Memoirs of Cardinal de Retz, Volume 1

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HISTORIC COURT MEMOIRS.

MEMOIRS OF JEAN FRANCOIS PAUL de GONDI, CARDINAL DE RETZ, V1
Written by Himself

Being Historic Court Memoirs of the Great Events during the Minority of
Louis XIV. and the Administration of Cardinal Mazarin.

ORIGINAL PREFACE.

Our Author, John Francis Paul de Gondi, Cardinal de Retz, Sovereign of Commercy, Prince of Euville, second Archbishop of Paris, Abbot of Saint Denis in France, was born at Montmirail, in Brie, in October, 1614.

His father was Philippe Emanuel de Gondi, Comte, de Joigni, General of the Galleys of France and Knight of the King's Orders; and his mother was Frances Marguerite, daughter of the Comte de Rochepot, Knight of the King's Orders, and of Marie de Lannoy, sovereign of Commercy and Euville.

Pierre de Gondi, Duc de Retz, was his brother, whose daughter was the Duchesse de Lesdiguieres.

His grandfather was Albert de Gondi, Duc de Retz, Marquis de Belle Isle, a Peer of France, Marshal and General of the Galleys, Colonel of the French Horse, First Gentleman of the Bedchamber, and Great Chamberlain to the Kings Charles IX. and Henri III.

This history was first printed in Paris in 1705, at the expense of the Duchesse de Lesdiguieres, the last of this noble family, whose estate fell after her decease to that of Villeroy.

His preceptor was the famous Vincent de Paul, Almoner to Queen Anne of Austria.

In 1627 he was made a Canon of the Cathedral of Paris by his uncle, Jean Francois de Gondi, first archbishop of that city, and was not long after created a Doctor of the Sorbonne.

In 1643 he was appointed Coadjutor of the archbishopric of Paris, with the title of Archbishop of Corinth, during which, such was his pastoral vigilance that the most important affairs of the Church were committed to his care.

As to his general character, if we take it from his own Memoirs, he had such presence of mind, and so dexterously improved all opportunities which fortune presented to him, that it seemed as if he had foreseen or desired them. He knew how to put a good gloss upon his failings, and oftentimes verily believed he was really the man which he affected to be only in appearance. He was a man of bright parts, but no conduct, being violent and inconstant in his intrigues of love as well as those of politics, and so indiscreet as to boast of his successful amours with certain ladies whom he ought not to have named. He affected pomp and splendour, though his profession demanded simplicity and humility. He was continually shifting parties, being a loyal subject one day and the next a rebel, one time a sworn enemy to the Prime Minister, and by and by his zealous friend; always aiming to make himself formidable or necessary. As a pastor he had engrossed the love and confidence of the people, and as a statesman he artfully played them off against their sovereign. He studied characters thoroughly, and no man painted them in truer colours more to his own purpose. Sometimes he confesses his weaknesses, and at other times betrays his self−flattery.

It being his fate to be imprisoned by Mazarin, first at Vincennes and then at Nantes, he made his escape to Rome, and in 1656 retired to Franche Comte, where Cardinal Mazarin gave orders for his being arrested; upon which he posted to Switzerland, and thence to Constance, Strasburg, Ulm, Augsburg, Frankfort, and Cologne, to which latter place Mazarin sent men to take him dead or alive; whereupon he retired to Holland, and made a trip from one town to another till 1661, when, Cardinal Mazarin dying, our Cardinal went as far as Valenciennes on his way to Paris, but was not suffered to come further; for the King and Queen−mother would not be satisfied without his resignation of the archbishopric of Paris, to which he at last submitted upon advantageous terms for himself and an amnesty for all his adherents. But still the Court carried it so severely to the Cardinal that they would not let him go and pay his last devoirs to his father when on his dying bed. At length, however, after abundance of solicitation, he had leave to go and wait upon the King and Queen, who, on the death of Pope Alexander VII., sent him to Rome to assist at the election of his successor.

No wonder that King Charles II. of England promised to intercede for the Cardinal's reestablishment; for when the royal family were starving, as it were, in their exile at Paris, De Retz did more for them than all the French Court put together; and, upon the King's promise to take the Roman Catholics of England under his protection after his restoration, he sent an abbot to Rome to solicit the Pope to lend him money, and to dispose the English Catholics in his favour.

He would fain have returned his hat to the new Pope, but his Holiness, at the solicitation of Louis XIV., ordered him to keep it. After this he chose a total retirement, lived with exemplary piety, considerably retrenched

his expenses, and hardly allowed himself common necessaries, in order to save money to pay off a debt of three millions, which he had the happiness to discharge, and to balance all accounts with the world before his death, which happened at Paris on the 24th of August, 1679, in the 65th year of his age.

BOOK I.

MADAME:—Though I have a natural aversion to give you the history of my own life, which has been chequered with such a variety of different adventures, yet I had rather sacrifice my reputation to the commands of a lady for whom I have so peculiar a regard than not disclose the most secret springs of my actions and the inmost recesses of my soul.

By the caprice of fortune many mistakes of mine have turned to my credit, and I very much doubt whether it would be prudent in me to remove the veil with which some of them are covered. But as I am resolved to give you a naked, impartial account of even the most minute passages of my life ever since I have been capable of reflection, so I most humbly beg you not to be surprised at the little art, or, rather, great disorder, with which I write my narrative, but to consider that, though the diversity of incidents may sometimes break the thread of the history, yet I will tell you nothing but with all that sincerity which the regard I have for you demands. And to convince you further that I will neither add to nor diminish from the plain truth, I shall set my name in the front of the work.

False glory and false modesty are the two rocks on which men who have written their own lives have generally split, but which Thuanus among the moderns and Caesar among the ancients happily escaped. I doubt not you will do me the justice to believe that I do not pretend to compare myself with those great writers in any respect but sincerity,—a virtue in which we are not only permitted, but commanded, to rival the greatest heroes.

I am descended from a family illustrious in France and ancient in Italy, and born upon a day remarkable for the taking of a monstrous sturgeon in a small river that runs through the country of Montmirail, in Brie, the place of my nativity.

I am not so vain as to be proud of having it thought that I was ushered into the world with a prodigy or a miracle, and I should never have mentioned this trifling circumstance had it not been for some libels since published by my enemies, wherein they affect to make the said sturgeon a presage of the future commotions in this kingdom, and me the chief author of them.

I beg leave to make a short reflection on the nature of the mind of man. I believe there never was a more honest soul in the world than my father's; I might say his temper was the very essence of virtue. For though he saw I was too much inclined to duels and gallantry ever to make a figure as an ecclesiastic, yet his great love for his eldest son—not the view of the archbishopric of Paris, which was then in his family— made him resolve to devote me to the service of the Church. For he was so conscious of his reasons, that I could even swear he would have protested from the very bottom of his heart that he had no other motive than the apprehension of the dangers to which a contrary profession might expose my soul. So true it is that nothing is so subject to delusion as piety: all sorts of errors creep in and hide themselves under that veil; it gives a sanction to all the turns of imagination, and the honesty of the intention is not sufficient to guard against it. In a word, after all I have told you, I turned priest, though it would have been long enough first had it not been for the following accident.

The Duc de Retz, head of our family, broke at that time, by the King's order, the marriage treaty concluded some years before between the Duc de Mercoeur —[Louis, Duc de Mercoeur, since Cardinal de Vendome, father of the Duc de Vendome, and Grand Prior, died 1669.]— and his daughter, and next day came to my father and agreeably surprised him by telling him he was resolved to give her to his cousin to reunite the family.

As I knew she had a sister worth above 80,000 livres a year, I, that very instant, thought of a double match. I had no hopes they would think of me, knowing how things stood, so I was resolved to provide for myself.

Having got a hint that my father did not intend to carry me to the wedding, as, foreseeing, it may be, what happened, I pretended to be better pleased with my profession, to be touched by what my father had so often laid before me on that subject, and I acted my part so well that they believed I was quite another man.

My father resolved to carry me into Brittany, for the reason that I had shown no inclination that way. We found Mademoiselle de Retz at Beaupreau, in Anjou. I looked on the eldest only as my sister, but immediately considered Mademoiselle de Scepaux (so the youngest was called) as my mistress.

