

MEMOIRS OF LOUIS DE ROUVROY, DUC DE SAINT-SIMON THE COURT OF LOUIS XIV

(SELECTED EXTRACTS)

Ignorance of Breteuil:

Bonnceil, introducer of the ambassadors, being dead, Breteuil obtained his post. Breteuil was not without intellect, but aped courtly manners, called himself Baron de Breteuil, and was much tormented and laughed at by his friends. One day, dining at the house of Madame de Pontchartrain, and, speaking very authoritatively, Madame de Pontchartrain disputed with him, and, to test his knowledge, offered to make a bet that he did not know who wrote the Lord's Prayer. He defended himself as well as he was able, and succeeded in leaving the table without being called upon to decide the point. Caumartin, who saw his embarrassment, ran to him, and kindly whispered in his ear that Moses was the author of the Lord's Prayer. Thus strengthened, Breteuil returned to the attack, brought, while taking coffee, the conversation back again to the bet; and, after reproaching Madame de Pontchartrain for supposing him ignorant upon such a point, and declaring he was ashamed of being obliged to say such a trivial thing, pronounced emphatically that it was Moses who had written the Lord's Prayer. The burst of laughter that, of course, followed this, overwhelmed him with confusion. Poor Breteuil was for a long time at loggerheads with his friend, and the Lord's Prayer became a standing reproach to him.

He had a friend, the Marquis de Gesvres, who, upon some points, was not much better informed. Talking one day in the cabinet of the King, and admiring in the tone of a connoisseur some fine paintings of the Crucifixion by the first masters, he remarked that they were all by one hand.

He was laughed at, and the different painters were named, as recognized by their style.

"Not at all," said the Marquis, "the painter is called INRI; do you not see his name upon all the pictures?" What followed after such gross stupidity and ignorance can be imagined.

Saint-Simon Leaves the Army:

The changes which took place in the army after the Peace of Ryswick, were very great and very strange. The excellence of the regiments, the merits of the officers, those who commanded, all were forgotten by Barbezieux, young and impetuous, whom the King allowed to act as he liked. My regiment was disbanded, and my company was incorporated with that of Count d'Uzes, brother-in-law of Duras, who looked well after the interests of his relative. I was thus deprived of command, without regiment, without company, and the only opportunity offered me was to serve in a regiment commanded by Saint Morris, where I should have been, as it were, at the lowest step of the ladder, with my whole military career to begin over again.

I had served at the head of my regiment during four campaigns, with applause and reputation, I am bold enough to say it. I thought therefore I was entitled to better treatment than this. Promotions were made; five officers, all my juniors,

were placed over my head. I resolved then to leave the service, but not to take a rash step. I consulted first with several friends before sending in my resignation. All whom I consulted advised me to quit the service, but for a long time I could not resolve to do so. Nearly three months passed, during which I

suffered cruel anguish of mind from my irresolution. I knew that if I left the army I should be certain to incur the anger of the King, and I do not hesitate to say that this was not a matter of indifference to me. The King was always annoyed when anybody ceased to serve; he called it "quitting him;" and made his anger felt for a long time. At last, however, I determined on my course of action.

I wrote a short letter to the King, in which, without making any complaints, I said that as my health was not good (it had given me some trouble on different occasions) I begged to be allowed to quit his service, and said that I hoped I should be permitted to console myself for leaving the army by assiduously attending upon him at the Court: After despatching this letter I went away immediately to Paris.

I learnt afterwards from my friends, that upon receiving my letter the King called Chamillart to him, and said with emotion: "Well! Monsieur, here is another man who quits us!—" and he read my letter word for word. I did not learn that anything else escaped him.

As for me, I did not return to Versailles for a whole week, or see the King again until Easter Monday. After his supper that evening, and when about to undress himself, he paid me a distinction, a mere trifle I admit, and which I should be ashamed to mention if it did not under the circumstances serve as a characteristic of him.

Although the place he undressed in was very well illuminated, the chaplain at the evening prayers there held in his hand a lighted candle, which he gave afterwards to the chief valet-de-chambre, who carried it before the King until he reached his arm-chair, and then handed it to whomever the King ordered him to give it to. On this evening the King, glancing all around him, cast his eye upon me, and told the valet to give the candle to me. It was an honour which he bestowed sometimes upon one, sometimes upon another, according to his whim, but which, by his manner of bestowing it, was always coveted, as a great distinction. My surprise may be imagined when I heard myself named aloud for this office, not only on this but on many other occasions. It was not that there was any lack of people of consideration to hold the candle; but the King was sufficiently piqued by my retirement not to wish everybody to see that he was so.

For three years he failed not to make me feel to what extent he was angry with me. He spoke to me no longer; he scarcely bestowed a glance upon me, and never once alluded to my letter. To show that his annoyance did not extend to my wife, but that it was solely and wholly directed against me, he bestowed, about eight months after, several marks of favour upon Madame de Saint-Simon. She was continually invited to the suppers at Trianon—an honour which had never before been granted her. I only laughed at this. Madame de Saint-Simon was not invited to Marly; because the husbands always, by right, accompanied their wives there, apartments being given for both. At Trianon it was different. Nobody was allowed to sleep there except those absolutely in attendance. The King wished, therefore, the better to mark by this distinction that the exclusion was

intended for me alone, and that my wife had no part in it.

Notwithstanding this; I persevered in my ordinary assiduity, without ever asking to be invited to Marly, and lived agreeably with my wife and my friends. I have thought it best to finish with this subject at once—now I must go back to my starting point.

The Fuss over the Offertory:

The year finished with an affair in which I was not a little interested. During the year there were several grand fetes, at which the King went to High Mass and vespers. On these occasions a lady of the Court, named by the Queen, or when there was none, by the Dauphiness, made a collection for the poor. The house of Lorraine, always anxious to increase its importance, shirked impudently this duty, in order thereby to give itself a new distinction, and assimilate its rank to that of the Princes of the blood. It was a long time before this was perceived. At last the Duchesse de Noailles, the Duchesse de Guiche, her daughter, the Marechal de Boufflers, and others, took notice of it; and I was soon after informed of it. I determined that the matter should be arranged, and that justice should be done.

The Duchesse de Lude was first spoken to on the subject; she, weak and timid, did not dare to do anything; but at last was induced to speak to Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne, who, wishing to judge for herself as to the truth of the matter, ordered Madame de Montbazon to make the collection for the poor at the next fete that took place. Although very well, Madame de Montbazon pretended to be ill, stopped in bed half a day, and excused herself on this ground from performing the duty. Madame de Bourgogne was annoyed, but she did not dare to push matters farther; and, in consequence of this refusal, none of the Duchesses would make the collection. Other ladies of quality soon perceived this, and they also refused to serve; so that the collection fell into all sorts of hands, and sometimes was not made at all. Matters went on so far, indeed, that the King at last grew angry, and threatened to make Madame de Bourgogne herself take this office. But refusals still followed upon refusals, and the bomb thus at length was ready to burst.

The King, who at last ordered the daughter of M. le Grand to take the plate on New Year's Day, 1704., had, it seems, got scent of the part I was taking in this matter, and expressed himself to Madame de Maintenon, as I learnt, as very discontented with me and one or two other Dukes. He said that the Dukes were much less obedient to him than the Princes; and that although many Duchesses had refused to make the collection, the moment he had proposed that the daughter of M. le Grand should take it, M. le Grand consented. On the next day, early in the morning, I saw Chamillart, who related to me that on the previous evening, before he had had time to open his business, the King had burst out in anger against me, saying it was very strange, but that since I had quitted the army I did nothing but meddle in matters of rank and bring actions against everybody; finishing, by declaring that if he acted well he should send me so far away that I should be unable to importune him any more. Chamillart added, that he had done all in his power to appease the King, but with little effect.

After consulting with my friends, I determined to go up to the King and boldly ask to speak to him in his cabinet, believing that to be the wisest course I

could pursue. He was not yet so reconciled to me as he afterwards became, and, in fact, was sorely out of humour with me. This step did not seem, therefore, altogether unattended with danger; but, as I have said, I resolved to take it. As he passed, therefore, from his dinner that same day, I asked permission to follow him into his cabinet. Without replying to me, he made a sign that I might enter, and went into the embrasure of the window.

