

The Memoirs of Louis XV/XVI, V3

Madame du Hausset, unknown English Girl and the Princess Lamballe

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Madame du Hausset, unknown English Girl and the Princess Lamballe

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SECRET COURT MEMOIRS OF LOUIS XVI. AND THE ROYAL FAMILY OF FRANCE

INTRODUCTION.

I should consider it great presumption to intrude upon the public anything respecting myself, were there any other way of establishing the authenticity of the facts and papers I am about to present. To the history of my own peculiar situation, amid the great events I record, which made me the depository of information and documents so important, I proceed, therefore, though reluctantly, without further preamble.

I was for many years in the confidential service of the Princesse de Lamballe, and the most important materials which form my history have been derived not only from the conversations, but the private papers of my lamented patroness. It remains for me to show how I became acquainted with Her Highness, and by what means the papers I allude to came into my possession.

Though, from my birth, and the rank of those who were the cause of it (had it not been from political motives kept from my knowledge), in point of interest I ought to have been very independent, I was indebted for my resources in early life to His Grace the late Duke of Norfolk and Lady Mary Duncan. By them I was placed for education in the Irish Convent, Rue du Bacq, Faubourg St. Germain, at Paris, where the immortal Sacchini, the instructor of the Queen, gave me lessons in music. Pleased with my progress, the celebrated composer, when one day teaching Marie Antoinette, so highly overrated to that illustrious lady my infant natural talents and acquired science in his art, in the presence of her very shadow, the Princesse de Lamballe, as to excite in Her Majesty an eager desire for the opportunity of hearing me, which the Princess volunteered to obtain by going herself to the convent next morning with Sacchini. It was enjoined upon the composer, as I afterwards learned, that he was neither to apprise me who Her Highness was, nor to what motive I was indebted for her visit. To this Sacchini readily agreed, adding, after disclosing to them my connections and situation, "Your Majesty will be, perhaps, still more surprised, when I, as an Italian, and her German master, who is a German, declare that she speaks both these languages like a native, though born in England; and is as well disposed to the Catholic faith, and as well versed in it, as if she had been a member of that Church all her life.

This last observation decided my future good fortune: there was no interest in the minds of the Queen and Princess paramount to that of making proselytes to their creed.

The Princess, faithful to her promise, accompanied Sacchini. Whether it was chance, ability, or good fortune, let me not attempt to conjecture; but from that moment I became the protege of this ever-regretted angel. Political circumstances presently facilitated her introduction of me to the Queen. My combining a readiness in the Italian and German languages, with my knowledge of English and French, greatly promoted my power of being useful at that crisis, which, with some claims to their confidence of a higher order, made this august, lamented, injured pair more like mothers to me than mistresses, till we were parted by their murder.

The circumstances I have just mentioned show that to mere curiosity, the characteristic passion of our sex and so often its ruin, I am to ascribe the introduction, which was only prevented by events unparalleled in history from proving the most fortunate in my life as it is the most cherished in my recollection.

It will be seen, in the course of the following pages, how often I was employed on confidential missions, frequently by myself, and, in some instances, as the attendant of the Princess. The nature of my situation, the trust reposed in me, the commissions with which I was honoured, and the affecting charges of which I was the bearer, flattered my pride and determined me to make myself an exception to the rule that "no woman can keep a secret." Few ever knew exactly where I was, what I was doing, and much less the importance of my occupation. I had passed from England to France, made two journeys to Italy and Germany, three to the Archduchess Maria Christiana, Governess of the Low Countries, and returned back to France, before any of my friends in England were aware of my retreat, or of my ever having accompanied the Princess. Though my letters were written and dated at Paris, they were all forwarded to England by way of Holland or Germany, that no clue should be given for annoyances from idle curiosity. It is to this discreetness, to this inviolable secrecy, firmness, and fidelity, which I so early in life displayed to the august personages who stood in need of such a person, that I owe the unlimited confidence of my illustrious benefactress, through which I was furnished with the valuable materials I am now submitting to the public.

I was repeatedly a witness, by the side of the Princesse de Lamballe, of the appalling scenes of the bonnet rouge, of murders a la lanterne, and of numberless insults to the unfortunate Royal Family of Louis XVI., when the Queen was generally selected as the most marked victim of malicious indignity. Having had the honour of so often beholding this much injured Queen, and never without remarking how amiable in her manners, how condescendingly kind in her deportment towards every one about her, how charitably generous, and withal, how beautiful she was,—I looked upon her as a model of perfection. But when I found the public feeling so much at variance with my own, the difference became utterly unaccountable. I longed for some explanation of the mystery. One day I was insulted in the Tuileries, because I had alighted from my horse to walk there without wearing the national ribbon. On this I met the Princess: the conversation which grew out of my adventure emboldened me to question her on a theme to me inexplicable.

"What," asked I, "can it be which makes the people so outrageous against the Queen?"

Her Highness condescended to reply in the complimentary terms which I am about to relate, but without answering my question.

"My dear friend!" exclaimed she, "for from this moment I beg you will consider me in that light, never having been blessed with children of my own, I feel there is no way of acquitting myself of the obligations you have heaped upon me, by the fidelity with which you have executed the various commissions entrusted to your charge, but by adopting you as one of my own family. I am satisfied with you, yes, highly satisfied with you, on the score of your religious principles; and as soon as the troubles subside, and we have a little calm after them, my father-in-law and myself will be present at the ceremony of your confirmation."

The goodness of my benefactress silenced me gratitude would not allow me to persevere for the moment. But from what I had already seen of Her Majesty the Queen, I was too much interested to lose sight of my object, —not, let me be believed, from idle womanish curiosity, but from that real, strong, personal interest which I, in

common with all who ever had the honour of being in her presence, felt for that much-injured, most engaging sovereign.

A propitious circumstance unexpectedly occurred, which gave me an opportunity, without any appearance of officious earnestness, to renew the attempt to gain the end I had in view.

I was riding in the carriage with the Princesse de Lamballe, when a lady drove by, who saluted my benefactress with marked attention and respect. There was something in the manner of the Princess, after receiving the salute, which impelled me, spite of myself, to ask who the lady was.

"Madame de Genlis," exclaimed Her Highness, with a shudder of disgust, "that lamb's face with a wolf's heart, and a fog's cunning." Or, to quote her own Italian phrase which I have here translated, "colla faccia d'agnello, il cuore dun lupo, a la dritura della volpe."

In the course of these pages the cause of this strong feeling against Madame de Genlis will be explained. To dwell on it now would only turn me aside from my narrative. To pursue my story, therefore:

When we arrived at my lodgings (which were then, for private reasons, at the Irish Convent, where Sacchini and other masters attended to further me in the accomplishments of the fine arts), "Sing me something," said the Princess, "'Cantate mi qualche cosa', for I never see that woman " (meaning Madame de Genlis) "but I feel ill and out of humour. I wish it may not be the foreboding of some great evil!"

I sang a little rondo, in which Her Highness and the Queen always delighted, and which they would never set me free without making me sing, though I had given them twenty before it.

[The rondo I allude to was written by Sarti for the celebrated Marchesi, Lungi da to ben mio, and is the same in which he was so successful in England, when he introduced it in London in the opera of Giulio Sabino.]

Her Highness honoured me with even more than usual praise. I kissed the hand which had so generously applauded my infant talents, and said, "Now, my dearest Princess, as you are so kind and good-humoured, tell me something about the Queen!"

She looked at me with her eyes full of tears. For an instant they stood in their sockets as if petrified: and then, after a pause, "I cannot," answered she in Italian, as she usually did, "I cannot refuse you anything. 'Non posso neyarti niente'. It would take me an age to tell you the many causes which have conspired against this much-injured Queen! I fear none who are near her person will escape the threatening storm that hovers over our heads. The leading causes of the clamour against her have been, if you must know, Nature; her beauty; her power of pleasing; her birth; her rank; her marriage; the King himself; her mother; her imperfect education; and, above all, her unfortunate partialities for the Abbe Vermond; for the Duchesse de Polignac; for myself, perhaps; and last, but not least, the thorough, unsuspecting goodness of her heart!

"But, since you seem to be so much concerned for her exalted, persecuted Majesty, you shall have a Journal I myself began on my first coming to France, and which I have continued ever since I have been honoured with the confidence of Her Majesty, in graciously giving me that unlooked-for situation at the head of her household, which honour and justice prevent my renouncing under any difficulties, and which I never will quit but with my life!"

She wept as she spoke, and her last words were almost choked with sobs.