I thought her very handsome, her complexion the most charming in the world, lilies and roses in abundance, admirable eyes, a very pretty mouth, and what she wanted in stature was abundantly made up by the prospect of

80,000 livres a year and of the Duchy of Beaupreau, and by a thousand chimeras which I formed on these real foundations.

I played my game nicely from the beginning, and acted the ecclesiastic and the devotee both in the journey and during my stay there; nevertheless, I paid my sighs to the fair one,—she perceived it. I spoke at last, and she heard me, but not with that complacency which I could have wished.

But observing she had a great kindness for an old chambermaid, sister to one of my monks of Buzai, I did all I could to gain her, and by the means of a hundred pistoles down, and vast promises, I succeeded. She made her mistress believe that she was designed for a nunnery, and I, for my part, told her that I was doomed to nothing less than a monastery. She could not endure her sister, because she was her father's darling, and I was not overfond of my brother,—[Pierre de Gondi, Duc de Retz, who died in 1676.]— for the same reason. This resemblance in our fortunes contributed much to the uniting of our affections, which I persuaded myself were reciprocal, and I resolved to carry her to Holland.

Indeed, there was nothing more easy, for Machecoul, whither we were come from Beaupreau, was no more than half a league from the sea. But money was the only thing wanting, for my treasury, was so drained by the gift of the hundred pistoles above mentioned that I had not a sou left. But I found a supply by telling my father that, as the farming of my abbeys was taxed with the utmost rigour of the law, so I thought myself obliged in conscience to take the administration of them into my own hands. This proposal, though not pleasing, could not be rejected, both because it was regular and because it made him in some measure believe that I would not fail to keep my benefices, since I was willing to take care of them. I went the next day to let Buzai,—[One of his abbeys.]— which is but five leagues from Machecoul. I treated with a Nantes merchant, whose name was Jucatieres, who took advantage of my eagerness, and for 4,000 crowns ready money got a bargain that made his fortune. I thought I had 4,000,000, and was just securing one of the Dutch pinks, which are always in the road of Retz, when the following accident happened, which broke all my measures.

Mademoiselle de Retz (for she had taken that name after her sister's marriage) had the finest eyes in the world, and they never were so beautiful as when she was languishing in love, the charms of which I never yet saw equalled. We happened to dine at a lady's house, a league from Machecoul, where Mademoiselle de Retz, looking in the glass at an assembly of ladies, displayed all those tender, lively, moving airs which the Italians call 'morbidezza', or the lover's languish. But unfortunately she was not aware that Palluau, since Marechal de Clerambaut, was behind her, who observed her airs, and being very much attached to Madame de Retz, with whom he had in her tender years been very familiar, told her faithfully what he had observed.

Madame de Retz, who mortally hated her sister, disclosed it that very night to her father, who did not fail to impart it to mine. The next morning, at the arrival of the post from Paris, all was in a hurry, my father pretending to have received very pressing news; and, after our taking a slight though public leave of the ladies, my father carried me to sleep that night at Nantes. I was, as you may imagine, under very great surprise and concern; for I could not guess the cause of this sudden departure. I had nothing to reproach myself with upon the score of my conduct; neither had I the least suspicion that Palluau had seen anything more than ordinary till I arrived at Orleans, where the matter was cleared up, for my brother, to prevent my escape, which I vainly attempted several times on my journey, seized my strong box, in which was my money, and then I understood that I was betrayed; in what grief, then, I arrived at Paris, I leave you to imagine.

I found there Equilli, Vasse's uncle, and my first cousin, who, I daresay, was one of the most honest men of his time, and loved me from his very soul. I apprised him of my design to run away with Mademoiselle de Retz. He heartily approved of my project, not only because it would be a very advantageous match for me, but because he was persuaded that a double alliance was necessary to secure the establishment of the family.

The Cardinal de Richelieu —[Armand Jean du Plesais, Cardinal de Richelieu, was born in 1585, and died in 1642.]— (then Prime Minister) mortally hated the Princesse de Guemenee, because he was persuaded she had crossed his amours with the Queen,—[Anne of Austria, eldest daughter of Philip HL, King of Spain, and wife of Louis XIII., died 1666.]— and had a hand in the trick played him by Madame du Fargis, one of the Queen's dressing women, who showed her Majesty (Marie de Medicis) a love− letter written by his Eminence to the Queen, her daughter−in−law. The Cardinal pushed his resentment so far that he attempted to force the Marechal de Breze, his brother−in−law, and captain of the King's Life− guards, to expose Madame de Guemenee's letters, which were found in M. de Montmorency's—[Henri de Montmorency was apprehended on the 1st of September,

1632, and beheaded in Toulouse in November of the same year.] —coffer when he was arrested at Chateau Naudari. But the Marechal de Breze had so much honour and generosity as to return them to Madame de Guemenee. He was, nevertheless, a very extravagant gentleman; but the Cardinal de Richelieu, perceiving he had been formerly honoured by some kind of relation to him, and dreading his angry excursions and preachments before the King, who had some consideration for his person, bore with him very patiently for the sake of settling peace in his own family, which he passionately longed to unite and establish, but which was the only thing out of his power, who could do whatever else he pleased in France. For the Marechal de Breze had conceived so strong an aversion to M. de La Meilleraye, who was then Grand Master of the Artillery, and afterwards Marechal de La Meilleraye, that he could not endure him. He did not imagine that the Cardinal would ever look upon a man who, though his first cousin, was of a mean extraction, had a most contemptible aspect, and, if fame says true, not one extraordinary good quality.

The Cardinal was of another mind, and had a great opinion—indeed, with abundance of reason—of M. de La Meilleraye's courage; but he esteemed his military capacity infinitely too much, though in truth it was not contemptible. In a word, he designed him for that post which we have since seen so gloriously filled by M. de Turenne.

You may, by what has been said, judge of the divisions that were in Cardinal de Richelieu's family, and how much he was concerned to appease them. He laboured at them with great application, and for this end thought he could not do better than to unite these two heads of the faction in a close confidence with himself, exclusive of all others. To this end he used them jointly and in common as the confidants of his amours, which certainly were neither suitable to the lustre of his actions nor the grandeur of his life; for Marion de Lorme, one of his mistresses, was little better than a common prostitute. Another of his concubines was Madame de Fruges, that old gentlewoman who was so often seen sauntering in the enclosure. The first used to come to his apartment in the daytime, and he went by night to visit the other, who was but the pitiful cast−off of Buckingham and Epienne. The two confidants introduced him there in coloured clothes; for they had made up a hasty peace, to which Madame de Guemenee nearly fell a sacrifice.

M. de La Meilleraye, whom they called the Grand Master, was in love with Madame de Guemenee, but she could not love him; and he being, both in his own nature and by reason of his great favour with the Cardinal, the most imperious man living, took it very ill that he was not beloved. He complained, but the lady was insensible; he huffed and bounced, but was laughed to scorn. He thought he had her in his power because the Cardinal, to whom he had declared his rage against her, had given him her letters, as above mentioned, which were written to M. de Montmorency, and, therefore, in his menaces he let fall some hints with relation to those letters to the disadvantage of Madame de Guemenee. She thereupon ridiculed him no longer, but went almost raving mad, and fell into such an inconceivable melancholy that you would not have known her, and retired to Couperai, where she would let nobody see her.

As soon as I applied my mind to study I resolved at the same time to take the Cardinal de Richelieu for my pattern, though my friends opposed it as too pedantic; but I followed my first designs, and began my course with good success. I was afterwards followed by all persons of quality of the same profession; but, as I was the first, the Cardinal was pleased with my fancy, which, together with the good offices done me by the Grand Master with the Cardinal, made him speak well of me on several occasions, wonder that I had never made my court to him, and at the same time he ordered M. de Lingendes, since Bishop of Magon, to bring me to his house.