When we were quite alone I explained, at considerable length, my reasons for acting in this matter, declaring that it was from no disrespect to his Majesty that I had requested Madame de Saint-Simon and the other Duchesses to refuse to collect for the poor, but simply to bring those to account who had claimed without reason to be exempt from this duty. I added, keeping my eyes fixed upon the King all the time, that I begged him to believe that none of his subjects were more submissive to his will or more willing to acknowledge the supremacy of his authority in all things than the Dukes. Until this his tone and manner had been very severe; but now they both softened, and he said, with much goodness and familiarity, that "that was how it was proper to speak and think," and other remarks equally gracious. I took then the opportunity of expressing the sorrow I felt at seeing, that while my sole endeavour was to please him, my enemies did all they could to blacken me in his eyes, indicating that I suspected M. le Grand, who had never pardoned me for the part I took in the affair of the Princesse d'Harcourt, was one of the number. After I had finished the King remained still a moment, as if ready to hear if I had anything more to say, and then quitted me with a bow, slight but very gracious, saying it was well, and that he was pleased with me.

I learnt afterwards that he said the same thing of me in the evening to Chamillart, but, nevertheless, that he did not seem at all shaken in his prejudice in favour of M. le Grand. The King was in fact very easy to prejudice, difficult to lead back, and most unwilling to seek enlightenment, or to listen to any explanations, if authority was in the slightest degree at stake. Whoever had the address to make a question take this shape, might be assured that the King would throw aside all consideration of justice, right, and reason, and dismiss all evidence. It was by playing on this chord that his ministers knew how to manage him with so much art, and to make themselves despotic masters, causing him to believe all they wished, while at the same time they rendered him inaccessible to explanation, and to those who might have explained.

I have, perhaps, too much expanded an affair which might have been more compressed. But in addition to the fact that I was mixed up in it, it is by these little private details, as it seems to me, that the characters of the Court and King are best made known.

Dynastic Preoccupations:

The King was very anxious to establish his illegitimate children, whom he advanced day by day; and had married two of them, daughters, to Princes of the blood. One of these, the Princesse de Conti, only daughter of the King and Madame de la Valliere, was a widow without children; the other, eldest daughter of the King and Madame de Montespan, had married Monsieur le Duc (Louis de Bourbon, eldest son of the Prince de Conde). For some time past Madame de Maintenon, even more than the King, had thought of nothing else than how to raise the remaining illegitimate children, and

wished to marry Mademoiselle de Blois (second daughter of the King and of Madame de Montespan) to Monsieur the Duc de Chartres. The Duc de Chartres was the sole nephew of the King, and was much above the Princes of the blood by his rank of Grandson of France, and by the Court that Monsieur his father kept up.

The marriages of the two Princes of the blood, of which I have just spoken, had scandalised all the world. The King was not ignorant of this; and he could thus judge of the effect of a marriage even more startling; such as was this proposed one. But for four years he had turned it over in his mind and had even taken the first steps to bring it about. It was the more difficult because the father of the Duc de Chartres was infinitely proud of his rank, and the mother belonged to a nation which abhorred illegitimacy and, misalliances, and was indeed of a character to forbid all hope of her ever relishing this marriage.

In order to vanquish all these obstacles, the King applied to M. le Grand (Louis de Lorraine). This person was brother of the Chevalier de Lorraine, the favourite, by disgraceful means, of Monsieur, father of the Duc de Chartres. The two brothers, unscrupulous and corrupt, entered willingly into the scheme, but demanded as a reward, paid in advance, to be made "Chevaliers of the Order." This was done, although somewhat against the inclination of the King, and success was promised.

The young Duc de Chartres had at that time for teacher Dubois (afterwards the famous Cardinal Dubois), whose history was singular. He had formerly been a valet; but displaying unusual aptitude for learning, had been instructed by his master in literature and history, and in due time passed into the service of Saint Laurent, who was the Duc de Chartres' first instructor. He became so useful and showed so much skill, that Saint Laurent made him become an abbe. Thus raised in position, he passed much time with the Duc de Chartres, assisting him to prepare his lessons, to write his exercises, and to look out words in the dictionary. I have seen him thus engaged over and over again, when I used to go and play with the Duc de Chartres. As Saint Laurent grew infirm, Dubois little by little supplied his place; supplied it well too, and yet pleased the young Duke. When Saint Laurent died Dubois aspired to succeed him. He had paid his court to the Chevalier de Lorraine, by whose influence he was much aided in obtaining his wish. When at last appointed successor to Saint Laurent, I never saw a man so glad, nor with more reason. The extreme obligation he was under to the Chevalier de Lorraine, and still more the difficulty of maintaining himself in his new position, attached him more and more to his protector.

It was, then, Dubois that the Chevalier de Lorraine made use of to gain the consent of the young Duc de Chartres to the marriage proposed by the King. Dubois had, in fact, gained the Duke's confidence, which it was easy to do at that age; had made him afraid of his father and of the King; and, on the other hand, had filled him with fine hopes and expectations. All that Dubois could do, however, when he broke the matter of the marriage to the young Duke, was to ward off a direct refusal; but that was sufficient for the success of the enterprise. Monsieur was already gained, and as soon as the King had a reply from Dubois he hastened to broach the affair. A day or two before this, however, Madame (mother of the Duc de Chartres) had scent of what was going on. She spoke to her son of the indignity of this marriage with that force in which she was never wanting, and drew from him a promise that he would not consent to it. Thus, he was feeble towards his teacher, feeble towards his mother, and

there was aversion on the one hand and fear on the other, and great embarrassment on all sides.

One day early after dinner I saw M. de Chartres, with a very sad air, come out of his apartment and enter the closet of the King. He found his Majesty alone with Monsieur. The King spoke very obligingly to the Duc de Chartres, said that he wished to see him married; that he offered him his daughter, but that he did not intend to constrain him in the matter, but left him quite at liberty. This discourse, however, pronounced with that terrifying majesty so natural to the King, and addressed to a timid young prince, took away his voice, and quite unnerved him. He, thought to escape from his slippery position by throwing himself upon Monsieur and Madame, and stammeringly replied that the King was master, but that a son's will depended upon that of his parents. "What you say is very proper," replied the King; "but as soon as you consent to my proposition your father and mother will not oppose it." And then turning to Monsieur he said, "Is this not true, my brother?" Monsieur consented, as he had already done, and the only person remaining to consult was Madame, who was immediately sent for.

As soon as she came, the King, making her acquainted with his project, said that he reckoned she would not oppose what her husband and her son had already agreed to. Madame, who had counted upon the refusal of her son, was tongue-tied. She threw two furious glances upon Monsieur and upon the Duc de Chartres, and then said that, as they wished it, she had nothing to say, made a slight reverence, and went away. Her son immediately followed her to explain his conduct; but railing against him, with tears in her eyes, she would not listen, and drove him from her room. Her husband, who shortly afterwards joined her, met with almost the same treatment.

That evening an "Apartment" was held at the palace, as was customary three times a week during the winter; the other three evenings being set apart for comedy, and the Sunday being free. An Apartment as it was called, was an assemblage of all the Court in the grand saloon, from seven o'clock in the evening until ten, when the King sat down to table; and, after ten, in one of the saloons at the end of the grand gallery towards the tribune of the chapel. In the first place there was some music; then tables were placed all about for all kinds of gambling; there was a 'lansquenet'; at which Monsieur and Monseigneur always played; also a billiard-table; in a word, every one was free to play with every one, and allowed to ask for fresh tables as all the others were occupied. Beyond the billiards was a refreshment-room. All was perfectly lighted. At the outset, the King went to the "apartments" very often and played, but lately he had ceased to do so. He spent the evening with Madame de Maintenon, working with different ministers one after the other. But still he wished his courtiers to attend assiduously.

