and the affair became public. Imprisoned in the Bastille, he was acquitted by the Parliament, but exiled from Paris. Madame de La Motte was imprisoned in la Salpêtrière, but escaped abroad. Through public malignity the queen, although entirely innocent of wrongdoing, was in part blamed in this affair.

³⁴ Necker (Jacques), a French financier and minister, born in Geneva. As a banker in Paris he acquired a great reputation for honesty. As a minister he attempted certain useful but insufficient reforms (1732-1804).

³⁵ Malesherbes (Chrétien Guillaume *de* Lamoignon), an honest and just magistrate. Minister under Louis XVI, he was compelled to resign owing to the opposition of the privileged classes. He defended the king before the Convention and died on the scaffold (1721-1794).

³⁶ Espréménil (Jean Jacques Duval *a*), Councilor of the Paris Parliament (1746-1794).

³⁷ Madame Suzanne Necker, wife of Jacques Necker, celebrated for her wit and her munificence; her daughter was Madame de Staël.

³⁸ Mirabeau (Honoré Gabriel), the most eminent orator of the French Revolution. In 1789, spurned by the nobles, he was sent to the States-general as deputy of the *Tiers-Etat*, where, by his learning and eloquence, he contributed to the victories of the Constituent Assembly. He died accused, not without reason, of having made a compact with the court (1749-1791).

³⁹ Maury (Jean Siffrein), a French prelate and orator, deputy of the Constituent Assembly (1746-1817).

⁴⁰ The flight of the Royal Family was set for the night of June 20-21, 1791. They fled and were arrested at Varennes June 22, and brought back to Paris. Léonard assisted the royal family in their flight.

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