This was the source of my first disgrace, for, instead of complying with these offers of the Cardinal and with the entreaties of the Grand Master, urging me to go and make my court to him, I returned the most trifling excuses and apologies; one time I pretended to be sick and went into the country. In short, I did enough to let them see that I did not care to be a dependent on the Cardinal de Richelieu, who was certainly a very great man, but had this particular trait in his genius,—to take notice of trifles. Of this he gave me the following instance: The history of the conspiracy of Jean Louis de Fiesque,—[Author of "The Conspiracy of Genoa." He was drowned on the 1st of January, 1557.]— which I had written at eighteen years of age, being conveyed by Boisrobert into the Cardinal's hands, he was heard to say, in the presence of Marechal d'Estrees and M. de Senneterre, "This is a dangerous genius." This was told my father that very night by M. de Senneterre, and I took it as spoken to myself.

The success that I had in the acts of the Sorbonne made me fond of that sort of reputation, which I had a mind to push further, and thought I might succeed in sermons. Instead of preaching first, as I was advised, in the little

convents, I preached on Ascension, Corpus Christi Day, etc., before the Queen and the whole Court, which assurance gained me a good character from the Cardinal; for, when he was told how well I had performed, he said, "There is no judging of things by the event; the man is a coxcomb." Thus you see I had enough to do for one of two−and−twenty years of age.

M. le Comte,—[Louis de Bourbon, Comte de soissons, killed in the battle of Marfee, near Sedan, in 1641.]—who had a tender love for me, and to whose service and person I was entirely devoted, left Paris in the night, in order to get into Sedan, for fear of an arrest; and, in the meantime, entrusted me with the care of Vanbrock, the greatest confidant he had in the world. I took care, as I was ordered, that he should never stir out but at night, for in the daytime I concealed him in a private place, between the ceiling and the penthouse, where I thought it impossible for anything but a cat or the devil to find him. But he was not careful enough of himself, for one morning my door was burst open, and armed men rushed into my chamber, with the provost at their head, who cried, with a great oath, "Where is Vanbrock?" I replied, "At Sedan, monsieur, I believe." He swore again most confoundedly, and searched the mattresses of all the beds in the house, threatening to put my domestics to the rack if they did not make a disclosure; but there was only one that knew anything of the matter, and so they went away in a rage. You may easily imagine that when this was reported the Court would highly resent it. And so it happened, for the license of the Sorbonne being expired, and the competitors striving for the best places, I had the ambition to put in for the first place, and did not think myself obliged to yield to the Abbe de La Mothe−Houdancourt, now Archbishop of Auch, over whom I had certainly some advantage in the disputations. I carried myself in this affair more wisely than might have been expected from my youth; for as soon as I heard that my rival was supported by the Cardinal, who did him the honour to own him for his kinsman, I sent the Cardinal word, by M. de Raconis, Bishop of Lavaur, that I desisted from my pretension, out of the respect I owed his Eminence, as soon as I heard that he concerned himself in the affair. The Bishop of Lavaur told me the Cardinal pretended that the Abby de La Mothe would not be obliged for the first place to my cession, but to his own merit. This answer exasperated me. I gave a smile and a low bow, pursued my point, and gained the first place by eighty−four voices. The Cardinal, who was for domineering in all places and in all affairs, fell into a passion much below his character, either as a minister or a man, threatened the deputies of the Sorbonne to raze the new buildings he had begun there, and assailed my character again with incredible bitterness.

All my friends were alarmed at this, and were for sending me in all haste to Italy. Accordingly, I went to Venice, stayed there till the middle of August, and was very near being assassinated; for I amused myself by making an intrigue with Signora Vendranina, a noble Venetian lady, and one of the most handsome I ever saw. M. de Maille, the King's ambassador, aware of the dangerous consequences of such adventures in this country, ordered me to depart from Venice; upon which I went through Lombardy, and towards the end of September arrived at Rome, where the Marechal d'Estrees, who resided there as ambassador, gave me such instructions for my behaviour as I followed to a tittle. Though I had no design to be an ecclesiastic, yet since I wore a cassock I was resolved to acquire some reputation at the Pope's Court. I compassed my design very happily, avoiding any appearance of gallantry and lewdness, and my dress being grave to the last degree; but for all this I was at a vast expense, having fine liveries, a very splendid equipage, and a train of seven or eight gentlemen, whereof four were Knights of Malta. I disputed in the Colleges of Sapienza (not to be compared for learning with those of the Sorbonne), and fortune continued still to raise me. For the Prince de Schomberg, the Emperor's ambassador, sent me word one day, while I was playing at 'balon' at the baths of Antoninus, to leave the place clear for him. I answered that I could have refused his Excellency nothing asked in a civil manner, but since it was commanded, I would have him to know that I would obey the orders of no ambassador whatever, but that of the King, my master. Being urged a second time by one of his attendants to leave the place, I stood upon my own defence, and the Germans, more, in my opinion, out of contempt of the few people I had with me than out of any other consideration, let the affair drop. This bold carriage of so modest an abbe, to an ambassador who never went abroad without one hundred musketeers on horseback to attend him, made a great noise in Rome, and was much taken notice of by Cardinal Mazarin.

The Cardinal de Richelieu's health declining, the archbishopric of Paris was now almost within my ken, which, together with other prospects of good benefices, made me resolve not to fling off the cassock but upon honourable terms and valuable considerations; but having nothing yet within my view that I could be sure of, I resolved to distinguish myself in my own profession by all the methods I could. I retired from the world, studied

very hard, saw but very few men, and had no more correspondence with any of the female sex, except Madame de ———−.

The devil had appeared to the Princesse de Guemenee just a fortnight before this adventure happened, and was often raised by the conjurations of M. d'Andilly, to frighten his votary, I believe, into piety, for he was even more in love with her person than I myself; but he loved her in the Lord, purely and spiritually. I raised, in my turn, a demon that appeared to her in a more kind and agreeable form. In six weeks I got her away from Port Royal; I was very diligent in paying her my respects, and the satisfaction I had in her company, with some other agreeable diversions, qualified in a great measure the chagrin which attended my profession, to which I was not yet heartily reconciled. This enchantment had like to have raised such a storm as would have given a new face to the affairs of Europe if fortune had been ever so little on my side.

M. the Cardinal de Richelieu loved rallying other people, but could not bear a jest himself, and all men of this humour are always very crabbed and churlish; of which the Cardinal gave an instance, in a public assembly of ladies, to Madame de Guemenee, when he threw out a severe jest, which everybody observed was pointed at me. She was sensibly affronted, but I was enraged. For at last there was a sort of an understanding between us, which was often ill−managed, yet our interests were inseparable. At this time Madame de La Meilleraye, with whom, though she was silly, I had fallen in love, pleased the Cardinal to that degree that the Marshal perceived it before he set out for the army, and rallied his wife in such a manner that she immediately found he was even more jealous than ambitious. She was terribly afraid of him, and did not love the Cardinal, who, by marrying her to his cousin, had lessened his own family, of which he was extremely fond. Besides, the Cardinal's infirmities made him look a great deal older than he was. And though all his other actions had no tincture of pedantry, yet in his amorous intrigues he had the most of it in the world. I had a detail of all the steps he had made therein, which were extremely ridiculous. But continuing his solicitation, and carrying her to his country seat at Ruel,—[The Cardinal de Richelieu's seat, three leagues from Paris.]— where he kept her a considerable time, I guessed that the lady had not brains enough to resist the splendour of Court favour, and that her husband's jealousy would soon give way to his interest, but, above all, to his blind side, which was an attachment to the Court not to be equalled. When I was in the hottest pursuit of this passion I proposed to myself the most exquisite pleasures in triumphing over the Cardinal de Richelieu in this fair field of battle; but on a sudden I had the mortification to hear the whole family was changed. The husband allowed his wife to go to Ruel as often as she pleased, and her behaviour towards me I suspected to be false and treacherous. In short, Madame de Guemenee's anger, for a reason I hinted before, my jealousy of Madame de La Meilleraye, and an aversion to my own profession, all joined together in a fatal moment and were near producing one of the greatest and most famous events of our age.

La Rochepot, my first cousin and dear friend, was a domestic of the late Duc d'Orleans,—[Gaston Jean Baptists de France, born 1608, and died at Blois, 1660.]— and his great confidant. He mortally hated the Cardinal de Richelieu, who had persecuted his mother, and had her hung up in effigy, and kept his father still a prisoner in the Bastille, and now refused the son a regiment, though Marechal de La Meilleraye, who very highly esteemed him for his courage, interceded for the favour. You may imagine that when we came together we did not forget the Cardinal.