This evening, directly after the music had finished, the King sent for Monseigneur and Monsieur, who were already playing at 'lansquenet'; Madame, who scarcely looked at a party of 'hombre' at which she had seated herself; the Duc de Chartres, who, with a rueful visage, was playing at chess; and Mademoiselle de Blois, who had scarcely begun to appear in society, but who this evening was extraordinarily decked out, and who, as yet, knew nothing and suspected nothing; and therefore, being naturally very timid, and horribly afraid of the King, believed herself sent for in order to be reprimanded, and trembled so that Madame de Maintenon took her upon her knees,

where she held her, but was scarcely able to reassure her. The fact of these royal persons being sent for by the King at once made people think that a marriage was in contemplation. In a few minutes they returned, and then the announcement was made public. I arrived at that moment. I found everybody in clusters, and great astonishment expressed upon every face. Madame was walking in the gallery with Chateauthiers—her favourite, and worthy of being so. She took long strides, her handkerchief in her hand, weeping without constraint, speaking pretty loudly, gesticulating; and looking like Ceres after the rape of her daughter Proserpine, seeking her in fury, and demanding her back from Jupiter. Every one respectfully made way to let her pass. Monsieur, who had returned to 'lansquenet', seemed overwhelmed with shame, and his son appeared in despair; and the bride-elect was marvellously embarrassed and sad. Though very young, and likely to be dazzled by such a marriage, she understood what was passing, and feared the consequences. Most people appeared full of consternation.

The Apartment, which, however heavy in appearance, was full of interest to me, seemed quite short. It finished by the supper of the King. His Majesty appeared quite at ease. Madame's eyes were full of tears, which fell from time to time as she looked into every face around, as if in search of all our thoughts. Her son, whose eyes too were red, she would not give a glance to; nor to Monsieur: all three ate scarcely anything. I remarked that the King offered Madame nearly all the dishes that were before him, and that she refused with an air of rudeness which did not, however, check his politeness. It was furthermore noticeable that, after leaving the table, he made to Madame a very marked and very low reverence, during which she performed so complete a pirouette, that the King on raising his head found nothing but her back before him, removed about a step further towards the door.

On the morrow we went as usual to wait in the gallery for the breaking-up of the council, and for the King's Mass. Madame came there. Her son approached her, as he did every day, to kiss her hand. At that very moment she gave him a box on the ear, so sonorous that it was heard several steps distant. Such treatment in presence of all the Court covered with confusion this unfortunate prince, and overwhelmed the infinite number of spectators, of whom I was one, with prodigious astonishment.

That day the immense dowry was declared; and on Sunday there was a grand ball, that is, a ball opened by a 'branle' which settled the order of the dancing throughout the evening. Monseigneur the Duc de Bourgogne danced on this occasion for the first time; and led off the 'branle' with Mademoiselle. I danced also for the first time at Court. My partner was Mademoiselle de Souches, daughter of the Grand Prevot; she danced excellently. I had been that morning to wait on Madame, who could not refrain from saying, in a sharp and angry voice, that I was doubtless very glad of the promise of so many balls—that this was natural at my age; but that, for her part, she was old, and wished they were well over. A few days after, the contract of marriage was signed in the closet of the King, and in the presence of all the Court. The same day the household of the future Duchesse de Chartres was declared. The King gave her a first gentleman usher and a Dame d'Atours, until then reserved to the daughters of France, and a lady of honour, in order to carry out completely so strange a novelty. I must say something about the persons who composed this household.

The Prince de Conti lost, before this time, his son, Prince la Roche-sur- Yon, who was only four years old. The King wore mourning for him, although it was the custom not to do so for children under seven years of age. But the King had already departed from this custom for one of the children of M. du Maine, and he dared not afterwards act differently towards the children of a prince of the blood. Just at the end of September, M. du Maine lost another child, his only son. The King wept very much, and, although the child was considerably under seven years of age, wore mourning for it. The marriage of Mademoiselle to M. de Lorraine was then just upon the point of taking place; and Monsieur (father of Mademoiselle) begged that this mourning might be laid aside when the marriage was celebrated. The King agreed, but Madame la Duchesse and the Princesse de Conti believed it apparently beneath them to render this respect to Monsieur, and refused to comply. The King commanded them to do so, but they pushed the matter so far as to say that they had no other clothes. Upon this, the King ordered them to send and get some directly. They were obliged to obey, and admit themselves vanquished; but they did so not without great vexation.

Death of Jules Hardouin-Mansart:

Mansart died very suddenly during the Marly excursion (1708). He was the Surveyor of the King's Works, and a character worth contemplating for a moment. A tall, well-built man, of very lowly origins, he had a pleasant face and exceedingly sharp wits, which he cleverly used to ingratiate himself with his betters, although he never entirely shook off the vulgarity of his original lowly condition. First a drummer-boy, then a stone-cutter, then an apprentice mason, he managed to ingratiate himself with the great François Mansart, who left such a great reputation as a French architect. Mansart made use of him to work on the King's buildings, and tried to train and make something out of him. People said that he was François Mansart's bastard, but he gave it to be known that he was the nephew of the great man, and took his name after Mansart's death in 1666, by which means he hoped to become better known and he succeeded. Finally he attracted the notice of the King. Thereafter he proceeded to put his acquaintance with the gentlemen, valets and masons to such good purpose that His Majesty, who already admired in him the qualities of obscure birth and lack of attachment to any great party, endowed him with his "uncle's" genius, dismissed the present Surveyor of the King's Works, Colbert de Villacerf, and put Mansart in his place. Despite this promotion, Mansart did not know his work and his brother in law, Robert de Cotte, his brother-in-law whom he made chief architect, was as ignorant as he. They took all their plans, drawings and ideas from another architect, nicknamed L'Assurance, whom as far as possible they kept firmly hidden.

Mansart cunningly enticed the king from small beginnings to embark on long and costly enterprises. He showed him unfinished sketches, especially for gardens, which fired the imagination of the king so that he made suggestions. Then Mansart, exclaiming that he would never have thought of such a thing, would go into raptures, declaring that compared with His Majesty he was no better than a student, so that the King fell into his trap quite innocently. Drawings in hand, he insinuated himself into the semi-private apartments, and then gradually into all of them, and at all hours, and often without any plans or business to discuss. Later he took to sharing in the conversation and accustomed the King to discuss the news and other matters with him. Sometimes he asked questions, but he knew how to choose his moments, for he

understood the King to perfection, and never mistook the times for being familiar or formal. He liked to show off his privileges during the King's walks and to see people marvelling at the lengths to which he dared to go. Yet he never used his influence to harm anyone, although it might have been dangerous to attack him. In this way he acquired status and induced not only the nobles and the Princes of the Blood, but even the Bastards and the ministers, to serve his interests. They and the upper servants were very careful to remain on good terms with him.

The King had exactly the same kind of partiality for Mansart that he had for his physician, Fagon. Just as he was greatly angered when Courtiers did not consult Fagon when they were ill, and obey his orders, so it was thought most rash for anyone to consider building a house or making a garden without consulting Mansart. In fact, Mansart thought the same himself, but he was not capable. He built the bridge at Moulins and called it a masterpiece of stability and boasted about it in the most complacent way. Four or five months after it was finished, however, Charlus, the father of the Duc de Levis, happened to attend the King's *lever* on returning from his estates near Moulins. Mansart was present at the time and hoped to hear praise of his bridge, and after a while asked the King to enquire about it. But Charlus was a clever man, although disappointed and inclined to be cynical, and he made no reply, which the King noticed and asked him again. "Sire", said Charlus, "I know nothing about it since it went away, but I think that at present it must be somewhere near Nantes." "What are you saying?" said the King, "I mean the bridge at Moulins". "Precisely Sire", replied Charlus, "the bridge at Moulins. It came adrift the night before I left, and went floating off down the river." The King and Mansart looked astonished, and the Courtiers laughed behind their hands. This was indeed what had happened; and the bridge at Blois, which Mansart had built shortly before, played him the same trick.