Seeing her so much affected, I humbly begged pardon for having unintentionally caused her tears, and begged permission to accompany her to the Tuileries.

"No," said she, "you have hitherto conducted yourself with a profound prudence, which has insured you my confidence. Do not let your curiosity change your system. You shall have the Journal. But be careful. Read it only by yourself, and do not show it to any one. On these conditions you shall have it."

I was in the act of promising, when Her Highness stopped me.

"I want no particular promises. I have sufficient proofs of your adherence to truth. Only answer me simply in the affirmative."

I said I would certainly obey her injunctions most religiously.

She then left me, and directed that I should walk in a particular part of the private alleys of the Tuileries, between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. I did so; and from her own hand I there received her private Journal.

In the following September of this same year (1792) she was murdered!

Journalising copiously, for the purpose of amassing authentic materials for the future historian, was always a favourite practice of the French, and seems to have been particularly in vogue in the age I mention. The press has sent forth whole libraries of these records since the Revolution, and it is notorious that Louis XV. left Secret Memoirs, written by his own hand, of what passed before this convulsion; and had not the papers of the Tuileries shared in the wreck of royalty, it would have been seen that Louis XVI. had made some progress in the memoirs of his time; and even his beautiful and unfortunate Queen had herself made extensive notes and collections for the record of her own disastrous career. Hence it must be obvious how one so nearly connected in situation and suffering with her much-injured mistress, as the Princesse de Lamballe, would naturally fall into a similar habit had she even no stronger temptation than fashion and example. But self-communion, by means of the pen, is invariably the consolation of strong feeling, and reflecting minds under great calamities, especially when their intercourse with the world has been checked or poisoned by its malice.

The editor of these pages herself fell into the habit of which she speaks; and it being usual with her benefactress to converse with all the unreserve which every honest mind shows when it feels it can confide, her humble attendant, not to lose facts of such importance, commonly made notes of what she heard. In any other person's hands the Journal of the Princess would have been incomplete; especially as it was written in a rambling manner, and was never intended for publication. But connected by her confidential conversations with me, and the recital of the events to which I personally bear testimony, I trust it will be found the basis of a satisfactory record, which I pledge myself to be a true one.

I do not know, however, that, at my time of life, and after a lapse of thirty years, I should have been roused to the arrangement of the papers which I have combined to form this narrative, had I not met with the work of Madame Campan upon the same subject.

This lady has said much that is true respecting the Queen; but she has omitted much, and much she has misrepresented: not, I dare say, purposely, but from ignorance, and being wrongly informed. She was often absent from the service, and on such occasions must have been compelled to obtain her knowledge at second-hand. She herself told me, in 1803, at Rouen, that at a very important epoch the peril of her life forced her from the seat of action. With the Princesse de Lamballe, who was so much about the Queen, she never had any particular connexion. The Princess certainly esteemed her for her devotedness to the Queen; but there was a natural reserve in the Princess's character, and a mistrust resulting from circumstances of all those who saw much company, as Madame Campan did. Hence no intimacy was encouraged. Madame Campan never came to the Princess without

being sent for.

An attempt has been made since the Revolution utterly to destroy faith in the alleged attachment of Madame Campan to the Queen, by the fact of her having received the daughters of many of the regicides for education into her establishment at Rouen. Far be it from me to sanction so unjust a censure. Although what I mention hurt her character very much in the estimation of her former friends, and constituted one of the grounds of the dissolution of her establishment at Rouen, on the restoration of the Bourbons, and may possibly in some degree have deprived her of such aids from their adherents as might have made her work unquestionable, yet what else, let me ask, could have been done by one dependent upon her exertions for support, and in the power of Napoleon's family and his emissaries? On the contrary, I would give my public testimony in favour of the fidelity of her feelings, though in many instances I must withhold it from the fidelity of her narrative. Her being utterly isolated from the illustrious individual nearest to the Queen must necessarily leave much to be desired in her record. During the whole term of the Princesse de Lamballe's superintendence of the Queen's household, Madame Campan never had any special communication with my benefactress, excepting once, about the things which were to go to Brussels, before the journey to Varennes; and once again, relative to a person of the Queen's household, who had received the visits of Petion, the Mayor of Paris, at her private lodgings. This last communication I myself particularly remember, because on that occasion the Princess, addressing me in her own native language, Madame Campan, observing it, considered me as an Italian, till, by a circumstance I shall presently relate, she was undeceived.

I should anticipate the order of events, and incur the necessity of speaking twice of the same things, were I here to specify the express errors in the work of Madame Campan. Suffice it now that I observe generally her want of knowledge of the Princesse de Lamballe; her omission of many of the most interesting circumstances of the Revolution; her silence upon important anecdotes of the King, the Queen, and several members of the first assembly; her mistakes concerning the Princesse de Lamballe's relations with the Duchesse de Polignac, Comte de Fersan, Mirabeau, the Cardinal de Rohan, and others; her great miscalculation of the time when the Queen's confidence in Barnave began, and when that of the Empress—mother in Rohan ended; her misrepresentation of particulars relating to Joseph II.; and her blunders concerning the affair of the necklace, and regarding the libel Madame Lamotte published in England, with the connivance of Calonne:— all these will be considered, with numberless other statements equally requiring correction in their turn. What she has omitted I trust I shall supply; and where she has gone astray I hope to set her right; that, between the two, the future biographer of my august benefactresses may be in no want of authentic materials to do full justice to their honoured memories.

I said in a preceding paragraph that I should relate a circumstance about Madame Campan, which happened after she had taken me for an Italian and before she was aware of my being in the service of the Princess.

Madame Campan, though she had seen me not only at the time I mention but before and after, had always passed me without notice. One Sunday, when in the gallery of the Tuileries with Madame de Stael, the Queen, with her usual suite, of which Madame Campan formed one, was going, according to custom, to hear Mass, Her Majesty perceived me and most graciously addressed me in German. Madame Campan appeared greatly surprised at this, but walked on and said nothing. Ever afterwards, however, she treated me whenever we met with marked civility.

Another edition of Boswell to those who got a nod from Dr. Johnson!

The reader will find in the course of this work that on the 2nd of August, 1792, from the kindness and humanity of my, august benefactresses, I was compelled to accept a mission to Italy, devised merely to send me from the sanguinary scenes of which they foresaw they and theirs must presently become victims. Early in the following month the Princesse de Lamballe was murdered. As my history extends beyond the period I have mentioned, it is fitting I should explain the indisputable authorities whence I derived such particulars as I did not see.

A person, high in the confidence of the Princess, through the means of the honest coachman of whom I shall have occasion to speak, supplied me with regular details of whatever took place, till she herself, with the rest of the ladies and other attendants, being separated from the Royal Family, was immured in the prison of La Force. When I returned to Paris after this dire tempest, Madame Clery and her friend, Madame de Beaumont, a natural daughter of Louis XV., with Monsieur Chambon of Rheims, who never left Paris during the time, confirmed the correctness of my papers. The Madame Clery I mention is the same who assisted her husband in his faithful attendance upon the Royal Family in the Temple; and this exemplary man added his testimony to the rest, in the presence of the Duchesse de Guiche Grammont, at Pymont in Germany, when I there met him in the suite of the late sovereign of France, Louis XVIII., at a concert. After the 10th of August, I had also a continued correspondence: with many persons at Paris, who supplied me with thorough accounts of the succeeding horrors, in letters directed to Sir William Hamilton, at Naples, and by him forwarded to me. And in addition to all these high sources, many particular circumstances: have been disclosed to me by individuals, whose authority, when I have used it, I have generally affixed to the facts they have enabled me to communicate.

It now only remains for me to mention that I have endeavoured to arrange everything, derived either from the papers of the Princesse de Lamballe, or from her remarks, my own observation, or the intelligence of others, in chronological order. It will readily be seen by the reader where the Princess herself speaks, as I have invariably set apart my own recollections and remarks in paragraphs and notes, which are not only indicated by the heading of each chapter, but by the context of the passages themselves. I have also begun and ended what the Princess says with inverted commas. All the earlier part, of the work preceding her personal introduction proceeds principally from her pen or her lips: I have done little more than change it from Italian into English, and embody thoughts and sentiments that were often disjointed and detached. And throughout, whether she or others speak, I may safely say this work will be found the most circumstantial, and assuredly the most authentic, upon the subject of which it treats, of all that have yet been presented to the public of Great Britain. The press has been prolific in fabulous writings upon these times, which have been devoured with avidity. I hope John Bull is not so devoted to gilded foreign fictions as to spurn the unadorned truth from one of his downright countrywomen: and let me advise him en passant, not to treat us beauties of native growth with indifference at home; for we readily find compensation in the regard, patronage, and admiration of every nation in Europe. I am old now, and may speak freely.