I being crossed in my designs, as I told you, and as full of resentment as La Rochepot was for the affronts put upon his person and family, we chimed in our thoughts and resolutions, which were, dexterously to manage the weakness of the Duc d'Orleans and to put that in execution which the boldness of his domestics had almost effected at Corbie.

The Duc d'Orleans was appointed General, and the Comte de Soissons Lieutenant−General of the King's forces in Picardy, but neither of them stood well with the Cardinal, who gave them those posts only because the situation of affairs was such that he could not help it. L'Epinai, Montresor, and La Rochepot made use of all the arguments they could think of to raise jealousies and fears in the Duc d'Orleans, and to inspire him with resolution and courage to rid himself of the Cardinal. Others laboured to persuade the Comte de Soissons to relish the same proposal, but though resolved upon, it was never put into execution. For they had the Cardinal in their power at Amiens, but did him no harm. For this every one blamed the Count's companion, but I could never yet learn the true cause; only this is certain, that they were no sooner come to Paris than they were all seized with a panic, and retired, some one way, some another.

The Comte de Guiche, since Marechal de Grammont, and M. de Chavigni, Secretary of State and the

Cardinal's most intimate favourite, were sent by the King to Blois. Here they frightened the Duc d'Orleans and made him return to Paris, where he was more afraid than ever; for such of his domestics as were not gained by the Court made use of his pusillanimous temper, and represented to him the necessity he was under to provide for his own, or rather their, security. La Rochepot and myself endeavoured to heighten his fears as much as possible, in order to precipitate him into our measures. The term sounds odd, but it is the most expressive I could find of a character like the Duke's. He weighed everything, but fixed on nothing; and if by chance he was inclined to do one thing more than another, he would never execute it without being pushed or forced into it.

La Rochepot did all he could to fix him, but finding that the Duke was always for delays, and for perplexing all expedients with groundless fears of invincible difficulties, he fell upon an expedient very dangerous to all appearance, but, as it usually happens in extraordinary cases, much less so than at first view.

Cardinal de Richelieu having to stand godfather at the baptism of Mademoiselle, La Rochepot's proposal was to continue to show the Duke the necessity he lay under still to get rid of the Cardinal, without saying much of the particulars, for fear of hazarding the secret, but only to entertain him with the general proposal of that affair, thereby to make him the better in love with the measures when proposed; and that they might, at a proper time and place, tell him they had concealed the detail to the execution from his Highness upon no other account but that they had experienced on several occasions that there was no other way of serving his Highness, as he himself had told La Rochepot several times; that nothing, therefore, remained but to get some brave fellows fit for such a resolute enterprise, and to hold post−horses ready upon the road of Sedan under some other pretext, and to so execute the design in the presence and in the name of his Royal Highness upon the day of the intended solemnity, that his Highness should cheerfully own it when it was done, and that then we would carry him off by those horses to Sedan. Meanwhile the distraction of the inferior ministers and the joy of the King to see himself delivered from a tyrant would dispose the Court rather to invite than to pursue him. This was La Rochepot's scheme, and it seemed exceedingly plausible.

La Rochepot and I had, it may be, blamed the inactivity of the Duc d'Orleans and the Comte de Soissons in the affair of Amiens a hundred times; yet, no sooner was the scheme sufficiently matured for execution, the idea of which I had raised in the memory of La Rochepot, than my mind was seized with I know not what fear; I took it then for a scruple of conscience,—I cannot tell whether it was in truth so or not, but, in short, the thought of killing a priest and a cardinal deeply affected my mind. La Rochepot laughed at my scruples, and bantered me thus: "When you are in the field of battle I warrant you will not beat up the enemy's quarters for fear of assassinating men in their sleep." I was ashamed of my scruples, and again hugged the crime, which I looked upon as sanctified by the examples of great men, and justified and honoured by the mighty danger that attended its execution. We renewed our consultations, engaged some accomplices, took all the necessary precautions, and resolved upon the execution. The danger was indeed very great, but we might reasonably hope to come off well enough; for the Duke's guard, which was within, would not have failed to come to our assistance against that of the Cardinal's, which was without. But his fortune, and not his guards, delivered him from the snare; for either Mademoiselle or himself, I forget which, fell suddenly ill, and the ceremony was put off to another time, so that we lost our opportunity. The Duke returned to Blois, and the Marquis de Boissi protested he would never betray us, but that he would be no longer concerned, because he had just received some favour or other from the Cardinal's own hands.

I confess that this enterprise, which, had it succeeded, would have crowned us with glory, never fully pleased me. I was not so scrupulous in the committing of two other transgressions against the rules of morality, as you may have before observed; but I wish, with all my heart, I had never been concerned in this. Ancient Rome, indeed, would have counted it honourable; but it is not in this respect that I honour the memory of old Rome.

There is commonly a great deal of folly in conspiracies; but afterwards there is nothing tends so, much to make men wise, at least for some time. For, as the danger in things of this nature continues, even after the opportunities for doing them are over, men are from that instant more prudent and circumspect.

Having thus missed our blow, the Comte de La Rochepot and the rest of them retired to their several seats in the country; but my engagements detained me at Paris, where I was so retired that I spent all my time in my study; and if ever I was seen abroad, it was with all the reserve of a pious ecclesiastic; we were all so true to one another in keeping this adventure secret, that it never got the least wind while the Cardinal lived, who was a minister that had the best intelligence in the world; but after his death it was discovered by the imprudence of Tret and

Etourville. I call it imprudence, for what greater weakness can men be guilty of than to declare themselves to have been capable of what is dangerous in the first instance?

To return to the history of the Comte de Soissons, I observed before that he had retired to Sedan for safety, which he could not expect at Court. He wrote to the King, assuring his Majesty of his fidelity, and that while he stayed in that place he would undertake nothing prejudicial to his service. He was most mindful of his promise; was not to be biassed by all the offers of Spain or the Empire, but rejected with indignation the overtures of Saint−Ibal and of Bardouville, who would have persuaded him to take up arms. Campion, one of his domestics, whom he had left at Paris to mind his affairs at Court, told me these particulars by the Count's express orders, and I still remember this passage in one of his letters to Campion: "The men you know are very urgent with me to treat with the enemy, and accuse me of weakness because I fear the examples of Charles de Bourbon and Robert d'Artois." He was ordered to show me this letter and desire my opinion thereupon. I took my pen, and, at a little distance from the answer he had already begun, I wrote these words:

"And I do accuse them of folly." The reasons upon which my opinion was grounded were these: The Count was courageous in the highest degree of what is commonly called valour, and had a more than ordinary share in that boldness of mind which we call resolution. The first is common and to be frequently met with among the vulgar, but the second is rarer than can be imagined, and yet abundantly more necessary for great enterprises; and is there a greater in the world than heading a party? The command of an army is without comparison of less intricacy, for there are wheels within wheels necessary for governing the State, but then they are not near so brittle and delicate. In a word, I am of opinion there are greater qualities necessary to make a good head of a party than to make an emperor who is to govern the whole world, and that resolution ought to run parallel with judgment,—I say, with heroic judgment, which is able to distinguish the extraordinary from what we call the impossible.

The Count had not one grain of this discerning faculty, which is but seldom to be met with in the sublimest genius. His character was mean to a degree, and consequently susceptible of unreasonable jealousies and distrusts, which of all characters is the most opposite to that of a good partisan, who is indispensably obliged in many cases to suppress, and in all to conceal, the best−grounded suspicions.

This was the reason I could not be of the opinion of those who were for engaging the Count in a civil war; and Varicarville, who was the man of the best sense and temper of all the persons of quality he had about him, told me since that when be saw what I wrote in Campion's letter the day I set out for Italy, he very well knew by what motives I was, against my inclination, persuaded into this opinion.

The Count held out all this year and the next against every solicitation of the Spaniards and the importunities of his own friends, much more by the wise counsels of Varicarville than by the force of his own resolution; but nothing could secure him from the teasings of the Cardinal de Richelieu, who poured into his ears every day in the King's name his many dismal discoveries and prognostications. For fear of being tedious I shall only tell you in one word that the Cardinal, contrary to his own interest, hurried the Count into a civil war, by such arts of chicanery as those who are fortune's favourites never fail to play upon the unfortunate.