Mansart made an enormous amount of money out of his buildings, contracts and all other aspects of his work. He was autocratic in the extreme. No craftsman, nor contractor nor any other person concerned with his buildings ever dared to argue with him or make the slightest protest. Since neither he nor the King had any taste, he never created a thing of beauty, nor even anything convenient for its purpose, to justify the vast expenses which he incurred. Monseigneur ceased to employ him at Meudon after others had convinced him that Mansart simply led him into extravagances, but the King instead of being grateful to Monseigneur and angry with Mansart, did his best to reconcile them and even offered to defray some of the costs. Nonetheless, Monseigneur was annoyed at having been duped; he refused the offer, and remained angry about the whole affair.

The fine chapel at Versailles – which is fine in matters of craftsmanship and ornamentation – which took so many years to build and so many millions of *livres*, is so badly proportioned that it seems to overpower the palace itself. It was designed in such a way for a special purpose. Mansart indeed calculated the proportions solely from the viewpoint of the royal box, because he knew that the King was most unlikely to enter the chapel from below. He then deliberately raised that hideous excrescence of the chapel roof above the roof-line of the palace, so as to force the king, in due course, to raise the whole palace by one storey in order to hide the projecting chapel roof. Had not war broken out at the critical moment the work would have been carried out. In the meantime however, Mansart died

Death of the King's Brother:

After such a frightful spectacle as had been witnessed, so many tears and so much tenderness, nobody doubted that the three, days which remained of the stay at Marly would be exceedingly sad. But, on the very morrow of the day on which Monsieur died, some ladies of the palace, upon entering the apartments of Madame de Maintenon, where was the King with the Duchesse de Bourgogne, about twelve o'clock, heard her from the chamber where they were, next to hers, singing opera tunes. A little while after, the King, seeing the Duchesse de Bourgogne very sad in a corner of the room, asked Madame de Maintenon, with surprise, why the said Duchess was so melancholy; set himself to work to rouse her; then played with her and some ladies of the palace he had called in to join in the sport. This was not all. Before rising from the dinner table, at a little after two o'clock, and twenty-six hours after the death of Monsieur, Monseigneur the Duc de Bourgogne asked the Duc de Montfort if he would play at brelan.

"At brelan!" cried Montfort, in extreme astonishment; "you cannot mean it! Monsieur is still warm."

"Pardon me," replied the Prince, "I do mean it though. The King does not wish that we should be dull here at Marly, and has ordered me to make everybody play; and, for fear that nobody should dare to begin, to set, myself, the example;" and with this he began to play at brelan; and the salon was soon filled with gaming tables.

Such was the affection of the King: such that of Madame de Maintenon! She felt the loss of Monsieur as a deliverance, and could scarcely restrain her joy; and it was with the greatest difficulty she succeeded in putting on a mournful countenance. She saw that the King was already consoled; nothing could therefore be more becoming than for her to divert him, and nothing suited her better than to bring things back into their usual course, so that there might be no more talk of Monsieur nor of affliction. For propriety of appearance she cared nothing. The thing could not fail, however, to be scandalous; and in whispers was found so. Monseigneur, though he had appeared to like Monsieur, who had given him all sorts of balls and amusements, and shown him every kind of attention and complaisance, went out wolf hunting the very day after his death; and, upon his return, finding play going on in the salons, went without hesitation and played himself like the rest. Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne and M. le Duc de Berry only saw Monsieur on public occasions, and therefore could not be much moved by his loss. But Madame la Duchesse was extremely touched by this event. He was her grandfather; and she tenderly loved her mother, who loved Monsieur; and Monsieur had always been very kind to her, and provided all kinds of diversion for her. Although not very loving to anybody, she loved Monsieur; and was much affected not to dare to show her grief, which she indulged a long time in private. What the grief of Madame was has already been seen.

As for M. de Chartres, he was much affected by his loss. The father and son loved each other extremely. Monsieur was a gentle and indulgent parent, who had never constrained his son. But if the Duke's heart was touched, his reason also was. Besides the great assistance it was to him to have a father, brother of the King, that father was, as it were, a barrier between him and the King, under whose hand he now found

himself directly placed. His greatness, his consideration, the comfort of his house and his life, would, therefore, depend on him alone. Assiduity, propriety of conduct, a certain manner, and, above all, a very different deportment towards his wife, would now become the price of everything he could expect to obtain from the King.

Madame la Duchesse de Chartres, although well treated by Monsieur, was glad to be delivered from him; for he was a barrier betwixt her and the King, that left her at the mercy of her husband. She was charmed to be quit of the duty of following Monsieur to Paris or Saint Cloud, where she found herself, as it were, in a foreign country, with faces which she never saw anywhere else, which did not make her welcome; and where she was exposed to the contempt and humour of Madame, who little spared her. She expected for the future never to leave the Court, and to be not only exempt from paying her court to Monsieur, but that Madame and her husband would for the future be obliged to treat her in quite another manner.

Character of Monsieur, the King's brother:

The bulk of the Court regretted Monsieur, for it was he who set all pleasure a-going; and when he left it, life and merriment seemed to have disappeared likewise. Setting aside his obstinacy with regard to the Princes, he loved the order of rank; preferences, and distinctions: he caused them to be observed as much as possible, and himself set the example. He loved great people; and was so affable and polite, that crowds came to him. The difference which he knew how to make, and which he never failed to make, between every one according to his position, contributed greatly to his popularity. In his receptions, by his greater or less, or more neglectful attention, and by his words, he always marked in a flattering manner the differences made by birth and dignity, by age and merit, and by profession; and all this with a dignity natural to him, and a constant facility which he had acquired. His familiarity obliged, and yet no rash people ever ventured to take advantage of it. He visited or sent exactly when it was proper; and under his roof he allowed a complete liberty, without injury to the respect shown him, or to a perfect court air. He had learned from the Queen his mother, and well remembered this art. The crowd, therefore, constantly flocked towards the Palais Royal.

At Saint Cloud, where all his numerous household used to assemble, there were many ladies who, to speak the truth, would scarcely have been received elsewhere, but many also of a higher set, and great store of gamblers. The pleasures of all kinds of games, and the singular beauty of the place, where a thousand caleches were always ready to whirl even the most lazy ladies through the walks, soft music and good cheer, made it a palace of delight, grace, and magnificence.

All this without any assistance from Madame, who dined and supped with the ladies and Monsieur, rode out sometimes in a caleche with one of them, often sulked with the company, made herself feared for her harsh and surly temper—frequently even for her words; and passed her days in a little cabinet she had chosen, where the windows were ten feet from the ground, gazing perpetually on the portraits of Paladins and other German princes, with which she had tapestried the walls; and writing every day with her own hand whole volumes of letters, of which she always kept autograph

copies. Monsieur had never been able to bend her to a more human way of life; and lived decently with her, without caring for her person in any way.

For his part, Monsieur, who had very gallantly won the battle of Cassel, and who had always shown courage in the sieges where he had served, had only the bad qualities that distinguish women. With more knowledge of the world than wit, with no reading, though he had a vast and exact acquaintance with noble houses, their births and marriages, he was good for nothing. Nobody was so flabby in body and mind, no one so weak, so timid, so open to deception, so led by the nose, so despised by his favourites, often so roughly treated by them. He was quarrelsome in small matters, incapable of keeping any secret, suspicious, mistrustful; fond of spreading reports in his Court to make mischief, to learn what was really going on or just to amuse himself: he fetched and carried from one to the other. With so many defects, unrelated to any virtue, he had such an abominable taste, that his gifts and the fortunes that he gave to those he took into favour had rendered him publicly scandalous. He neither respected times nor places. His minions, who owed him everything, sometimes treated him most insolently; and he had often much to do to appease horrible jealousies. He lived in continual hot water with his favourites, to say nothing of the quarrels of that troop of ladies of a very decided character—many of whom were very malicious, and, most, more than malicious—with whom Monsieur used to divert himself, entering into all their wretched squabbles.