I have no interest whatever in the work I submit but that of endeavouring to redeem the character of so many injured victims. Would to Heaven my memory were less acute, and that I could obliterate from the knowledge of the world and posterity the names of their infamous destroyers; I mean, not the executioners who terminated their mortal existence for in their miserable situation that early martyrdom was an act of grace—but I mean some, perhaps still living, who with foul cowardice, stabbing like assassins in the dark, undermined their fair fame, and morally murdered them, long before their deaths, by daily traducing virtues the slanderers never possessed, from mere jealousy of the glory they knew themselves incapable of deserving.

Montesquieu says, "If there be a God, He must be just!" That divine justice, after centuries, has been fully established on the descendants of the cruel, sanguinary conquerors of South America and its butchered harmless Emperor Montezuma and his innocent offspring, who are now teaching Spain a moral lesson in freeing themselves from its insatiable thirst for blood and wealth, while God Himself has refused that blessing to the Spaniards which they denied to the Americans! Oh, France! what hast thou not already suffered, and what hast thou not yet to suffer, when to thee, like Spain, it shall visit their descendants even unto the fourth generation?

To my insignificant losses in so mighty a ruin perhaps I ought not to allude. I should not presume even to mention that fatal convulsion which shook all Europe and has since left the nations in that state of agitated undulation which succeeds a tempest upon the ocean, were it not for the opportunity it gives me to declare the bounty of my benefactresses. All my own property went down in the wreck; and the mariner who escapes only with his life can never recur to the scene of his escape without a shudder. Many persons are still living, of the first respectability, who well remember my quitting this country, though very young, on the budding of a brilliant career. Had those

prospects been followed up they would have placed me beyond the caprice of fickle fortune. But the dazzling lustre of crown favours and princely patronage outweighed the slow, though more solid hopes of self-achieved independence. I certainly was then almost a child, and my vanity, perhaps, of the honour of being useful to two such illustrious personages got the better of every other sentiment. But now when I reflect, I look back with consternation on the many risks I ran, on the many times I stared death in the face with no fear but that of being obstructed in my efforts to serve, even with my life, the interests dearest to my heart—that of implicit obedience to these truly benevolent and generous Princesses, who only wanted the means to render me as happy and independent as their cruel destiny has since made me wretched and miserable! Had not death deprived me of their patronage I should have had no reason to regret any sacrifice I could have made for them, for through the Princess, Her Majesty, unasked, had done me the honour to promise me the reversion of a most lucrative as well as highly respectable post in her employ. In these august personages I lost my best friends; I lost everything—except the tears, which bathe the paper as I write tears of gratitude, which will never cease to flow to the memory of their martyrdom.

SECTION II.

JOURNAL COMMENCED:

"The character of Maria Theresa, the Empress—mother of Marie Antoinette, is sufficiently known. The same spirit of ambition and enterprise which had already animated her contentions with France in the latter part of her career impelled her to wish for its alliance. In addition to other hopes she had been encouraged to imagine that LOUIS XV. might one day aid her in recovering the provinces which the King of Prussia had violently wrested from her ancient dominions. She felt the many advantages to be derived from a union with her ancient enemy, and she looked for its accomplishment by the marriage of her daughter.

"Policy, in sovereigns, is paramount to every other consideration. They regard beauty as a source of profit, like managers of theatres, who, when a female candidate is offered, ask whether she is young and handsome,— not whether she has talent. Maria Theresa believed that her daughter's beauty would prove more powerful over France than her own armies. Like Catharine II., her envied contemporary, she consulted no ties of nature in the disposal of her children,—a system more in character where the knout is the logician than among nations boasting higher civilization: indeed her rivalry with Catharine even made her grossly neglect their education. Jealous of the rising power of the North, she saw that it was the purpose of Russia to counteract her views in Poland and Turkey through France, and so totally forgot her domestic duties in the desire to thwart the ascendancy of Catharine that she often suffered eight or ten days to go by without even seeing her children, allowing even the essential sources of instruction to remain unprovided. Her very caresses were scarcely given but for display, when the children were admitted to be shown to some great personage; and if they were overwhelmed with kindness, it was merely to excite a belief that they were the constant care and companions of her leisure hours. When they grew up they became the mere instruments of her ambition. The fate of one of them will show how their mother's worldliness was rewarded.

"A leading object of Maria Theresa's policy was the attainment of influence over Italy. For this purpose she first married one of the Archduchesses to the imbecile Duke of Parma. Her second manoeuvre was to contrive that Charles III. should seek the Archduchess Josepha for his younger son, the King of Naples. When everything had been settled, and the ceremony by proxy had taken place, it was thought proper to sound the Princess as to how far she felt inclined to aid her mother's designs in the Court of Naples. 'Scripture says,' was her reply, 'that when a woman is married she belongs to the country of her husband.'

"'But the policy of State?' exclaimed Maria Theresa.

"'Is that above religion?' cried the Princess.

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"This unexpected answer of the Archduchess was so totally opposite to the views of the Empress that she was for a considerable time undecided whether she would allow her daughter to depart, till, worn out by perplexities, she at last consented, but bade the Archduchess, previous to setting off for this much desired country of her new husband, to go down to the tombs, and in the vaults of her ancestors offer up to Heaven a fervent prayer for the departed souls of those she was about to leave.

"Only a few days before that a Princess had been buried in the vaults—I think Joseph the Second's second wife, who had died of the small-pox.

"The Archduchess Josepha obeyed her Imperial mother's cruel commands, took leave of all her friends and relatives, as if conscious of the result, caught the same disease, and in a few days died!

"The Archduchess Carolina was now tutored to become her sister's substitute, and when deemed adequately qualified was sent to Naples, where she certainly never forgot she was an Austrian nor the interest of the Court of Vienna. One circumstance concerning her and her mother fully illustrates the character of both. On the marriage, the Archduchess found that Spanish etiquette did not allow the Queen to have the honour of dining at the same table as the King. She apprised her mother. Maria Theresa instantly wrote to the Marchese Tenucei, then Prime Minister at the Court of Naples, to say that, if her daughter, now Queen of Naples, was to be considered less than the King her husband, she would send an army to fetch her back to Vienna, and the King might purchase a Georgian slave, for an Austrian Princess should not be thus humbled. Maria Theresa need not have given herself all this trouble, for before, the letter arrived the Queen of Naples had dismissed all the Ministry, upset the Cabinet of Naples, and turned out even the King himself from her bedchamber! So much for the overthrow of Spanish etiquette by Austrian policy. The King of Spain became outrageous at the influence of Maria Theresa, but there was no alternative.

"The other daughter of the Empress was married, as I have observed already, to the Duke of Parma for the purpose of promoting the Austrian strength in Italy against that of France, to which the Court of, Parma, as well as that of Modena, had been long attached.

"The fourth Archduchess, Marie Antoinette, being the youngest and most beautiful of the family, was destined for France. There were three older than Marie Antoinette; but she, being much lovelier than her sisters, was selected on account of her charms. Her husband was never considered by the contrivers of the scheme: he was known to have no sway whatever, not even in the choice of his own wife! But the character of Louis XV. was recollected, and calculations drawn from it, upon the probable power which youth and beauty might obtain over such a King and Court.

"It was during the time when Madame de Pompadour directed, not only the King, but all France with most despotic sway, that the union of the Archduchess Marie Antoinette with the grandson of Louis XV. was proposed. The plan received the warmest support of Choiseul, then Minister, and the ardent co-operation of Pompadour. Indeed it was to her, the Duc de Choiseul, and the Comte de Mercy, the whole affair may be ascribed. So highly was she flattered by the attention with which Maria Theresa distinguished her, in consequence of her zeal, by presents and by the title 'dear cousin,' which she used in writing to her, that she left no stone unturned till the proxy of the Dauphin was sent to Vienna, to marry Marie Antoinette in his name.

"All the interest by which this union was supported could not, however, subdue a prejudice against it, not only among many of the Court, the Cabinet, and the nation, but in the Royal Family itself. France has never looked with complacency upon alliances with the House of Austria: enemies to this one avowed themselves as soon as it was declared. The daughters of Louis XV. openly expressed their aversion; but the stronger influence prevailed, and Marie Antoinette became the Dauphine.

"Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, and afterwards of Sens, suggested the appointment of the Librarian of the College des Quatre Nations, the Abbe Vermond, as instructor to the Dauphine in French. The Abbe Vermond was accordingly despatched by Louis XV. to Vienna. The consequences of this appointment will be seen in the sequel. Perhaps not the least fatal of them arose from his gratitude to the Archbishop, who recommended him. Some years afterwards, in influencing his pupil, when Queen, to help Brienne to the Ministry, he did her and her kingdom more injury than their worst foes. Of the Abbe's power over Marie Antoinette there are various opinions; of his capacity there is but one—he was superficial and cunning. On his arrival at Vienna he became the tool of Maria Theresa. While there, he received a salary as the daughter's tutor, and when he returned to France, a much larger one as the mother's spy. He was more ambitious to be thought a great man, in his power over his pupil, than a rich one. He was too Jesuitical to wish to be deemed rich. He knew that superfluous emoluments would soon have overthrown the authority he derived from conferring, rather than receiving favours; and hence he never soared to any higher post. He was generally considered to be disinterested. How far his private fortunes benefited by his station has never appeared; nor is it known whether, by the elevation of his friend and patron to the Ministry in the time of Louis XVI., he gained anything beyond the gratification of vanity, from having been the cause: it is probable he did not, for if he had, from the general odium against that promotion, no doubt it would have been exposed, unless the influence of the Queen was his protection, as it proved in so many cases where he grossly erred. From the first he was an evil to Marie Antoinette; and ultimately habit rendered him a necessary evil.

"The education of the Dauphine was circumscribed; though very free in her manners, she was very deficient in other respects; and hence it was she so much avoided all society of females who were better informed than herself, courting in preference the lively tittle-tattle of the other sex, who were, in turn, better pleased with the gaieties of youth and beauty than the more substantial logical witticisms of antiquated Court-dowagers. To this may be ascribed her ungovernable passion for great societies, balls, masquerades, and all kinds of public and private amusements, as well as her subsequent attachment to the Duchesse de Polignac, who so much encouraged them for the pastime of her friend and sovereign. Though naturally averse to everything requiring study or application, Marie Antoinette was very assiduous in preparing herself for the parts she performed in the various comedies, farces, and cantatas given at her private theatre; and their acquirement seemed to cost her no trouble. These innocent diversions became a source of calumny against her; yet they formed almost the only part of her German education, about which Maria Theresa had been particular: the Empress-mother deemed them so valuable to her children that she ordered the celebrated Metastasio to write some of his most sublime cantatas for the evening recreations of her sisters and herself. And what can more conduce to elegant literary knowledge, or be less dangerous to the morals of the young, than domestic recitation of the finest flights of the intellect? Certain it is that Marie Antoinette never forgot her idolatry of her master Metastasio; and it would have been well for her had all concerned in her education done her equal justice. The Abbe Vermond encouraged these studies; and the King himself afterwards sanctioned the translation of the works of his Queen's revered instructor, and their publication at her own expense, in a superb edition, that she might gratify her fondness the more conveniently by reciting them in French. When Marie Antoinette herself became a mother, and oppressed from the change of circumstances, she regretted much that she had not in early life cultivated her mind more extensively. 'What a resource,' would she exclaim, is a mind well stored against human casualties!' She determined to avoid in her own offspring the error, of which she felt herself the victim, committed by her Imperial mother, for whose fault, though she suffered, she would invent excuses. 'The Empress,' she would say, was left a young widow with ten or twelve children; she had been accustomed, even during the Emperor's life, to head her vast empire, and she thought it would be unjust to sacrifice to her own children the welfare of the numerous family which afterwards devolved upon her exclusive government and protection.'

"Most unfortunately for Marie Antoinette, her great supporter, Madame de Pompadour, died before the Archduchess came to France. The pilot who was to steer the young mariner safe into port was no more, when she arrived at it. The Austrian interest had sunk with its patroness. The intriguers of the Court no sooner saw the King without an avowed favourite than they sought to give him one who should further their own views and crush the Choiseul party, which had been sustained by Pompadour. The licentious Duc de Richelieu was the pander on this

occasion. The low, vulgar Du Barry was by him introduced to the King, and Richelieu had the honour of enthroning a successor to Pompadour, and supplying Louis XV. with the last of his mistresses. Madame de Grammont, who had been the royal confidante during the interregnum, gave up to the rising star. The effect of a new power was presently seen in new events. All the Ministers known to be attached to the Austrian interest were dismissed; and the time for the arrival of the young bride, the Archduchess of Austria, who was about to be installed Dauphine of France, was at hand, and she came to meet scarcely a friend, and many foes—of whom even her beauty, her gentleness, and her simplicity, were doomed to swell the phalanx."

SECTION III.

"On the marriage night, Louis XV. said gaily to the Dauphin, who was supping with his usual heartiness, 'Don't overcharge your stomach to— night'

"'Why, I always sleep best after a hearty supper,' replied the Dauphin, with the greatest coolness.

"The supper being ended, he accompanied his Dauphine to her chamber, and at the door, with the greatest politeness, wished her a good night. Next morning, upon his saying, when he met her at breakfast, that he hoped she had slept well, Marie Antoinette replied, 'Excellently well, for I had no one to disturb me!'

"The Princesse de Guemenee, who was then at the head of the household, on hearing the Dauphine moving very early in her apartment, ventured to enter it, and, not seeing the Dauphin, exclaimed, 'Bless me! he is risen as usual!'—'Whom do you mean?' asked Marie Antoinette. The Princess misconstruing the interrogation, was going to retire, when the Dauphine said, 'I have heard a great deal of French politeness, but I think I am married to the most polite of the nation!'—'What, then, he is risen?'— 'No, no, no!' exclaimed the Dauphine, 'there has been no rising; he has never lain down here. He left me at the door of my apartment with his hat in his hand, and hastened from me as if embarrassed with my person!'

"After Marie Antoinette became a mother she would often laugh and tell Louis XVI. of his bridal politeness, and ask him if in the interim between that and the consummation he had studied his maiden aunts or his tutor on the subject. On this he would laugh most excessively.

"Scarcely was Marie Antoinette seated in her new country before the virulence of Court intrigue against her became active. She was beset on all sides by enemies open and concealed, who never slackened their persecutions. All the family of Louis XV., consisting of those maiden aunts of the Dauphin just adverted to (among whom Madame Adelaide was specially implacable), were incensed at the marriage, not only from their hatred to Austria, but because it had accomplished the ambition of an obnoxious favourite to give a wife to the Dauphin of their kingdom. On the credulous and timid mind of the Prince, then in the leading strings of this pious sisterhood, they impressed the misfortunes to his country and to the interest of the Bourbon family, which must spring from the Austrian influence through the medium of his bride. No means were left unessayed to steel him against her sway. I remember once to have heard Her Majesty remark to Louis XVI., in answer to some particular observations he made, 'These, Sire, are the sentiments of our aunts, I am sure.' And, indeed, great must have been their ascendancy over him in youth, for up to a late date he entertained a very high respect for their capacity and judgment. Great indeed must it have been to have prevailed against all the seducing allurements of a beautiful and fascinating young bride, whose amiableness, vivacity, and wit became the universal admiration, and whose graceful manner of address few ever equalled and none ever surpassed; nay, even so to have prevailed as to form one of the great sources of his aversion to consummate the marriage! Since the death of the late Queen, their mother, these four Princesses (who, it was said, if old maids, were not so from choice) had received and performed the exclusive honours of the Court. It could not have diminished their dislike for the young and lovely new-comer to see themselves under the necessity of abandoning their dignities and giving up their station. So eager were they to contrive themes of complaint against her, that when she visited them in the simple attire in

which she so much delighted, 'sans ceremonie', unaccompanied by a troop of horse and a squadron of footguards, they complained to their father, who hinted to Marie Antoinette that such a relaxation of the royal dignity would be attended with considerable injury to French manufactures, to trade, and to the respect due to her rank. 'My State and Court dresses,' replied she, 'shall not be less brilliant than those of any former Dauphine or Queen of France, if such be the pleasure of the King,—but to my grandpapa I appeal for some indulgence with respect to my undress private costume of the morning.