The minds of people began now to be more embittered than ever. I was sent for by the Count to Sedan to tell him the state of Paris. The account I gave him could not but be very agreeable; for I told him the very truth: that he was universally beloved, honoured, and adored in that city, and his enemy dreaded and abhorred. The Duc de Bouillon, who was urgent for war, be the consequence what it would, improved upon these advantages, and made them look more plausible, but Varicarville strongly opposed him.

I thought myself too young to declare my opinion; but, being pressed to do so by his Highness, I took the liberty to tell him that a Prince of the blood ought to engage himself in a civil war rather than suffer any diminution of his reputation or dignity, yet that nothing but these two cases could justly oblige him to it, because he hazards both by a commotion whenever the one or the other consideration does not make it necessary; that I thought his Highness far from being under any such necessity; that his retreat to Sedan secured him from the indignity he must have submitted to, among others, of taking the left hand, even in the Cardinal's own house; that, in the meantime, the popular hatred of the Cardinal gained his Highness the greater share of the public favour, which is always much better secured by inaction than action, because the glory of action depends upon success, for which no one can answer; whereas inaction is sure to be commended as being founded upon the hatred which the public will always bear to the minister. That, therefore, I should think it would be more glorious for his Highness, in the view of the world, to support himself by his own weight, that is, by the merit of his virtue,

against the artifices of so powerful a minister as the Cardinal de Richelieu,—I say, more glorious to support himself by a wise and regular conduct than to kindle the fire of war, the flagrant consequences whereof no man is able to foresee; that it was true that the minister was universally cursed, but that I could not yet see that the people's minds were exasperated enough for any considerable revolution; that the Cardinal was in a declining state of health, and if he should not die this time, his Highness would have the opportunity of showing the King and the public that though, by his own personal authority and his important post at Sedan, he was in a capacity to do himself justice, he sacrificed his own resentments to the welfare and quiet of the State; and that if the Cardinal should recover his health, he would not fail, by additional acts of tyranny and oppression, to draw upon himself the redoubled execrations of the people, which would ripen, their murmurings and discontents into a universal revolution.

This is the substance of what I said to the Count, and he seemed to be somewhat affected by it. But the Duc de Bouillon was enraged, and told me, by way of banter, "Your blood is very cold for a gentleman of your age." To which I replied in these very words: "All the Count's servants are so much obliged to you, monsieur, that they ought to bear everything from you; but were it not for this consideration alone, I should think that your bastions would not be always strong enough to protect you." The Duke soon came to himself, and treated me with all the civilities imaginable, such as laid a foundation for our future friendship. I stayed two days longer at Sedan, during which the Count changed his mind five different times, as I was told by M. Saint−Ibal, who said little was to be expected from a man of his humour. At last, however, the Duc de Bouillon won him over. I was charged to do all I could to convince the people of Paris, had an order to take up money and to lay it out for this purpose, and I returned from Sedan with letters more than enough to have hanged two hundred men.

As I had faithfully set the Count's true interest before him, and dissuaded him from undertaking an affair of which he was by no means capable, I thought it high time to think of my own affairs. I hated my profession now more than ever; I was at first hurried into it by the infatuation of my kindred. My destiny had bound me down to it by the chains both of duty and pleasure, so that I could see no possibility to set myself free. I was upwards of twenty−five years of age, and I saw it was now too late to begin to carry a musket; but that which tortured me most of all was this fatal reflection, that I had spent so much of my time in too eager a pursuit of pleasure, and thereby riveted my own chains; so that it looked as if fate was resolved to fasten me to the Church, whether I would or no. You may imagine with what satisfaction such thoughts as these were accompanied, for this confusion of affairs gave me hopes of getting loose from my profession with uncommon honour and reputation. I thought of ways to distinguish myself, pursued them very diligently, and you will allow that nothing but destiny broke my measures.

The Marechaux de Vitri and Bassompierre, the Comte de Cremail, M. du Fargis, and M. du Coudrai Montpensier were then prisoners in the Bastille upon different counts. But, as length of time makes confinement less irksome, they were treated very civilly, and indulged with a great share of freedom. Their friends came to see them, and sometimes dined with them. By means of M. du Fargis, who had married my aunt, I got acquainted with the rest, and by conversing with them discovered very remarkable emotions in some of them, upon which I could not help reflecting. The Marechal de Vitri was a gentleman of mean parts, but bold, even to rashness, and his having been formerly employed to kill the Marechal d'Ancre had given him in the common vogue, though I think unjustly, the air of a man of business and expedition. He appeared to me enraged against the Cardinal, and I concluded he might do service in the present juncture, but did not address myself directly to him, and thought it the wisest way first to sift the Comte de Cremail, who was a man of sound sense, and could influence the Marechal de Vitri as he pleased. He apprehended me at half a word, and immediately asked me if I had made myself known to any of the prisoners. I answered, readily:

"No, monsieur; and I will tell you my reasons in a very few words. Bassompierre is a tattler; I expect to do nothing with the Marechal de Vitri but by your means. I suspect the honesty of Du Coudrai, and as for my uncle, Du Fargis, he is a gallant man, but has no headpiece."

"Whom, then, do you confide in at Paris?" said the Comte de Cremail.

"I dare trust no man living," said I, "but yourself."

"It is very well," said he, briskly; "you are the man for me. I am above eighty years old, and you but twenty−five; I will qualify your heat, and you my chilliness."

We went upon business, drew up our plan, and at parting he said these very words: "Let me alone one week,

and after that I will tell you more of my mind, for I hope to convince the Cardinal that I am good for something more than writing the "Jeu de l'Inconnu."

You must know that the "Jeu de l'Inconnu " was a book, indeed, very ill written, which the Comte de Cremail had formerly published, and which the Cardinal had grossly ridiculed. You will be surprised, without doubt, that I should think of prisoners for an affair of this importance, but the nature of it was such that it could not be put into better hands, as you will see by and by.

A week after, going to visit the prisoners, and Cremail and myself being accidentally left alone, we took a walk upon the terrace, where, after a thousand thanks for the confidence I had put in him, and as many protestations of his readiness to serve the Comte de Soissons, he spoke thus: "There is nothing but the thrust of a sword or the city of Paris that can rid us of the Cardinal. Had I been at the enterprise of Amiens, I think I should not have missed my blow, as those gentlemen did. I am for that of Paris; it cannot miscarry; I have considered it well. See here what additions I have made to our plan." And thereupon he put into my hand a paper, in substance as follows: that he had conferred with the Marechal de Vitri, who was as well disposed as anybody in the world to serve the Count; that they would both answer for the Bastille, where all the garrison was in their interest; that they were likewise sure of the arsenal; and that they would also declare themselves as soon as the Count had gained a battle, on condition that I made it appear beforehand, as I had told him (the Comte de Cremail), that they should be supported by a considerable number of officers, colonels of Paris, etc. For the rest, this paper contained many particular observations on the conduct of the undertaking, and many cautions relating to the behaviour to be observed by the Count. That which surprised me most of all was to see how fully persuaded these gentlemen were of carrying their point with ease.

Though it came into my head to propose this project to the persons in the Bastille, yet nothing but the perfect knowledge I had of their disposition and inclination could have persuaded me that it was practicable. And I confess, upon perusal of the plan prepared by M. de Cremail, a man of great experience and excellent sense, I was astonished to find a few prisoners disposing of the Bastille with the same freedom as the Governor, the greatest authority in the place.

As all extraordinary circumstances are of wonderful weight in popular revolutions, I considered that this project, which was even ripe for execution, would have an admirable effect in the city. And as nothing animates and supports commotions more than the ridiculing of those against whom they are raised, I knew it would be very easy for us to expose the conduct of a minister who had tamely suffered prisoners to hamper him, as one may say, with their chains. I lost no time; afterwards I opened myself to M. d'Estampes, President of the Great Council, and to M. l'Ecuyer, President of the Chamber of Accounts, both colonels, and in great repute among the citizens, and I found them every way answering the character I had of them from the Count; that is, very zealous for his interest, and fully persuaded that the insurrection was not only practicable, but very easy. Pray observe that these two gentlemen, who made no great figure, even in their own profession, were, perhaps, two of the most peaceable persons in the kingdom. But there are some fires which burn all before them. The main thing is to know and seize the critical moment.