The Chevaliers de Lorraine and Chatillon had both made a large fortune by their good looks, with which he was more smitten than with those of any other of his favourites. Chatillon, who had neither head, nor sense, nor wit, got on in this way, and acquired fortune. The other behaved like a Guisard, who blushes at nothing provided he succeeds; and governed Monsieur with a high hand all his life, was overwhelmed with money and benefices, did what he liked for his family, lived always publicly as the master with Monsieur; and as he had, with the pride of the Guises, their art and cleverness, he contrived to get between the King and Monsieur, to be dealt with gingerly, if not feared by both, and was almost as important a man with the one as with the other. He had the finest apartments in the Palais Royal and Saint Cloud, and a pension of ten thousand crowns. He remained in his apartments after the death of Monsieur, but would not from pride continue to receive the pension, which from pride was offered him. Although it would have been difficult to be more timid and submissive than was Monsieur with the King—for he flattered both his ministers and his mistresses—he, nevertheless, mingled with his respectful demeanour the demeanour of a brother, and the free and easy ways of one. In private, he was yet more unconstrained; always taking an armed chair, and never waiting until the King told him to sit. In the Cabinet, after the King appeared, no other Prince sat besides him, not even Monseigneur. But in what regarded his service, and his manner of approaching and leaving the King, no private person could behave with more respect; and he naturally did everything with grace and dignity. He never, however, was able to bend to Madame de Maintenon completely, nor avoid making small attacks on her to the King, nor avoid satirising her pretty broadly in person. It was not her success that annoyed him; but simply the idea that La Scarron had become his sister-in-law; this was insupportable to him. Monsieur was extremely vain, but not haughty, very sensitive, and a great stickler for what was due to him. Upon one occasion he complained to the King that M. le Duc had for some time neglected to attend upon him, as he was bound, and had boasted that he would not do it. The King replied, that

it was not a thing to be angry about, that he ought to seek an opportunity to be served by M. le Duc, and if he would not, to affront him. Accordingly, one morning at Marly, as he was dressing, seeing M. le Duc walking in the garden, Monsieur opened the window and called to him. Monsieur le Duc came up, and entered the room. Then, while one remark was leading to another, Monsieur slipped off his dressing-gown, and then his shirt. A valet de chambre standing by, at once slipped a clean shirt into the hands of M. le Duc, who, caught thus in a trap, was compelled to offer the garment to Monsieur, as it was his duty to do. As soon as Monsieur had received it, he burst out laughing, and said—"Good-bye, cousin, go away. I do not want to delay you longer." M. le Duc felt the point of this, and went away very angry, and continued so in consequence of the high tone Monsieur afterwards kept up on the subject.

Louvois as Superintendant of Buildings:

Louvois, who was then Minister of War, was also superintendent of the buildings. The King, who liked building, and who had cast off all his mistresses, had pulled down the little porcelain Trianon he had made for Madame de Montespan, and was rebuilding it in the form it still retains. One day he perceived, for his glance was most searching, that one window was a trifle narrower than the others. He showed it to Louvois, in order that it might be altered, which, as it was not then finished, was easy to do. Louvois sustained that the window was all right. The King insisted then, and on the morrow also, but Louvois, pigheaded and inflated with his authority, would not yield.

The next day the King saw Le Notre in the gallery. Although his trade was gardens rather than houses, the King did not fail to consult him upon the latter. He asked him if he had been to Trianon. Le Notre replied that he had not. The King ordered him to go. On the morrow he saw Le Notre again; same question, same answer. The King comprehended the reason of this, and a little annoyed, commanded him to be there that afternoon at a given time. Le Notre did not dare to disobey this time. The King arrived, and Louvois being present, they returned to the subject of the window, which Louvois obstinately said was as broad as the rest. The King wished Le Notre to measure it, for he knew that, upright and true, he would openly say what he found. Louvois, piqued, grew angry. The King, who was not less so, allowed him to say his say. Le Notre, meanwhile, did not stir. At last, the King made him go, Louvois still grumbling, and maintaining his assertion with audacity and little measure. Le Notre measured the window, and said that the King was right by several inches. Louvois still wished to argue, but the King silenced him, and commanded him to see that the window was altered at once, contrary to custom abusing him most harshly.

What annoyed Louvois most was, that this scene passed not only before all the officers of the buildings, but in presence of all who followed the King in his promenades, nobles, courtiers, officers of the guard, and others, even all the rolete. The dressing given to Louvois was smart and long, mixed with reflections upon the fault of this window, which, not noticed so soon, might have spoiled all the facade, and compelled it to be re-built.

Louvois, who was not accustomed to be thus treated, returned home in fury, and like a man in despair. His familiars were frightened, and in their disquietude angled to learn what had happened. At last he told them, said he was lost, and that for a few inches

the King forgot all his services, which had led to so many conquests; he declared that henceforth he would leave the trowel to the King, bring about a war, and so arrange matters that the King should have good need of him!

Court Ritual:

Brissac, a few years before his retirement, served the Court ladies a nice turn. All through the winter they attended evening prayers on Thursdays and Sundays, because the King went there; and, under the pretence of reading their prayer-books, had little tapers before them, which cast a light on their faces, and enabled the King to recognise them as he passed. On the evenings when they knew he would not go, scarcely one of them went. One evening, when the King was expected, all the ladies had arrived, and were in their places, and the guards were at their doors. Suddenly, Brissac appeared in the King's place, lifted his baton, and cried aloud, "Guards of the King, withdraw, return to your quarters; the King is not coming this evening." The guards withdrew; but after they had proceeded a short distance, were stopped by brigadiers posted for the purpose, and told to return in a few minutes. What Brissac had said was a joke. The ladies at once began to murmur one to another. In a moment or two all the candles were put out, and the ladies, with but few exceptions, left the chapel. Soon after the King arrived, and, much astonished to see so few ladies present, asked how it was that nobody was there. At the conclusion of the prayers Brissac related what he had done, not without dwelling on the piety of the Court ladies. The King and all who accompanied him laughed heartily. The story soon spread, and these ladies would have strangled Brissac if they had been able.

The Duchesse de Bourgogne being in the family way this spring, was much inconvenienced. The King wished to go to Fontainebleau at the commencement of the fine season, contrary to his usual custom; and had declared this wish. In the mean time he desired to pay visits to Marly. Madame de Bourgogne much amused him; he could not do without her, yet so much movement was not suitable to her state. Madame de Maintenon was uneasy, and Fagon gently intimated his opinion. This annoyed the King, accustomed to restrain himself for nothing, and spoiled by having seen his mistresses travel when big with child, or when just recovering from their confinement, and always in full dress. The hints against going to Marly bothered him, but did not make him give them up. All he would consent to was, that the journey should put off from the day after Quasimodo to the Wednesday of the following week; but nothing could make him delay his amusement, beyond that time, or induce him to allow the Princess to remain at Versailles.

On the following Saturday, as the King was taking a walk after mass, and amusing himself at the carp basin between the Chateau and the Perspective, we saw the Duchesse de Lude coming towards him on foot and all alone, which, as no lady was with the King, was a rarity in the morning. We understood that she had something important to say to him, and when he was a short distance from her, we stopped so as to allow him to join her alone. The interview was not long. She went away again, and the King came back towards us and near the carps without saying a word. Each saw clearly what was in the wind, and nobody was eager to speak. At last the King, when

quite close to the basin, looked at the principal people around, and without addressing anybody, said, with an air of vexation, these few words:

"The Duchesse de Bourgogne has miscarried."

M. de la Rochefoucauld at once uttered an exclamation. M. de Bouillon, the Duc de Tresmes, and Marechal de Boufflers repeated in a low tone the words I have named; and M. de la Rochefoucauld returning to the charge, declared emphatically that it was the greatest misfortune in the world, and that as she had already wounded herself on other occasions, she might never, perhaps, have any more children.

"And if so," interrupted the King all on a sudden, with anger, "what is that to me? Has she not already a son; and if he should die, is not the Duc de Berry old enough to marry and have one? What matters it to the who succeeds me,—the one or the other? Are the not all equally my grandchildren?" And immediately, with impetuosity he added, "Thank God, she is wounded, since she was to be so; and I shall no longer be annoyed in my journeys and in everything I wish to do, by the representations of doctors, and the reasonings of matrons. I shall go and come at my pleasure, and shall be left in peace."

A silence so deep that an ant might be heard to walk, succeeded this strange outburst. All eyes were lowered; no one hardly dared to breathe. All remained stupefied. Even the domestics and the gardeners stood motionless.