"It was dangerous for one in whose conduct so many prying eyes were seeking for sources of accusation to gratify herself even by the overthrow of an absurdity, when that overthrow might incur the stigma of innovation. The Court of Versailles was jealous of its Spanish inquisitorial etiquette. It had been strictly wedded to its pageantries since the time of the great Anne of Austria. The sagacious and prudent provisions of this illustrious contriver were deemed the ne plus ultra of royal female policy. A cargo of whalebone was yearly obtained by her to construct such stays for the Maids of Honour as might adequately conceal the Court accidents which generally—poor ladies! —befell them in rotation every nine months.

"But Marie Antoinette could not sacrifice her predilection for a simplicity quite English, to prudential considerations. Indeed, she was too young to conceive it even desirable. So much did she delight in being unshackled by finery that she would hurry from Court to fling off her royal robes and ornaments, exclaiming, when freed from them, 'Thank Heaven, I am out of harness!'

"But she had natural advantages, which gave her enemies a pretext for ascribing this antipathy to the established fashion to mere vanity. It is not impossible that she might have derived some pleasure from displaying a figure so beautiful, with no adornment except its native gracefulness; but how great must have been the chagrin of the Princesses, of many of the Court ladies, indeed, of all in any way ungainly or deformed, when called to exhibit themselves by the side of a bewitching person like hers, unaided by the whalebone and horse-hair paddings with which they had hitherto been made up, and which placed the best form on a level with the worst? The prudes who practised illicitly, and felt the convenience of a guise which so well concealed the effect of their frailties, were neither the least formidable nor the least numerous of the enemies created by this revolution of costume; and the Dauphine was voted by common consent—for what greater crime could there be in France? —the heretic Martin Luther of female fashions! The four Princesses, her aunts, were as bitter against the disrespect with which the Dauphine treated the armour, which they called dress, as if they themselves had benefited by the immunities it could, confer.

"Indeed, most of the old Court ladies embattled themselves against Marie Antoinette's encroachments upon their habits. The leader of them was a real medallion, whose costume, character, and notions spoke a genealogy perfectly antediluvian; who even to the latter days of Louis XV., amid a Court so irregular, persisted in her precision. So systematic a supporter of the antique could be no other than the declared foe of any change, and, of course, deemed the desertion of large sack gowns, monstrous Court hoops, and the old notions of appendages attached to them, for tight waists and short petticoats, an awful demonstration of the depravity of the time! —[The editor needs scarcely add, that the allusion of the Princess is to Madame de Noailles.]

"This lady had been first lady to the sole Queen of Louis XV. She was retained in the same station for Marie Antoinette. Her motions were regulated like clock-work. So methodical was she in all her operations of mind and body, that, from the beginning of the year to its end, she never deviated a moment. Every hour had its peculiar occupation. Her element was etiquette, but the etiquette of ages before the flood. She had her rules even for the width of petticoats, that the Queens and Princesses might have no temptation to straddle over a rivulet, or crossing, of unroyal size.

"The Queen of Louis XV. having been totally subservient in her movements night and day to the wishes of the Comtesse de Noailles, it will be readily conceived how great a shock this lady must have sustained on being informed one morning that the Dauphine had actually risen in the night, and her ladyship not by to witness a

ceremony from which most ladies would have felt no little pleasure in being spared, but which, on this occasion, admitted of no delay! Notwithstanding the Dauphine excused herself by the assurance of the urgency allowing no time to call the Countess, she nearly fainted at not having been present at that, which others sometimes faint at, if too near! This unaccustomed watchfulness so annoyed Marie Antoinette, that, determined to laugh her out of it, she ordered an immense bottle of hartshorn to be placed upon her toilet. Being asked what use was to be made of the hartshorn, she said it was to prevent her first Lady of Honour from falling into hysterics when the calls of nature were uncivil enough to exclude her from being of the party. This, as may be presumed, had its desired effect, and Marie Antoinette was ever afterwards allowed free access at least to one of her apartments, and leave to perform that in private which few individuals except Princesses do with parade and publicity.

"These things, however, planted the seeds of rancour against Marie Antoinette, which Madame de Noailles carried with her to the grave. It will be seen that she declared against her at a crisis of great importance. The laughable title of Madame Etiquette, which the Dauphine gave her, clung to her through life; though conferred only in merriment, it never was forgiven.

"The Dauphine seemed to be under a sort of fatality with regard to all those who had any power of doing her mischief either with her husband or the Court. The Duc de Vauguyon, the Dauphin's tutor, who both from principle and interest hated everything Austrian, and anything whatever which threatened to lessen his despotic influence so long exercised over the mind of his pupil, which he foresaw would be endangered were the Prince once out of his leading-strings and swayed by a young wife, made use of all the influence which old courtiers can command over the minds they have formed (more generally for their own ends than those of uprightness) to poison that of the young Prince against his bride.

"Never were there more intrigues among the female slaves in the Seraglio of Constantinople for the Grand Signior's handkerchief than were continually harassing one party against the other at the Court of Versailles. The Dauphine was even attacked through her own tutor, the Abbe Vermond. A cabal was got up between the Abbe and Madame Marsan, instructress of the sisters of Louis XVI. (the Princesses Clotilde and Elizabeth) upon the subject of education. Nothing grew out of this affair excepting a new stimulus to the party spirit against the Austrian influence, or, in other words, the Austrian Princess; and such was probably its purpose. Of course every trifle becomes Court tattle. This was made a mighty business of, for want of a worse. The royal aunts naturally took the part of Madame Marsan. They maintained that their royal nieces, the French Princesses, were much better educated than the German Archduchesses had been by the Austrian Empress. They attempted to found their assertion upon the embonpoint of the French Princesses. They said that their nieces, by the exercise of religious principles, obtained the advantage of solid flesh, while the Austrian Archduchesses, by wasting themselves in idleness and profane pursuits, grew thin and meagre, and were equally exhausted in their minds and bodies! At this the Abbe Vermond, as the tutor of Marie Antoinette, felt himself highly offended, and called on Comte de Mercy, then the Imperial Ambassador, to apprise him of the insult the Empire had received over the shoulders of the Dauphine's tutor. The Ambassador gravely replied that he should certainly send off a courier immediately to Vienna to inform the Empress that the only fault the French Court could find with Marie Antoinette was her being not so unwieldy as their own Princesses, and bringing charms with her to a bridegroom, on whom even charms so transcendent could make no impression! Thus the matter was laughed off, but it left, ridiculous as it was, new bitter enemies to the cause of the illustrious stranger.

"The new favourite, Madame du Barry, whose sway was now supreme, was of course joined by the whole vitiated intriguing Court of Versailles. The King's favourite is always that of his parasites, however degraded. The politics of the De Pompadour party were still feared, though De Pompadour herself was no more, for Choiseul had friends who were still active in his behalf. The power which had been raised to crush the power that was still struggling formed a rallying point for those who hated Austria, which the deposed Ministry had supported; and even the King's daughters, much as they abhorred the vulgarity of Du Barry, were led, by dislike for the Dauphine, to pay their devotions to their father's mistress. The influence of the rising sun, Marie Antoinette, whose beauteous rays of blooming youth warmed every heart in her favour, was feared by the new favourite as well as by the old

maidens. Louis XV. had already expressed a sufficient interest for the friendless royal stranger to awaken the jealousy of Du Barry, and she was as little disposed to share the King's affections with another, as his daughters were to welcome a future Queen from Austria in their palace. Mortified at the attachment the King daily evinced, she strained every nerve to raise a party to destroy his predilections. She called to her aid the strength of ridicule, than which no weapon is more false or deadly. She laughed at qualities she could not comprehend, and underrated what she could not imitate. The Duc de Richelieu, who had been instrumental to her good fortune, and for whom (remembering the old adage: when one hand washes the other both are made clean) she procured the command of the army—this Duke, the triumphant general of Mahon and one of the most distinguished noblemen of France, did not blush to become the secret agent of a depraved meretrix in the conspiracy to blacken the character of her victim! The Princesses, of course, joined the jealous Phryne against their niece, the daughter of the Caesars, whose only faults were those of nature, for at that time she could have no other excepting those personal perfections which were the main source of all their malice. By one considered as an usurper, by the others as an intruder, both were in consequence industrious in the quiet work of ruin by whispers and detraction.

"To an impolitic act of the Dauphine herself may be in part ascribed the unwonted virulence of the jealousy and resentment of Du Barry. The old dotard, Louis XV., was so indelicate as to have her present at the first supper of the Dauphine at Versailles. Madame la Marechale de Beaumont, the Duchesse de Choiseul, and the Duchesse de Grammont were there also; but upon the favourite taking her seat at table they expressed themselves very freely to Louis XV. respecting the insult they conceived offered to the young Dauphine, left the royal party, and never appeared again at Court till after the King's death. In consequence of this scene, Marie Antoinette, at the instigation of the Abbe Vermond, wrote to her mother, the Empress, complaining of the slight put upon her rank, birth, and dignity, and requesting the Empress would signify her displeasure to the Court of France, as she had done to that of Spain on a similar occasion in favour of her sister, the Queen of Naples.