The Count had charged me to disclose myself to none in Paris besides these two, but I ventured to add two more: Parmentier, substitute to the Attorney−General; and his brother−in−law, Epinai, auditor of the Chamber of Accounts, who was the man of the greatest credit, though but a lieutenant, and the other a captain. Parmentier, who, both by his wit and courage, was as capable of a great action as any man I ever knew, promised me that he would answer for Brigalier, councillor in the Court of Aids, captain in his quarter, and very powerful among the people, but told me at the same time that he must not know a word of the matter, because he was a mere rattle, not to be trusted with a secret.

The Count made me a remittance of 12,000 crowns, which I carried to my aunt De Maignelai, telling her that it was a restitution made by one of my dying friends, who made me trustee of it upon condition that I should distribute it among decayed families who were ashamed to make their necessities known, and that I had taken an oath to distribute it myself, persuant to the desire of the testator, but that I was at a loss to find out fit objects for my charity; and therefore I desired her to take the care of it upon her. The good woman was perfectly transported, and said she would do it with all her heart; but because I had sworn to make the distribution myself, she insisted upon it that I must be present, not only for the sake of my promise, but to accustom myself to do acts of charity. This was the very thing I aimed at,—an opportunity of knowing all the poor of Paris. Therefore I suffered myself

to be carried every day by my aunt into the outskirts, to visit the poor in their garrets, and I met very often in her house people who were very well clad, and many whom I once knew, that came for private charity. My good aunt charged them always to pray to God for her nephew, who was the hand that God had been pleased to make use of for this good work. Judge you of the influence this gave me over the populace, who are without comparison the most considerable in all public disturbances. For the rich never come into such measures unless they are forced, and beggars do more harm than good, because it is known that they aim at plunder; those, therefore, who are capable of doing most service are such as are not reduced to common beggary, yet so straitened in their circumstances as to wish for nothing more than a general change of affairs in order to repair their broken fortunes. I made myself acquainted with people of this rank for the course of four months with uncommon application, so that there was hardly a child in the chimney−corner but I gratified with some small token. I called them by their familiar names. My aunt, who always made it her business to go from house to house to relieve the poor, was a cloak for all. I also played the hypocrite, and frequented the conferences of Saint Lazarus.

Varicarville and Beauregarde, my correspondents at Sedan, assured me that the Comte de Soissons was as well inclined as one could wish, and that he had not wavered since he had formed his last resolution. Varicarville said that we had formerly done him horrible injustice, and that they were now even obliged to restrain him, because he seemed to be too fond of the counsels of Spain and the Empire. Please to observe that these two Courts, which had made incredible solicitations to him while he wavered, began, as soon as his purpose was fixed, to draw back,—a fatality due to the phlegmatic temper of the Spaniard, dignified by the name of prudence, joined to the astute politics of the house of Austria. You may observe at the same time that the Count, who had continued firm and unshaken three months together, changed his mind as soon as his enemies had granted what he asked; which exactly comes up to the character of an irresolute man, who is always most unsteady the nearer the work comes to its conclusion. I heard of this convulsion, as one may call it, by an express from Varicarville, and took post the same night for Sedan, arriving there an hour after Aretonville, an agent despatched from the Count's brother in−law, M. de Longueville.—[Henri d'Orleans, the second of that name, died 1663.]— He came with some plausible but deceitful terms of accommodation which we all agreed to oppose. Those who had been always with the Count pressed him strongly with the remembrance of what he himself thought or said was necessary to be done ever since the war had been resolved on. Saint−Ibal, who had been negotiating for him at Brussels, pressed him with his engagements, advances, and solicitations, insisted on the steps I had, by his order, already taken in Paris, on the promises made to De Vitri and Cremail, and on the secret committed to two persons by his own command, and to four others for his service and with his consent. Our arguments, considering his engagements, were very just and clear. We carried our point with much ado after a conflict of four days. Aretonville was sent back with a very smart answer. M. de Guise, who had joined the Count, and was a well−wisher to a rupture, went to Liege to order the levies, Varicarville and I returned to Paris, but I did not care to tell my fellow conspirators of the irresolution of our principal. Some symptoms of it appeared afterwards, but they very soon vanished.

Being assured that the Spaniards had everything in readiness, I went for the last time to Sedan to take my final instructions. There I found Meternic, colonel of one of the oldest regiments of the Empire, despatched by General Lamboy, who had advanced with a gallant army under his command, composed for the most part of veteran troops. The Colonel assured the Count that he was ordered to obey his commands in everything, and to give battle to the Marechal de Chatillon, who commanded the army of France upon the Meuse. As the undertaking at Paris depended entirely on the success of such a battle, the Count thought it fitting that I should go along with Meternic to Givet, where I found the army in a very good condition. Then I returned to Paris, and gave an account of every particular to the Marechal de Pitri, who drew up the order for the enterprise. The whole city of Paris seemed so disposed for an insurrection that we thought ourselves sure of success. The secret was kept even to a miracle. The Count gave the enemy battle and won it. You now believe, without doubt, the day was our own. Far from it; for the Count was killed in the very crisis of the victory, and in the midst of his own men; but how and by whom no soul could ever tell.

You may guess what a condition I was in when I heard this news; M. de Cremail, the wisest of us all, thought of nothing else now but how to conceal the secret, which, though known to only six in all Paris, was known to too great a number; but the greatest danger of discovery was from the people of Sedan, who, being out of the kingdom, were not afraid of punishment. Nevertheless, everybody privy to it religiously kept it secret, and stood

their ground, which, with another accident I shall mention hereafter, has made me often think, and say too, that secrecy is not so rare a thing as we imagine with men versed in matters of State.

The Count's death settled me in my profession, for I saw no great things to be done, and I found myself too old to leave it for anything trifling. Besides, Cardinal de Richelieu's health was declining, and I already began to think myself Archbishop of Paris. I resolved that for the future I would devote myself to my profession. Madame de Guemenee had retired to Port Royal, her country−seat. M. d'Andilly had got her from me. She neither powdered nor curled her hair any longer, and had dismissed me solemnly with all the formalities required from a sincere penitent. I discovered, by means of a valet de chambre, that, captain —— of the Marshal's Guards, had as free access to Meilleraye's lady as myself. See what it is to be a saint! The truth is, I grew much more regular,—at least affected to be thought so,—led a retired life, stuck to my profession, studied hard, and got acquainted with all who were famous either for learning or piety. I converted my house almost into an academy, but took care not to erect the academy into a rigid tribunal. I began to be pretty free with the canons and curates, whom I found of course at my uncle's house. I did not act the devotee, because I could not be sure how long I should be able to play the counterfeit, but I had a high esteem for devout people, which with such is the main article of religion. I suited my pleasures to my practice, and, finding I could not live without some amorous intrigue, I managed an amour with Madame de Pommereux, a young coquette, who had so many sparks, not only in her house but at her devotions, that the apparent business of others was a cover for mine, which was, at least, some time afterwards, more to the purpose. When I had succeeded, I became a man in such request among those of my profession that the devotees themselves used to say of me with M. Vincent, "Though I had not piety enough, yet I was not far from the kingdom of heaven."