This silence lasted more than a quarter of an hour. The King broke it as he leaned upon a balustrade to speak of a carp. Nobody replied. He addressed himself afterwards on the subject of these carps to domestics, who did not ordinarily join in the conversation. Nothing but carps was spoken of with them. All was languishing, and the King went away some time after. As soon as we dared look at each other—out of his sight, our eyes met and told all. Everybody there was for the moment the confidant of his neighbour. We admired—we marvelled—we grieved, we shrugged our shoulders. However distant may be that scene, it is always equally present to me. M. de la Rochefoucauld was in a fury, and this time without being wrong. The chief ecuyer was ready to faint with affright; I myself examined everybody with my eyes and ears, and was satisfied with myself for having long since thought that the King loved and cared for himself alone, and was himself his only object in life.

Character of Louis XIV:

I shall pass over the stormy period of Louis XIV.'s minority. At twenty- three years of age he entered the great world as King, under the most favourable auspices. His ministers were the most skilful in all Europe; his generals the best; his Court was filled with illustrious and clever men, formed during the troubles which had followed the death of Louis XIII.

Louis XIV. was made for a brilliant Court. In the midst of other men, his figure, his courage, his grace, his beauty, his grand mien, even the tone of his voice and the majestic and natural charm of all his person, distinguished him till his death as the King Bee, and showed that if he had only been born a simple private gentlemen, he would equally have excelled in fetes, pleasures,

and gallantry, and would have had the greatest success in love. The intrigues and adventures which early in life he had been engaged in—when the Comtesse de Soissons lodged at the Tuileries, as superintendent of the Queen's household, and was the centre figure of the Court group—had exercised an unfortunate influence upon him: he received those impressions with which he could never after successfully struggle. From this time, intellect, education, nobility of sentiment, and high principle, in others, became objects of suspicion to him, and soon of hatred. The more he advanced in years the more this sentiment was confirmed in him. He wished to reign by himself. His jealousy on this point unceasingly became weakness. He reigned, indeed, in little things; the great he could never reach: even in the former, too, he was often governed. The superior ability of his early ministers and his early generals soon wearied him. He liked nobody to be in any way superior to him. Thus he chose his ministers, not for their knowledge, but for their ignorance; not for their capacity, but for their want of it. He liked to form them, as he said; liked to teach them even the most trifling things. It was the same with his generals. He took credit to himself for instructing them; wished it to be thought that from his cabinet he commanded and directed all his armies. Naturally fond of trifles, he unceasingly occupied himself with the most petty details of his troops, his household, his mansions; would even instruct his cooks, who received, like novices, lessons they had known by heart for years. This vanity, this unmeasured and unreasonable love of admiration, was his ruin. His ministers, his generals, his mistresses, his courtiers, soon perceived his weakness. They praised him with emulation and spoiled him. Praises, or to say truth, flattery, pleased him to such an extent, that the coarsest was well received, the vilest even better relished. It was the sole means by which you could approach him. Those whom he liked owed his affection for them to their untiring flatteries. This is what gave his ministers so much authority, and the opportunities they had for adulating him, of attributing everything to him, and of pretending to learn everything from him. Suppleness, meanness, an admiring, dependent, cringing manner—above all, an air of nothingness—were the sole means of pleasing him.

This poison spread. It spread, too, to an incredible extent, in a prince who, although of intellect beneath mediocrity, was not utterly without sense, and who had had some experience. Without voice or musical knowledge, he used to sing, in private, the passages of the opera prologues that were fullest of his praises. He was drowned in vanity; and so deeply, that at his public suppers—all the Court present, musicians also—he would hum these self-same praises between his teeth, when the music they were set to was played!

And yet, it must be admitted, he might have done better. Though his intellect, as I have said, was beneath mediocrity, it was capable of being formed. He loved glory, was fond of order and regularity; was by disposition prudent, moderate, discreet, master of his movements and his tongue. Will it be believed? He was also by disposition good and just! God had sufficiently gifted him to enable him to be a good King; perhaps even a tolerably great King! All the evil came to him from elsewhere. His early education was so neglected that nobody dared approach his apartment. He has often been heard to speak of those times with bitterness, and even to relate that, one evening he was found in the basin of the Palais Royal garden fountain, into which he had fallen! He was scarcely taught how to read or write, and remained so ignorant, that the most familiar historical and other facts were utterly unknown to him! He fell, accordingly, and sometimes

even in public, into the grossest absurdities.

It was his vanity, his desire for glory, that led him, soon after the death of the King of Spain, to make that event the pretext for war; in spite of the renunciations so recently made, so carefully stipulated, in the marriage contract. He marched into Flanders; his conquests there were rapid; the passage of the Rhine was admirable; the triple alliance of England, Sweden, and Holland only animated him. In the midst of winter he took Franche-Comte, by restoring which at the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, he preserved his conquests in Flanders. All was flourishing then in the state. Riches everywhere. Colbert had placed the finances, the navy, commerce, manufactures, letters even, upon the highest point; and this age, like that of Augustus, produced in abundance illustrious men of all kinds,-even those illustrious only in pleasures.

Le Tellier and Louvois, his son, who had the war department, trembled at the success and at the credit of Colbert, and had no difficulty in putting into the head of the King a new war, the success of which caused such fear to all Europe that France never recovered from it, and after having been upon the point of succumbing to this war, for a long time felt the weight and misfortune of it. Such was the real cause of that famous Dutch war, to which the King allowed himself to be pushed, and which his love for Madame de Montespan rendered so unfortunate for his glory and for his kingdom. Everything being conquered, everything taken, and Amsterdam ready to give up her keys, the King yields to his impatience, quits the army, flies to Versailles, and destroys in an instant all the success of his arms! He repaired this disgrace by a second conquest, in person, of Franche-Comte, which this time was preserved by France.

In 1676, the King having returned into Flanders, took Conde; whilst Monsieur took Bouchain. The armies of the King and of the Prince of Orange approached each other so suddenly and so closely, that they found themselves front to front near Heurtebise. According even to the admission of the enemy, our forces were so superior to those of the Prince of Orange, that we must have gained the victory if we had attacked. But the King, after listening to the opinions of his generals, some for, and some against giving battle, decided for the latter, turned tail, and the engagement was talked of no more. The army was much discontented. Everybody wished for battle. The fault therefore of the King made much impression upon the troops, and excited cruel railleries against us at home and in the foreign courts. The King stopped but little longer afterwards in the army, although we were only in the month of May. He returned to his mistress. The following year he returned to Flanders, and took Cambrai; and Monsieur besieged Saint-Omer. Monsieur got the start of the Prince of Orange, who was about to assist the place, gave him battle near Corsel, obtained a complete victory, immediately took Saint-Omer, and then joined the King. This contrast so affected the monarch that never afterwards did he give Monsieur command of an army! External appearances were perfectly kept up, but from that moment the resolution was taken and always well sustained.

The year afterwards the King led in person the siege of Ghent. The peace of Nimeguen ended this year the war with Holland, Spain, &c.; and on the commencement of the following year, that with the Emperor and the Empire. America, Africa, the Archipelago, Sicily, acutely felt the power of France, and in 1684 Luxembourg was the price of the delay of the Spaniards in fulfilling all the conditions of the peace. Genoa, bombarded, was forced to come in the persons of its doge and four of its senators, to sue for peace at the commencement of

the following year. From this date, until 1688, the time passed in the cabinet less in fetes than in devotion and constraint. Here finishes the apogee of this reign, and the fulness of glory and prosperity. The great captains, the great ministers, were no more, but their pupils remained. The second epoch of the reign was very different from the first; but the third was even more sadly dissimilar.