"This letter, which was intercepted, got to the knowledge of the Court and excited some clamour. To say the worst, it could only be looked upon as an ebullition of the folly of youth. But insignificant as such matters were in fact, malignity converted them into the locust, which destroyed the fruit she was sent to cultivate.

"Maria Theresa, old fox that she was, too true to her system to retract the policy, which formerly, laid her open to the criticism of all the civilised Courts of Europe for opening the correspondence with De Pompadour, to whose influence she owed her daughter's footing in France—a correspondence whereby she degraded the dignity of her sex and the honour of her crown—and at the same time suspecting that it was not her daughter, but Vermond, from private motives, who complained, wrote the following laconic reply to the remonstrance:

"'Where the sovereign himself presides, no guest can be exceptionable.'

"Such sentiments are very much in contradiction with the character of Maria Theresa. She was always solicitous to impress the world with her high notion of moral rectitude. Certainly, such advice, however politic, ought not to have proceeded from a mother so religious as Maria Theresa wished herself to be thought; especially to a young Princess who, though enthusiastically fond of admiration, at least had discretion to see and feel the impropriety of her being degraded to the level of a female like Du Barry, and, withal, courage to avow it. This, of itself, was quite enough to shake the virtue of Marie Antoinette; or, at least, Maria Theresa's letter was of a cast to make her callous to the observance of all its scruples. And in that vitiated, depraved Court, she too soon, unfortunately, took the hint of her maternal counsellor in not only tolerating, but imitating, the object she despised. Being one day told that Du Barry was the person who most contributed to amuse Louis XV., 'Then,' said she, innocently, 'I declare myself her rival; for I will try who can best amuse my grandpapa for the future. I will exert all my powers to please and divert him, and then we shall see who can best succeed.'

"Du Barry was by when this was said, and she never forgave it. To this, and to the letter, her rancour may principally be ascribed. To all those of the Court party who owed their places and preferments to her exclusive influence, and who held them subject to her caprice, she, of course, communicated the venom.

"Meanwhile, the Dauphin saw Marie Antoinette mimicking the monkey tricks with which this low Sultana amused her dotard, without being aware of the cause. He was not pleased; and this circumstance, coupled with his natural coolness and indifference for a union he had been taught to deem impolitic and dangerous to the interests of France, created in his virtuous mind that sort of disgust which remained so long an enigma to the Court and all the kingdom, excepting his royal aunts, who did the best they could to confirm it into so decided an aversion as might induce him to impel his grandfather to annul the marriage and send the Dauphine back to Vienna."

"After the Dauphin's marriage, the Comte d'Artois and his brother Monsieur —[Afterwards Louis XVIII., and the former the present Charles X.]— returned from their travels to Versailles. The former was delighted with the young Dauphine, and, seeing her so decidedly neglected by her husband, endeavoured to console her by a marked attention, but for which she would have been totally isolated, for, excepting the old King, who became more and more enraptured with the grace, beauty, and vivacity of his young granddaughter, not another individual in the Royal Family was really interested in her favour. The kindness of a personage so important was of too much weight not to awaken calumny. It was, of course, endeavoured to be turned against her. Possibilities, and even probabilities, conspired to give a pretext for the scandal which already began to be whispered about the Dauphine and D'Artois. It would have been no wonder had a reciprocal attachment arisen between a virgin wife, so long neglected by her husband, and one whose congeniality of character pointed him out as a more desirable partner than the Dauphin. But there is abundant evidence of the perfect innocence of their intercourse. Du Barry was most earnest in endeavouring, from first to last, to establish its impurity, because the Dauphine induced the gay young Prince to join in all her girlish schemes to tease and circumvent the favourite. But when this young Prince and his brother were married to the two Princesses of Piedmont, the intimacy between their brides and the Dauphine proved there could have been no doubt that Du Barry had invented a calumny, and that no feeling existed but one altogether sisterly. The three stranger Princesses were indeed inseparable; and these marriages, with that of the French Princess, Clotilde, to the Prince of Piedmont, created considerable changes in the coteries of Court.

"The machinations against Marie Antoinette could not be concealed from the Empress–mother. An extraordinary Ambassador was consequently sent from Vienna to complain of them to the Court of Versailles, with directions that the remonstrance should be supported and backed by the Comte de Mercy, then Austrian Ambassador at the Court of France. Louis XV. was the only person to whom the communication was news. This old dilettanti of the sex was so much engaged between his seraglio of the Parc–aux–cerfs and Du Barry that he knew less of what was passing in his palace than those at Constantinople. On being informed by the Austrian Ambassador, he sent an Ambassador of his own to Vienna to assure the Empress that he was perfectly satisfied of the innocent conduct of his newly acquired granddaughter.

"Among the intrigues within intrigues of the time I mention, there was one which shows that perhaps Du Barry's distrust of the constancy of her paramour, and apprehension from the effect on him of the charms of the Dauphine, in whom he became daily more interested, were not utterly without foundation. In this instance even her friend, the Duc de Richelieu, that notorious seducer, by lending himself to the secret purposes of the King, became a traitor to the cause of the King's favourite, to which he had sworn allegiance, and which he had supported by defaming her whom he now became anxious to make his Queen.

"It has already been said, that the famous Duchesse de Grammont was one of the confidential friends of Louis XV. before he took Du Barry under his especial protection. Of course, there can be no difficulty in conceiving how likely a person she would be, to aid any purpose of the King which should displace the favourite, by whom she herself had been obliged to retire, by ties of a higher order, to which she might prove instrumental.

"Louis XV. actually flattered himself with the hope of obtaining advantages from the Dauphin's coolness towards the Dauphine. He encouraged it, and even threw many obstacles in the way of the consummation of the marriage. The apartments of the young couple were placed at opposite ends of the palace, so that the Dauphin could not approach that of his Dauphine without a publicity which his bashfulness could not brook.

"Louis XV. now began to act upon his secret passion to supplant his grandson, and make the Dauphine his own Queen, by endeavouring to secure her affections to himself. His attentions were backed by gifts of diamonds, pearls, and other valuables, and it was at this period that Boehmer, the jeweller, first received the order for that famous necklace, which subsequently produced such dreadful consequences, and which was originally meant as a kingly present to the intended Queen, though afterwards destined for Du Barry, had not the King died before the completion of the bargain for it.

"The Queen herself one day told me, 'Heaven knows if ever I should have had the blessing of being a mother had I not one evening surprised the Dauphin, when the subject was adverted to, in the expression of a sort of regret at our being placed so far asunder from each other. Indeed, he never honoured me with any proof of his affection so explicit as that you have just witnessed'—for the King had that moment kissed her, as he left the apartment—'from the time of our marriage till the consummation. The most I ever received from him was a squeeze of the hand in secret. His extreme modesty, and perhaps his utter ignorance of the intercourse with woman, dreaded the exposure of crossing the palace to my bedchamber; and no doubt the accomplishment would have occurred sooner, could it have been effectuated in privacy. The hint he gave emboldened me with courage, when he next left me, as usual, at the door of my apartment, to mention it to the Duchesse de Grammont, then the confidential friend of Louis XV., who laughed me almost out of countenance; saying, in her gay manner of expressing herself, "If I were as young and as beautiful a wife as you are I should certainly not trouble myself to remove the obstacle by going to him while there were others of superior rank ready to supply his place." Before she quitted me, however, she said: "Well, child, make yourself easy: you shall no longer be separated from the object of your wishes: I will mention it to the King, your grandpapa, and he will soon order your husband's apartment to be changed for one nearer your own." And the change shortly afterwards took place.

"'Here,' continued the Queen, 'I accuse myself of a want of that courage which every virtuous wife ought to exercise in not having complained of the visible neglect shown me long, long before I did; for this, perhaps, would have spared both of us the many bitter pangs originating in the seeming coldness, whence have arisen all the scandalous stories against my character—which have often interrupted the full enjoyment I should have felt had they not made me tremble for the security of that attachment, of which I had so many proofs, and which formed my only consolation amid all the malice that for years had been endeavouring to deprive me of it! So far as regards my husband's estimation, thank fate, I have defied their wickedness! Would to Heaven I could have been equally secure in the estimation of my people—the object nearest to my heart, after the King and my dear children!'