Fortune favoured me more than usual at this time. I was at the house of Madame de Rambure, a notable and learned Huguenot, where I met with Mestrezat, the famous minister of Charento. To satisfy her curiosity she engaged us in a dispute; we had nine different disputations. The Marechal de la Forde and M. de Turenne were present at some of them, and a gentleman of Poitou, who was at all of them, became my proselyte. As I was then but twenty−six years of age, this made a great deal of noise, and among other effects, was productive of one that had not the least connection with its cause, which I shall mention after I have done justice to a civility I received from my antagonist in one of the conferences. I had the advantage of him in the fifth meeting, relating to the spiritual vocation; but in the sixth, treating of the Pope's authority, I was confounded, because, to avoid embroiling myself with the Court of Rome, I answered him on principles which are not so easy to be maintained as those of the Sorbonne. My opponent perceived the concern I was under, and generously forebore to urge such passages as would have obliged me to explain myself in a manner disagreeable to the Pope's Nuncio. I thought it extremely obliging, and as we were going out thanked him in the presence of M. de Turenne; to which he answered, very civilly, that it would have been a piece of injustice to hinder the Abbe de Retz from being made a cardinal. This was such complaisance as you are not to expect from every Geneva pedant. I told you before that this conference produced one effect very different from its cause, and it is this: Madame de Vendome, of whom you have heard, without doubt, took such a fancy to me ever after, that a mother could not have been more tender. She had been at the conference too, though I am very well assured she understood nothing of the matter; but the favourable opinion she had of me was owing to the Bishop of Lisieux, her spiritual director, who, finding I was disposed to follow my profession, which out of his great love to me he most passionately desired, made it his business to magnify the few good qualities I was master of; and I am thoroughly persuaded that what applause I had then in the world was chiefly owing to his encouragement, for there was not a man in France whose approbation could give so much honour. His sermons had advanced him from a very mean and foreign extraction (which was Flemish) to the episcopal dignity, which he adorned with solid and unaffected piety. His disinterestedness was far beyond that of the hermits or anchorites. He had the courage of Saint Ambrose, and at Court and in the presence of the King he so maintained his usual freedom that the Cardinal de Richelieu, who had been his scholar in divinity, both reverenced and feared him. This good man had that abundant kindness for me that he read me lectures thrice a week upon Saint Paul's Epistles, and he designed also the conversion of M. de Turenne and to give me the honour of it.

M. de Turenne had a great respect for him, whereof he gave him very, distinguishing marks. The Comte de Brion, whom, I believe, you may remember under the title of Duc d'Amville, was deeply in love with Mademoiselle de Vendome, since Madame de Nemours; and, besides, he was a great favourite of M. de Turenne,

who, to do him a pleasure and to give him the more opportunities to see Mademoiselle de Vendome, affected to be a great admirer of the Bishop of Lisieux and to hear his exhortations with a world of attention. The Comte de Brion, who had twice been a Capuchin, and whose life was a continual medley of sin and devotion, pretended likewise to be much interested in M. de Turenne's conversion, and was present at all the conferences held at Mademoiselle de Vendome's apartment. De Brion had very little wit, but was a clever talker, and had a great deal of assurance, which not very seldom supplies the room of good sense. This and the behaviour of M. de Turenne, together with the indolence of Mademoiselle de Vendome, made me think all was fair, so that I never suspected an amour at the bottom.

The Bishop of Lisieux being a great admirer of Corneille's writings, and making no scruple to see a good comedy, provided it was in the country among a few friends, the late Madame de Choisy proposed to entertain him with one at Saint Cloud. Accordingly Madame took with her Madame and Mademoiselle de Vendome, M. de Turenne, M. de Brion, Voiture, and myself. De Brion took care of the comedy and violins, and I looked after a good collation. We went to the Archbishop's house at Saint Cloud, where the comedians did not arrive till very late at night. M. de Lisieux admired the violins, and Madame de Vendome was hugely diverted to see her daughter dance alone. In short, we did not set out till peep of day (it being summer−time, and the days at the longest, and were got no further than the bottom of the Descent of Bonshommes, when all on a sudden the coach stopped. I, being next the door opposite to Mademoiselle de Vendome, bade the coachman drive on. He answered, as plain as he could speak for his fright, "What! would you have me drive over all these devils here?" I put my head out of the coach, but, being short−sighted from my youth, saw nothing at all. Madame de Choisy, who was at the other door with M. de Turenne, was the first in the coach who found out the cause of the coachman's fright. I say in the coach, for five or six lackeys behind it were already crying "Jesu Maria" and quaking with fear.

Madame de Choisy cried out, upon which M. de Turenne threw himself out of the coach, and I, thinking we were beset by highwaymen, leaped out on the other side, took one of the footmen's hangers, drew it, and went to the other aide to join M. de Turenne, whom I found with his eyes fixed on something, but what I could not see. I asked him what it was, upon which he pulled me by the sleeve, and said, with a low voice, "I will tell you, but we must not frighten the ladies," who, by this time, screamed most fearfully. Voiture began his Oremus, and prayed heartily. You, I suppose, knew Madame de Choisy's shrill tone; Mademoiselle de Vendome was counting her beads; Madame de Vendome would fain have confessed her sins to the Bishop of Lisieux, who said to her, "Daughter, be of good cheer; you are in the hands of God." At the same instant, the Comte do Brion and all the lackeys were upon their knees very devoutly singing the Litany of the Virgin Mary.

M. de Turenne drew his sword, and said to me, with the calm and undisturbed air he commonly puts on when he calls for his dinner, or gives battle, "Come, let us go and see who they are."

"Whom should we see?" said I, for I believed we had all lost our senses.

He answered, "I verily think they are devils."

When we had advanced five or six steps I began to see something which I thought looked like a long procession of black phantoms. I was frightened at first, because of the sudden reflection that I had often wished to see a spirit, and that now, perhaps, I should pay for my incredulity, or rather curiosity. M. de Turenne was all the while calm and resolute. I made two or three leaps towards the procession, upon which the company in the coach, thinking we were fighting with all the devils, cried out most terribly; yet it is a question whether our company was in a greater fright than the imaginary devils that put us into it, who, it seems, were a parcel of barefooted reformed Augustine friars, otherwise called the Black Capuchins, who, seeing two men advancing towards them with drawn swords, one of them, detached from the fraternity, cried out, "Gentlemen, we are poor, harmless friars, only come to bathe in this river for our healths." M. de Turenne and I went back to the coach ready to die with laughing at this adventure.

Upon the whole we could not help making this reflection, that what we read in the lives of most people is false. We were both grossly mistaken, I, for supposing him to be frightened; he, for thinking me calm and undisturbed. Who, therefore, can write truth better than the man who has experienced it? The President de Thou is very just in his remark when he says that "There is no true history extant, nor can be ever expected unless written by honest men who are not afraid or ashamed to tell the truth of themselves." I do not pretend to make any merit of my sincerity in this case, for I feel so great a satisfaction in unfolding my very heart and soul to you, that the pleasure is even more prevalent than reason with me in the religious regard I have to the exactness of my history.

Mademoiselle de Vendome had ever after an inconceivable contempt for the poor Comte de Brion, who in this ridiculous adventure had disclosed a weakness never before imagined; and as soon as we were got into the coach she bantered him, and said, particularly to me:

"I fancy I must be Henri IV.'s granddaughter by the esteem I have for valour. There's nothing can frighten you, since you were so undaunted on this extraordinary occasion."

I told her I was afraid, but being not so devout as M. de Brion, my fears did not turn to litanies.

"You feared not," said she, "and I fancy you do not believe there are devils, for M. de Turenne, who is very brave, was much surprised, and did not march on so briskly as you."

I confess the distinction pleased me mightily and made me think of venturing some compliments. I then said to her, "One may believe there is a devil and yet not fear him; there are things in the world more terrible."

"And what are they?" said she.

"They are so strong," said I, "that one dare not so much as name them."

She interpreted my meaning rightly, as she told me since, though she seemed at that time not to understand me.

Mademoiselle was not what they call a great beauty, yet she was very handsome, and I was complimented for saying of her and of Mademoiselle de Guise that they were beauties of quality who convinced the beholders at first sight that they were born Princesses. Mademoiselle de Vendome had no great share of wit, but her folly lay as yet concealed; her air was grave, tinctured with stateliness, not the effect of good sense, but the consequence of a languid constitution, which sort of gravity often covers a multitude of defects. In the main, take her altogether, she was really amiable.

Let me beseech you, madame, with all submission, to call now to mind the commands you were pleased to honour me with a little before your departure from Paris, that I should give you a precise account of every circumstance and accident of my life, and conceal nothing. You see, by what I have already related, that my ecclesiastical occupations were diversified and relieved, though not disfigured, by other employments of a more diverting nature. I observed a decorum in all my actions, and where I happened to make a false step some good fortune or other always retrieved it. All the ecclesiastics of the diocese wished to see me succeed my uncle in the archbishopric of Paris, but Cardinal de Richelieu was of another mind; he hated my family, and most of all my person, for the reasons already mentioned, and was still more exasperated for these two which follow.