I have related the adventure which led to the wars of this period; how an ill-made window-frame was noticed at the Trianon, then building; how Louvois was blamed for it; his alarm lest his disgrace should follow; his determination to engage the King in a war which should turn him from his building fancies. He carried out his resolve: with what result I have already shown. France was ruined at home; and abroad, despite the success of her arms, gained nothing. On the contrary, the withdrawal of the King from Gembloux, when he might have utterly defeated the Prince of Orange, did us infinite harm, as I have shown in its place. The peace which followed this war was disgraceful. The King was obliged to acknowledge the Prince of Orange as King of England, after having so long shown hatred and contempt for him. Our precipitation, too, cost us Luxembourg; and the ignorance of our plenipotentiaries gave our enemies great advantages in forming their frontier. Such was the peace of Ryswick, concluded in September, 1697.

This peace seemed as though it would allow France some breathing time. The King was sixty years of age, and had, in his own opinion, acquired all sorts of glory. But scarcely were we at peace, without having had time to taste it, than the pride of the King made him wish to astonish all Europe by the display of a power that it believed prostrated. And truly he did astonish Europe. But at what a cost! The famous camp of Compiègne—for 'tis to that I allude—was one of the most magnificent spectacles ever seen; but its immense and misplaced prodigality was soon regretted. Twenty years afterwards, some of the regiments who took part in it were still in difficulties from this cause.

Shortly afterwards,—by one of the most surprising and unheard-of pieces of good fortune, the crown of Spain fell into the hands of the Duc d'Anjou, grandson of the King. It seemed as though golden days had come back again to France. Only for a little time, however, did it seem so. Nearly all Europe, as it has been seen, banded against France, to dispute the Spanish crown. The King had lost all his good ministers, all his able generals, and had taken good pains they should leave no successors. When war came, then, we were utterly unable to prosecute it with success or honour. We were driven out of Germany, of Italy, of the Low Countries. We could not sustain the war, or resolve to make peace. Every day led us nearer and nearer the brink of the precipice, the terrible depths of which were for ever staring us in the face. A misunderstanding amongst our enemies, whereby England became detached from the grand alliance; the undue contempt of Prince Eugene for our generals, out of which arose the battle of Denain; saved us from the gulf. Peace came, and a peace, too, infinitely better than that we should have ardently embraced if our enemies had agreed amongst themselves beforehand. Nevertheless, this peace cost dear to France, and cost Spain half its territory—Spain, of which the King had said not even a windmill would he yield! But this was another piece of folly he soon repented of.

Thus, we see this monarch, grand, rich, conquering, the arbiter of Europe; feared and admired as long as the ministers and captains existed who really

deserved the name. When they were no more, the machine kept moving some time by impulsion, and from their influence. But soon afterwards we saw beneath the surface; faults and errors were multiplied, and decay came on with giant strides; without, however, opening the eyes of that despotic master, so anxious to do everything and direct everything himself, and who seemed to indemnify himself for disdain abroad by increasing fear and trembling at home. So much for the reign of this vain-glorious monarch.

Louis XIV and the Court:

Let me touch now upon some other incidents in his career, and upon some points in his character.

He early showed a disinclination for Paris. The troubles that had taken place there during his minority made him regard the place as dangerous; he wished, too, to render himself venerable by hiding himself from the eyes of the multitude; all these considerations fixed him at Saint-Germain soon after the death of the Queen, his mother. It was to that place he began to attract the world by fetes and gallantries, and by making it felt that he wished to be often seen.

His love for Madame de la Valliere, which was at first kept secret, occasioned frequent excursions to Versailles, then a little card castle, which had been built by Louis XIII.—annoyed, and his suite still more so, at being frequently obliged to sleep in a wretched inn there, after he had been out hunting in the forest of Saint Leger. That monarch rarely slept at Versailles more than one night, and then from necessity; the King, his son, slept there, so that he might be more in private with his mistress, pleasures unknown to the hero and just man, worthy son of Saint-Louis, who built the little chateau.

These excursions of Louis XIV. by degrees gave birth to those immense buildings he erected at Versailles; and their convenience for a numerous court, so different from the apartments at Saint-Germain, led him to take up his abode there entirely shortly after the death of the Queen. He built an infinite number of apartments, which were asked for by those who wished to pay their court to him; whereas at Saint-Germain nearly everybody was obliged to lodge in the town, and the few who found accommodation at the chateau were strangely inconvenienced.

The frequent fetes, the private promenades at Versailles, the journeys, were means on which the King seized in order to distinguish or mortify the courtiers, and thus render them more assiduous in pleasing him.

He felt that of real favours he had not enough to bestow; in order to keep up the spirit of devotion, he therefore unceasingly invented all sorts of ideal ones, little preferences and petty distinctions, which answered his purpose as well.

He was exceedingly jealous of the attention paid him. Not only did he notice the presence of the most distinguished courtiers, but those of inferior degree also. He looked to the right and to the left, not only upon rising but upon going to bed, at his meals, in passing through his apartments, or his gardens of Versailles, where alone the courtiers were allowed to follow him; he saw and noticed everybody; not one escaped him, not even those who hoped to remain unnoticed. He marked well all absentees from the Court, found out the reason of

their absence, and never lost an opportunity of acting towards them as the occasion might seem to justify. With some of the courtiers (the most distinguished), it was a demerit not to make the Court their ordinary abode; with others 'twas a fault to come but rarely; for those who never or scarcely ever came it was certain disgrace. When their names were in any way mentioned, "I do not know them," the King would reply haughtily. Those who presented themselves but seldom were thus Characterise: "They are people I never see;" these decrees were irrevocable. He could not bear people who liked Paris. Louis XIV. took great pains to be well informed of all that passed everywhere; in the public places, in the private houses, in society and familiar intercourse. His spies and tell-tales were infinite. He had them of all species; many who were ignorant that their information reached him; others who knew it; others who wrote to him direct, sending their letters through channels he indicated; and all these letters were seen by him alone, and always before everything else; others who sometimes spoke to him secretly in his cabinet, entering by the back stairs. These unknown means ruined an infinite number of people of all classes, who never could discover the cause; often ruined them very unjustly; for the King, once prejudiced, never altered his opinion, or so rarely, that nothing was more rare. He had, too, another fault, very dangerous for others and often for himself, since it deprived him of good subjects. He had an excellent memory; in this way, that if he saw a man who, twenty years before, perhaps, had in some manner offended him, he did not forget the man, though he might forget the offence. This was enough, however, to exclude the person from all favour. The representations of a minister, of a general, of his confessor even, could not move the King. He would not yield.

The most cruel means by which the King was informed of what was passing—for many years before anybody knew it—was that of opening letters. The promptitude and dexterity with which they were opened passes understanding. He saw extracts from all the letters in which there were passages that the chiefs of the post-office, and then the minister who governed it, thought ought to go before him; entire letters, too, were sent to him, when their contents seemed to justify the sending. Thus the chiefs of the post, nay, the principal clerks were in a position to suppose what they pleased and against whom they pleased. A word of contempt against the King or the government, a joke, a detached phrase, was enough. It is incredible how many people, justly or unjustly, were more or less ruined, always without resource, without trial, and without knowing why. The secret was impenetrable; for nothing ever cost the King less than profound silence and dissimulation.

This last talent he pushed almost to falsehood, but never to deceit, pluming himself upon keeping his word,—therefore he scarcely ever gave it. The secrets of others he kept as religiously as his own. He was even flattered by certain confessions and certain confidences; and there was no mistress, minister, or favourite, who could have wormed them out, even though the secret regarded themselves.

We know, amongst many others, the famous story of a woman of quality, who, after having been separated a year from her husband, found herself in the family way just as he was on the point of returning from the army, and who, not knowing what else to do, in the most urgent manner begged a private interview of the King. She obtained it, and confined to him her position, as to the worthiest man in his realm, as she said. The King counselled her to profit by her distress,

and live more wisely for the future, and immediately promised to retain her husband on the frontier as long as was necessary, and to forbid his return under any pretext, and in fact he gave orders the same day to Louvois, and prohibited the husband not only all leave of absence, but forbade him to quit for a single day the post he was to command all the winter. The officer, who was distinguished, and who had neither wished nor asked to be employed all the winter upon the frontier, and Louvois, who had in no way thought of it, were equally surprised and vexed. They were obliged, however, to obey to the letter, and without asking why; and the King never mentioned the circumstance until many years afterwards, when he was quite sure nobody could find out either husband or wife, as in fact they never could, or even obtain the most vague or the most uncertain suspicion.