[The Dauphine could not understand the first allusion of the Duchess; but it is evident that the vile intriguer took this opportunity of sounding her upon what she was commissioned to carry on in favour of Louis XV., and it is equally apparent that when she heard Marie Antoinette express herself decidedly in favour of her young husband, and distinctly saw how utterly groundless were the hopes of his secret rival, she was led thereby to abandon her wicked project; and perhaps the change of apartments was the best mask that could have been devised to hide the villany.]

"The present period appears to have been one of the happiest in the life of Marie Antoinette. Her intimate society consisted of the King's brothers, and their Princesses, with the King's saint-like sister Elizabeth; and they lived entirely together, excepting when the Dauphine dined in public. These ties seemed to be drawn daily closer for some time, till the subsequent intimacy with the Polignacs. Even when the Comtesse d'Artois lay-in, the Dauphine, then become Queen, transferred her parties to the apartments of that Princess, rather than lose the gratification of her society.

"During all this time, however, Du Barry, the Duc d'Aiguillon, and the aunts-Princesses, took special care to keep themselves between her and any tenderness on the part of the husband Dauphin, and, from different motives

uniting in one end, tried every means to get the object of their hatred sent back to Vienna."

SECTION IV.

"The Empress—mother was thoroughly aware of all that was going on. Her anxiety, not only about her daughter, but her State policy, which it may be apprehended was in her mind the stronger motive of the two, encouraged the machinations of an individual who must now appear upon the stage of action, and to whose arts may be ascribed the worst of the sufferings of Marie Antoinette.

"I allude to the Cardinal Prince de Rohan.

"At this time he was Ambassador at the Court of Vienna. The reliance the Empress placed on him favoured his criminal machinations against her daughter's reputation. He was the cause of her sending spies to watch the conduct of the Dauphine, besides a list of persons proper for her to cultivate, as well as of those it was deemed desirable for her to exclude from her confidence.

"As the Empress knew all those who, though high in office in Versailles, secretly received pensions from Vienna, she could, of course, tell, without much expense of sagacity, who were in the Austrian interest. The Dauphine was warned that she was surrounded by persons who were not her friends.

"The conduct of Maria Theresa towards her daughter, the Queen of Naples, will sufficiently explain how much the Empress must have been chagrined at the absolute indifference of Marie Antoinette to the State policy which was intended to have been served in sending her to France. A less fitting instrument for the purpose could not have been selected by the mother. Marie Antoinette had much less of the politician about her than either of her surviving sisters; and so much was she addicted to amusement, that she never even thought of entering into State affairs till forced by the King's neglect of his most essential prerogatives, and called upon by the Ministers themselves to screen them from responsibility. Indeed, the latter cause prevailed upon her to take her seat in the Cabinet Council (though she took it with great reluctance) long before she was impelled thither by events and her consciousness of its necessity. She would often exclaim to me: 'How happy I was during the lifetime of Louis XV.! No cares to disturb my peaceful slumbers! No responsibility to agitate my mind! No fears of erring, of partiality, of injustice, to break in upon my enjoyments! All, all happiness, my dear Princess, vanishes from the bosom of a woman if she once deviate from the prescribed domestic character of her sex! Nothing was ever framed more wise than the Salique Laws, which in France and many parts of Germany exclude women from reigning, for few of us have that masculine capacity so necessary to conduct with impartiality and justice the affairs of State!'

"To this feeling of the impropriety of feminine interference in masculine duties, coupled with her attachment to France, both from principle and feeling, may be ascribed the neglect of her German connexions, which led to many mortifying reproaches, and the still more galling espionage to which she was subjected in her own palace by her mother. These are, however, so many proofs of the falsehood of the allegations by which she suffered so deeply afterwards, of having sacrificed the interests of her husband's kingdom to her predilection for her mother's empire.

"The subtle Rohan designed to turn the anxiety of Maria Theresa about the Dauphine to account, and he was also aware that the ambition of the Empress was paramount in Maria Theresa's bosom to the love for her child. He was about to play a deep and more than double game. By increasing the mother's jealousy of the daughter, and at the same time enhancing the importance of the advantages afforded by her situation, to forward the interests of the mother, he, no doubt, hoped to get both within his power: for who can tell what wild expectation might not have animated such a mind as Rohan's at the prospect of governing not only the Court of France but that of Austria?—the Court of France, through a secret influence of his own dictation thrown around the Dauphine by the

mother's alarm; and that of Austria, through a way he pointed out, in which the object that was most longed for by the mother's ambition seemed most likely to be achieved! While he endeavoured to make Maria Theresa beset her daughter with the spies I have mentioned, and which were generally of his own selection, he at the same time endeavoured to strengthen her impression of how important it was to her schemes to insure the daughter's co-operation. Conscious of the eagerness of Maria Theresa for the recovery of the rich province which Frederick the Great of Prussia had wrested from her ancient dominions, he pressed upon her credulity the assurance that the influence of which the Dauphine was capable over Louis XV., by the youthful beauty's charms acting upon the dotard's admiration, would readily induce that monarch to give such aid to Austria as must insure the restoration of what it lost. Silesia, it has been before observed, was always a topic by means of which the weak side of Maria Theresa could be attacked with success. There is generally some peculiar frailty in the ambitious, through which the artful can throw them off their guard. The weak and tyrannical Philip II., whenever the recovery of Holland and the Low Countries was proposed to him, was always ready to rush headlong into any scheme for its accomplishment; the bloody Queen Mary, his wife, declared that at her death the loss of Calais would be found engraven on her heart; and to Maria Theresa, Silesia was the Holland and the Calais for which her wounded pride was thirsting.

"But Maria Theresa was wary, even in the midst of the credulity of her ambition. The Baron de Neni was sent by her privately to Versailles to examine, personally, whether there was anything in Marie Antoinette's conduct requiring the extreme vigilance which had been represented as indispensable. The report of the Baron de Neni to his royal mistress was such as to convince her she had been misled and her daughter misrepresented by Rohan. The Empress instantly forbade him her presence.

"The Cardinal upon this, unknown to the Court of Vienna, and indeed, to every one, except his factotum, principal agent, and secretary, the Abbe Georgel, left the Austrian capital, and came to Versailles, covering his disgrace by pretended leave of absence. On seeing Marie Antoinette he fell enthusiastically in love with her. To gain her confidence he disclosed the conduct which had been observed towards her by the Empress, and, in confirmation of the correctness of his disclosure, admitted that he had himself chosen the spies which had been set on her. Indignant at such meanness in her mother, and despising the prelate, who could be base enough to commit a deed equally corrupt and uncalled for, and even thus wantonly betrayed when committed, the Dauphine suddenly withdrew from his presence, and gave orders that he should never be admitted to any of her parties.

"But his imagination was too much heated by a guilty passion of the blackest hue to recede; and his nature too presumptuous and fertile in expedients to be disconcerted. He soon found means to conciliate both mother and daughter; and both by pretending to manage with the one the self-same plot which, with the other, he was recommending himself by pretending to overthrow. To elude detection he interrupted the regular correspondence between the Empress and the Dauphine, and created a coolness by preventing the communications which would have unmasked him, that gave additional security to the success of his deception.

"By the most diabolical arts he obtained an interview with the Dauphine, in which he regained her confidence. He made her believe that he had been commissioned by her mother, as she had shown so little interest for the house of Austria, to settle a marriage for her sister, the Archduchess Elizabeth, with Louis XV. The Dauphine was deeply affected at the statement. She could not conceal her agitation. She involuntarily confessed how much she should deplore such an alliance. The Cardinal instantly perceived his advantage, and was too subtle to let it pass. He declared that, as it was to him the negotiation had been confided, if the Dauphine would keep her own counsel, never communicate their conversation to the Empress, but leave the whole matter to his management and only assure him that he was forgiven, he would pledge himself to arrange things to her satisfaction. The Dauphine, not wishing to see another raised to the throne over her head and to her scorn, under the assurance that no one knew of the intention or could prevent it but the Cardinal, promised him her faith and favour; and thus rashly fell into the springs of this wily intriguer.

"Exulting to find Marie Antoinette in his power, the Cardinal left Versailles as privately as he arrived there, for Vienna. His next object was to ensnare the Empress, as he had done her daughter; and by a singular caprice, fortune, during his absence, had been preparing for him the means.