I once told the late President de Mesmes what seems now to me very probable, though it is the reverse of what I told you some time ago, that I knew a person who had few or no failings but what were either the effect or cause of some good qualities. I then said, on the contrary, to M. de Mesmes, that Cardinal de Richelieu had not one great quality but what was the effect or cause of some greater imperfection. This, which was only 'inter nos', was carried to the Cardinal, I do not know by whom, under my name. You may judge of the consequences. Another thing that angered him was because I visited the President Barillon, then prisoner at Amboise, concerning remonstrances made to the Parliament, and that I should do it at a juncture which made my journey the more noticeable. Two miserable hermits and false coiners, who had some secret correspondence with M. de Vendome, did, upon some discontent or other, accuse him very falsely of having proposed to them to assassinate the Cardinal, and to give the more weight to their depositions they named all those they thought notorious in that country; Montresor and M. Barillon were of the number. Early notice of this being given me, the great love I had for the President Barillon made me take post that night to acquaint him with his danger and get him away from Amboise, which was very feasible; but he, insisting upon his innocence, rejected my proposals, defied both the accusers and their accusations, and was resolved to continue in prison. This journey of mine gave a handle to the Cardinal to tell the Bishop of Lisieux that I was a cordial friend to all his enemies.

"True enough," said the Bishop; "nevertheless you ought to esteem him; you have no reason to complain of him, because those men whom you mean were all his true friends before they became your enemies."

"If it be so," replied the Cardinal, "then I am very much misinformed."

The Bishop at this juncture did me all the kind offices imaginable, and if the Cardinal had lived he would undoubtedly have restored me to his favour; for his Eminence was very well disposed, especially when the Bishop assured him that, though I knew myself ruined at Court to all intents and purposes, yet I would never come into the measures of M. le Grand.—[M. de Cinq−Mars, Henri Coeffier, otherwise called Ruze d'Effial, Master of the Horse of France; he was beheaded September 12, 1642.]— I was indeed importuned by my friend M. de Thou to

join in that enterprise, but I saw the weakness of their foundation, as the event has shown, and therefore rejected their proposals.

The Cardinal de Richelieu died in 1642, before the good Bishop had made my peace with him, and so I remained among those who had rendered themselves obnoxious to the Ministry. At first this character was very prejudicial to my interest. Although the King was overjoyed at his death, yet he carefully observed all the appearances of respect for his deceased minister, confirmed all his legacies, cared for his family, kept all his creatures in the Ministry, and affected to frown upon all who had not stood well with the Cardinal; but I was the only exception to this general rule. When the Archbishop of Paris presented me to the King, I was treated with such distinguishing marks of royal favour as surprised all the Court. His Majesty talked of my studies and sermons, rallied me with an obliging freedom, and bade me come to Court once every week. The reasons of these extraordinary civilities were utterly unknown to us until the night before his death, when he told them to the Queen. I passed them by in silence before as having no bearing on my history, but I am obliged to insert them here because they have been, in their consequences, more fortunate than I seemed to have any just claim to expect.

A short time after I left the college, my governor's valet de chambre found, at a poor pin−maker's house, a niece of hers but fourteen years old, who was surprisingly beautiful. After I had seen her he bought her for me for 150 pistoles, hired a little house for her, and placed her sister with her; when I went to see her I found her in great heaviness of mind, which I attributed to her modesty. I next day found what was yet more surprising and extraordinary than her beauty; she talked wisely and religiously to me, and yet without passion. She cried only when she could not help it. She feared her aunt to a degree that made me pity her. I admired her wit first, and then her virtue, for trial of which I pressed her as far as was necessary, until I was even ashamed of myself. I waited till night to get her into my coach, and then carried her to my aunt De Maignelai, who put her into a convent, where she died eight or ten years after, in great reputation for piety. My aunt, to whom this young creature confessed that the menaces of the pin−maker had terrified her so much that she would have done whatsoever I wished, was so affected with my behaviour that she went to tell it to the Bishop of Lisieux, who told it to the King.

This second adventure was not of the same nature, but it made as great an impression on the King's mind. It was a duel I had with Coutenau, captain of a company of the King's Light−horse, brave, but wild, who, riding post from Paris as I was going there, made the ostler take off my saddle and put on his. Upon my telling him I had hired the horse, he gave me a swinging box on the ear, which fetched blood. I instantly drew my sword, and so did he. While making our first thrusts his foot slipped, and his sword dropped out of his hand as he fell to the ground. I retired a little and bade him pick it up, which he did, but it was by the point, for he presented me the handle and begged a thousand pardons. He told this little story afterwards to the King, with whom he had great freedom. His Majesty was pleased with it, and remembered both time and place, as you will see hereafter.

The good reception I found at Court gave my relatives some grounds to hope that I might have the coadjutorship of Paris. At first they found a great deal of difficulty in my uncle's narrowness of spirit, which is always attended with fears and jealousies; but at length they prevailed upon him, and would have then carried our point, if my friends had not given it out, much against my judgment, that it was done by the consent of the Archbishop of Paris, and if they had not suffered the Sorbonne, the cures, and chapter to return him their thanks. This affair made too much noise in the world for my interest. For Cardinal Mazarin, De Noyers, and De Chavigni thwarted me, and told his Majesty that the chapter should not be entrusted with the power of nominating their own archbishop. And the King was heard to say that I was yet too young.

But we met with a worse obstacle than all from M. de Noyers, Secretary of State, one of the three favourite ministers, who passed for a religious man, and was suspected by some to be a Jesuit in disguise. He had a secret longing for the archbishopric of Paris, which would shortly be vacant, and therefore thought it expedient to remove me from that city, where he saw I was extremely beloved, and provide me with some post suitable to my years. He proposed to the King by his confessor to nominate me Bishop of Agde. The King readily granted the request, which confounded me beyond all expression. I had no mind to go to Languedoc, and yet so great are the inconveniences of a refusal that not a man had courage to advise me to it. I became, therefore, my own counsellor, and having resolved with myself what course to take, I waited upon his Majesty, and thanked him for his gracious offer, but said I dreaded the weight of so remote a see, and that my years wanted advice, which it is difficult to obtain in provinces so distant. I added to this other arguments, which you may guess at. I was in this adventure

also more happy than wise. The King continued to treat me very kindly. This circumstance, and the retreat of M. de Noyers, who fell into the snare that Chavigni had laid for him, renewed my hopes of the coadjutorship of Paris. The King died about this time, in 1643. M. de Beaufort, who had been always devoted to the Queen's interest, and even passed for her gallant, pretended now to govern the kingdom, of which he was not so capable as his valet de chambre. The Bishop of Beauvais, the greatest idiot you ever knew, took upon himself the character of Prime Minister, and on the first day of his administration required the Dutch to embrace the Roman Catholic religion if they desired to continue in alliance with France. The Queen was ashamed of this ridiculous minister, and sent for me to offer my father —[Philippe Emmanuel de Gondi, Comte de Joigni; he retired to the: Fathers of the Oratory, and became priest; died 1662, aged eighty−one.]— the place of Prime Minister; but he refusing peremptorily to leave his cell and the Fathers of the Oratory, the place was conferred upon Cardinal Mazarin.

You may now imagine that it was no great task for me to obtain what I desired at a time that nothing was refused, which made Feuillade say that the only words in the French tongue were "La Reine est si bonne."

Madame de Maignelai and the Bishop of Lisieux desired the Queen to grant me the coadjutorship of Paris, but they were repulsed, the Queen assuring them that none should have it but my father, who kept from Court; and would never be seen at the Louvre, except once, when the Queen told him publicly that the King, the very night before he died, had ordered her expressly to have it solicited for me, and that he said in the presence of the Bishop of Lisieux that he had me always in his thoughts since the adventures of the pinmaker and Captain Coutenau. What relation had these trifling stories to the archbishopric of Paris? Thus we see that affairs of the greatest moment often owe their rise and success to insignificant trifles and accidents. All the companies went to thank the Queen. I sent 16,000 crowns to Rome for my bull, with orders not to desire any favour, lest it should delay the despatch and give the ministers time to oppose it. I received my bull accordingly; and now you will see me ascending the theatre of action, where you will find scenes not indeed worthy of yourself, but not altogether unworthy of your attention.