Never did man give with better grace than Louis XIV., or augmented so much, in this way, the price of his benefits. Never did man sell to better profit his words, even his smiles,—nay, his looks. Never did disobliging words escape him; and if he had to blame, to reprimand, or correct, which was very rare, it was nearly always with goodness, never, except on one occasion (the admonition of Courtenvaux, related in its place), with anger or severity. Never was man so naturally polite, or of a politeness so measured, so graduated, so adapted to person, time, and place. Towards women his politeness was without parallel. Never did he pass the humblest petticoat without raising his hat; even to chamber- maids, that he knew to be such, as often happened at Marly. For ladies he took his hat off completely, but to a greater or less extent; for titled people, half off, holding it in his hand or against his ear some instants, more or less marked. For the nobility he contented himself by putting his hand to his hat. He took it off for the Princes of the blood, as for the ladies. If he accosted ladies he did not cover himself until he had quitted them. All this was out of doors, for in the house he was never covered. His reverences, more or less marked, but always light, were incomparable for their grace and manner; even his mode of half raising himself at supper for each lady who arrived at table. Though at last this fatigued him, yet he never ceased it; the ladies who were to sit down, however, took care not to enter after supper had commenced. If he was made to wait for anything while dressing, it was always with patience. He was exact to the hours that he gave for all his day, with a precision clear and brief in his orders. If in the bad weather of winter, when he could not go out, he went to Madame de Maintenon's a quarter of an hour earlier than he had arranged (which seldom happened), and the captain of the guards was not on duty, he did not fail afterwards to say that it was his own fault for anticipating the hour, not that of the captain of the guards for being absent. Thus, with this regularity which he never deviated from, he was served with the utmost exactitude.

He treated his valets well, above all those of the household. It was amongst them that he felt most at ease, and that he unbosomed himself the most familiarly, especially to the chiefs. Their friendship and their aversion have often had grand results. They were unceasingly in a position to render good and bad offices: thus they recalled those powerful enfranchised slaves of the Roman emperors, to whom the senate and the great people paid court and basely truckled. These valets during Louis XIV.'s reign were not less courted. The ministers, even the most powerful, openly studied their caprices; and the

Princes of the blood, nay, the bastards,—not to mention people of lower grade, did the same. The majority were accordingly insolent enough; and if you could not avoid their insolence, you were forced to put up with it.

The King loved air and exercise very much, as long as he could make use of them. He had excelled in dancing, and at tennis and mall. On horseback he was admirable, even at a late age. He liked to see everything done with grace and address. To acquit yourself well or ill before him was a merit or a fault. He said that with things not necessary it was best not to meddle, unless they were done well. He was very fond of shooting, and there was not a better or more graceful shot than he. He had always, in his cabinet seven or eight pointer bitches, and was fond of feeding them, to make himself known to them. He was very fond, too, of stag hunting; but in a caleche, since he broke his arm, while hunting at Fontainebleau, immediately after the death of the Queen. He rode alone in a species of "box," drawn by four little horses—with five or six relays, and drove himself with an address and accuracy unknown to the best coachmen. His postilions were children from ten to fifteen years of age, and he directed them.

He liked splendour, magnificence, and profusion in everything: you pleased him if you shone through the brilliancy of your houses, your clothes, your table, your equipages. Thus a taste for extravagance and luxury was disseminated through all classes of society; causing infinite harm, and leading to general confusion of rank and to ruin.

As for the King himself, nobody ever approached his magnificence. His buildings, who could number them? At the same time, who was there who did not deplore the pride, the caprice, the bad taste seen in them? He built nothing useful or ornamental in Paris, except the Pont Royal, and that simply by necessity; so that despite its incomparable extent, Paris is inferior to many cities of Europe. Saint-Germain, a lovely spot, with a marvellous view, rich forest, terraces, gardens, and water he abandoned for Versailles; the dullest and most ungrateful of all places, without prospect, without wood, without water, without soil; for the ground is all shifting sand or swamp, the air accordingly bad.

But he liked to subjugate nature by art and treasure.

He built at Versailles, on, on, without any general design, the beautiful and the ugly, the vast and the mean, all jumbled together. His own apartments and those of the Queen, are inconvenient to the last degree, dull, close, stinking. The gardens astonish by their magnificence, but cause regret by their bad taste. You are introduced to the freshness of the shade only by a vast torrid zone, at the end of which there is nothing for you but to mount or descend; and with the hill, which is very short, terminate the gardens. The violence everywhere done to nature repels and wearies us despite ourselves. The abundance of water, forced up and gathered together from all parts, is rendered green, thick, muddy; it disseminates humidity, unhealthy and evident; and an odour still more so. I might never finish upon the monstrous defects of a palace so immense and so immensely dear, with its accompaniments, which are still more so.

But the supply of water for the fountains was all defective at all moments, in spite of those seas of reservoirs which had cost so many millions to establish and to form upon the shifting sand and marsh. Who could have believed it? This defect became the ruin of the infantry which was turned out to do the work. Madame de Maintenon reigned. M. de Louvois was well with her, then. We were at peace. He conceived the idea of turning the river Eure between Chartres and

Maintenon, and of making it come to Versailles. Who can say what gold and men this obstinate attempt cost during several years, until it was prohibited by the heaviest penalties, in the camp established there, and for a long time kept up; not to speak of the sick,—above all, of the dead,—that the hard labour and still more the much disturbed earth, caused? How many men were years in recovering from the effects of the contagion! How many never regained their health at all! And not only the sub-officers, but the colonels, the brigadiers and general officers, were compelled to be upon the spot, and were not at liberty to absent themselves a quarter of an hour from the works. The war at last interrupted them in 1688, and they have never since been undertaken; only unfinished portions of them exist which will immortalise this cruel folly.

At last, the King, tired of the cost and bustle, persuaded himself that he should like something little and solitary. He searched all around Versailles for some place to satisfy this new taste. He examined several neighbourhoods, he traversed the hills near Saint-Germain, and the vast plain which is at the bottom, where the Seine winds and bathes the feet of so many towns, and so many treasures in quitting Paris. He was pressed to fix himself at Lucienne, where Cavoye afterwards had a house, the view from which is enchanting; but he replied that, that fine situation would ruin him, and that as he wished to go to no expense, so he also wished a situation which would not urge him into any. He found behind Lucienne a deep narrow valley, completely shut in, inaccessible from its swamps, and with a wretched village called Marly upon the slope of one of its hills. This closeness, without drain or the means of having any, was the sole merit of the valley. The King was overjoyed at his discovery. It was a great work, that of draining this sewer of all the environs, which threw there their garbage, and of bringing soil thither! The hermitage was made. At first, it was only for sleeping in three nights, from Wednesday to Saturday, two or three times a-year, with a dozen at the outside of courtiers, to fill the most indispensable posts.

By degrees, the hermitage was augmented, the hills were pared and cut down, to give at least the semblance of a prospect; in fine, what with buildings, gardens, waters, aqueducts, the curious and well known machine, statues, precious furniture, the park, the ornamental enclosed forest,—Marly has become what it is to-day, though it has been stripped since the death of the King.

Great trees were unceasingly brought from Compiègne or farther, three-fourths of which died and were immediately after replaced; vast spaces covered with thick wood, or obscure alleys, were suddenly changed into immense pieces of water, on which people were rowed in gondolas; then they were changed again into forest (I speak of what I have seen in six weeks); basins were changed a hundred times; cascades the same; carp ponds adorned with the most exquisite painting, scarcely finished, were changed and differently arranged by the same hands; and this an infinite number of times; then there was that prodigious machine just alluded to, with its immense aqueducts, the conduit, its monstrous resources solely devoted to Marly, and no longer to Versailles; so that I am under the mark in saying that Versailles, even, did not cost so much as Marly.

Such was the fate of a place the abode of serpents, and of carrion, of toads and frogs, solely chosen to avoid expense. Such was the bad taste of the King in all things, and his proud haughty pleasure in forcing nature; which neither the most mighty war, nor devotion could subdue!