"The Abbe Georgel, his secretary, by underhand manoeuvres, to which he was accustomed, had obtained access to all the secret State correspondence, in which the Empress had expressed herself fully to the Comte de Mercy relative to the views of Russia and Prussia upon Poland, whereby her own plans were much thwarted. The acquirement of copies of these documents naturally gave the Cardinal free access to the Court and a ready introduction once more to the Empress. She was too much committed by his possession of such weapons not to be most happy to make her peace with him; and he was too sagacious not to make the best use of his opportunity. To regain her confidence, he betrayed some of the subaltern agents, through whose treachery he had procured his evidences, and, in farther confirmation of his resources, showed the Empress several dispatches from her own Ministers to the Courts of Russia and Prussia. He had long, he said, been in possession of similar views of aggrandisement, upon which these Courts were about to act; and had, for a while, even incurred Her Imperial Majesty's displeasure, merely because he was not in a situation fully to explain; but that he had now thought of the means to crush their schemes before they could be put in practice. He apprised her of his being aware that Her Imperial Majesty's Ministers were actively carrying on a correspondence with Russia, with a view of joining her in checking the French co-operation with the Grand Signior; and warned her that if this design were secretly pursued, it would defeat the very views she had in sharing in the spoliation of Poland; and if openly, it would be deemed an avowal of hostilities against the Court of France, whose political system would certainly impel it to resist any attack upon the divan of Constantinople, that the balance of power in Europe might be maintained against the formidable ambition of Catherine, whose gigantic hopes had been already too much realised.

"Maria Theresa was no less astonished at these disclosures of the Cardinal than the Dauphine had been at his communication concerning her. She plainly saw that all her plans were known, and might be defeated from their detection.

"The Cardinal, having succeeded in alarming the Empress, took from his pocket a fabulous correspondence, hatched by his secretary, the Abbe Georgel. 'There, Madame,' said he, 'this will convince Your Majesty that the warm interest I have taken in your Imperial house has carried me farther than I was justified in having gone; but seeing the sterility of the Dauphine, or, as it is reported by some of the Court, the total disgust the Dauphin has to consummate the marriage, the coldness of your daughter towards the interest of your Court, and the prospect of a race from the Comtesse d'Artois, for the consequences of which there is no answering, I have, unknown to Your Imperial Majesty, taken upon myself to propose to LOUIS XV. a marriage with the Archduchess Elizabeth, who, on becoming Queen of France, will immediately have it in her power to forward the Austrian interest; for LOUIS XV., as the first proof of his affection to his young bride, will at once secure to your Empire the aid you stand so much in need of against the ambition of these two rising States. The recovery of Your Imperial Majesty's ancient dominions may then be looked upon as accomplished from the influence of the French Cabinet.

"The bait was swallowed. Maria Theresa was so overjoyed at this scheme that she totally forgot all former animosity against the Cardinal. She was encouraged to ascribe the silence of Marie Antoinette (whose letters had been intercepted by the Cardinal himself) to her resentment of this project concerning her sister; and the deluded Empress, availing herself of the pretended zeal of the Cardinal for the interest of her family, gave him full powers to return to France and secretly negotiate the alliance for her daughter Elizabeth, which was by no means to be disclosed to the Dauphine till the King's proxy should be appointed to perform the ceremony at Vienna. This was all the Cardinal wished for.

"Meanwhile, in order to obtain a still greater ascendancy over the Court of France, he had expended immense sums to bribe secretaries and Ministers; and couriers were even stopped to have copies taken of all the correspondence to and from Austria.

At the same crisis the Empress was informed by Prince Kaunitz that the Cardinal and his suite at the palace of the French Ambassador carried on such an immense and barefaced traffic of French manufactures of every description that Maria Theresa thought proper, in order to prevent future abuse, to abolish the privilege which gave to Ministers and Ambassadors an opportunity of defrauding the revenue. Though this law was levelled exclusively at the Cardinal, it was thought convenient under the circumstances to avoid irritating him, and it was consequently made general. But, the Comte de Mercy now obtaining some clue to his duplicity, an intimation was given to the Court at Versailles, to which the King replied, 'If the Empress be dissatisfied with the French Ambassador, he shall be recalled.' But though completely unmasked, none dared publicly to accuse him, each party fearing a discovery of its own intrigue. His official recall did not in consequence take place for some time; and the Cardinal, not thinking it prudent to go back till Louis XV. should be no more, lest some unforeseen discovery of his project for supplying her royal paramour with a Queen should rouse Du Barry to get his Cardinalship sent to the Bastille for life, remained fixed in his post, waiting for events.

"At length Louis XV. expired, and the Cardinal returned to Versailles. He contrived to obtain a private audience of the young Queen. He presumed upon her former facility in listening to him, and was about to betray the last confidence of Maria Theresa; but the Queen, shocked at the knowledge which she had obtained of his having been equally treacherous to her and to her mother, in disgust and alarm left the room without receiving a letter he had brought her from Maria Theresa, and without deigning to address a single word to him. In the heat of her passion and resentment, she was nearly exposing all she knew of his infamies to the King, when the coolheaded Princesse Elizabeth opposed her, from the seeming imprudence of such an abrupt discovery; alleging that it might cause an open rupture between the two Courts, as it had already been the source of a reserve and coolness, which had not yet been explained. The Queen was determined never more to commit herself by seeing the Cardinal. She accordingly sent for her mother's letter, which he himself delivered into the hands of her confidential messenger, who advised the Queen not to betray the Cardinal to the King, lest, in so doing, she should never be able to guard herself against the domestic spies, by whom, perhaps, she was even yet surrounded! The Cardinal, conceiving, from the impunity of his conduct, that he still held the Queen in check, through the influence of her fears of his disclosing her weakness upon the subject of the obstruction she threw in the way of her sister's marriage, did not resign the hope of converting that ascendancy to his future profit.

"The fatal silence to which Her Majesty was thus unfortunately advised I regret from the bottom of my soul! All the successive vile plots of the Cardinal against the peace and reputation of the Queen may be attributed to this ill-judged prudence! Though it resulted from an honest desire of screening Her Majesty from the resentment or revenge to which she might have subjected herself from this villain, who had already injured her in her own estimation for having been credulous enough to have listened to him, yet from this circumstance it is that the Prince de Rohan built the foundation of all the after frauds and machinations with which he blackened the character and destroyed the comfort of his illustrious victim. It is obvious that a mere exclusion from Court was too mild a punishment for such offences, and it was but too natural that such a mind as his, driven from the royal presence, and, of course, from all the noble societies to which it led (the anti-Court party excepted), should brood over the means of inveigling the Queen into a consent for his reappearance before her and the gay world, which was his only element, and if her favour should prove unattainable to revenge himself by her ruin.

"On the Cardinal's return to France, all his numerous and powerful friends beset the King and Queen to allow of his restoration to his embassy; but though on his arrival at Versailles, finding the Court had removed to Compiègne, he had a short audience there of the King, all efforts in his favour were thrown away. Equally unsuccessful was every intercession with the Empress-mother. She had become thoroughly awakened to his worthlessness, and she declared she would never more even receive him in her dominions as a visitor. The Cardinal, being apprised of this by some of his intimates, was at last persuaded to give up the idea of further importunity; and, pocketing his disgrace, retired with his hey dukes and his secretary, the Abbe Georgel, to whom may be attributed all the artful intrigues of his disgraceful diplomacy.

"It is evident that Rohan had no idea, during all his schemes to supplant the Dauphine by marrying her sister to the King, that the secret hope of Louis XV. had been to divorce the Dauphin and marry the slighted bride himself. Perhaps it is fortunate that Rohan did not know this. A brain so fertile in mischief as his might have converted such a circumstance to baneful uses. But the death of Louis XV. put an end to all the then existing schemes for a change in her position. It was to her a real, though but a momentary triumph. From the hour of her arrival she had a powerful party to cope with; and the fact of her being an Austrian, independent of the jealousy created by her charms, was, in itself, a spell to conjure up armies, against which she stood alone, isolated in the face of embattled myriads! But she now reared her head, and her foes trembled in her presence. Yet she could not guard against the moles busy in the earth secretly to undermine her. Nay, had not Louis XV. died at the moment he did, there is scarcely a doubt, from the number and the quality of the hostile influences working on the credulity of the young Dauphin, that Marie Antoinette would have been very harshly dealt with, —even the more so from the partiality of the dotard who believed himself to be reigning. But she has been preserved from her enemies to become their sovereign; and if her crowned brow has erewhile been stung by thorns in its coronal, let me not despair of their being hereafter smothered in yet unblown roses.