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THE

DUCHESS

OF

LA VALLIERE.

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

BY MADAME DE GENLIS.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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## PREFACE:

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THERE is in the French language a great number of historical romances ; it was the prevailing taste in the age of Lewis XIV. During that period, great names were contemplated with delight, because they recalled great ideas. This species of writing, like that of all others, possesses its advantages and inconveniences : the principal characters of an historical romance, are far more interesting than imaginary heroes : here, as in tragedy, history gives a value to fable, and fiction, in its turn, embellishes truth : curiosity, however, is not excited ;

the reader is acquainted, by anticipation, with the most striking events, the greatest part of the details, and the winding up of the plot. In short, in the composition of a work of this kind, the imagination of the author is always fettered; he is not at liberty to exhibit situations and brilliant scenes, as these must necessarily be recorded by history; he can invent only such things as will appear new to the public, and which may be conformable to the known characters of the different personages.

In conformity to this last rule, I have endeavoured, in particular, to adhere to historical truth, respecting the characters of which I have spoken;  
I read,

# PREFACE.

I read, with attention, all the memoirs of that period, and only delineated Madame de la Valliere, Lewis XIV. Madame Henrietta of England, Madame de Montespan, &c. from the unanimous testimony of their contemporaries. Had I consulted the authors of the last century alone, I must have traced a very unfaithful picture: M. Thomas, in his Essay on Eulogies, observes, "Lewis XIV. had, in his character, a kind of ostentation which tinged his manners, and stamped every measure of his administration. He was cast, by nature, so to speak, in no common mould. During this reign, a certain pomp was reflected on every thing, from the grandeur of the sovereign;



even the language became inflated by public admiration."

We agree with the author, that Lewis was "cast by nature in no common mould." But ostentation was, doubtless, neither the fault of Lewis the Great, nor of the age in which he lived; the immortal works of that day are written in a style of the most unaffected and noble simplicity, those of Bossuet and Fenelon, of Pascal, of Boileau, &c. and, of another kind, the Fables of La Fontaine, the Letters of Madame de Sévigné, the recollections of Madame de Caylus, and the Works of Hamilton, are especially distinguishable by the charms of a free and easy diction:

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it is the reproach of our own age, that most authors possess "a kind of ostentation, which absolutely bereaves their works of all the natural graces and simplicity of truth." Voltaire wrote with much genuine simplicity; but his most passionate admirers have found it much less difficult to adopt his principles than to imitate his style; and as writers, they have taken for their masters only Diderot, Thomas, and Raynal.

Lewis XIV. unquestionably possessed the most noble and dignified manners; but, in the society of his intimate friends, his behaviour was uniformly characterised by an unassuming and amiable simplicity. He

loved those who possessed a genuine independence of mind, and detested pedantry, and every species of affectation; he was, besides, disgusted with every kind of artificial manners. Madame de Caylus, in her recollections, speaking of Matha, observes, "This was a youth of great simplicity of mind, and on that account one of the best companions in the world." In the same work, written after the death of Lewis XIV. she says, of that prince, "If he was disposed to jest, if he exercised his wit, if he condescended to relate a story, it was done with such an infinite grace, and such a commanding air, as I never witnessed in any other but himself."



In the memoirs of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, he is represented with the same traits of character, and as possessing still greater goodness of heart. When the troubles of the Fronde were dispelled, Mademoiselle de Montpensier reappeared at court, after six years of absence and revolt: the king received her with the most engaging politeness; the queen-mother, on introducing her to him, said, "this lady, whom I present to you, is very much grieved at having been so malicious, but she promises to behave better in future." The king laughed, and uttered some pleasantries, full of grace and affability. Mademoiselle de Montpensier observed, on the occasion, that she ought to kneel and

solicit his forgiveness for what had passed; "It is I," replied the monarch, "who should be on my knees, at hearing you speak thus." He made a visit to Mademoiselle de Montpensier, who, notwithstanding his opposition, would accompany him to his carriage: "Do you order me then to ascend?" said the king to her, "without that, I durst not have gone before you?" At an entertainment given by the Marechal de l'Hopital, the king placed himself at table with a great company; he never touched a dish without first presenting it to those around him. He always detested etiquette, adds Mademoiselle de Montpensier, who found herself somewhat hurt that he had retrenched several  
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of the ceremonies formerly observed at court. He is likewise depicted by Mademoiselle de Motteville, with her acknowledged sincerity, as the best of sons, of brothers, and of masters. He was adored by all his domestics, to whom he was mild, affable, indulgent, and generous. The Abbé de Choisi relates, in his Memoirs, that Bontems, his valet-de-chambre, and a very disinterested man, solicited from him, one day, a place for some other person. "Ah! Bontems," said the king, "why do you always speak to me in behalf of others? I bestow this place on your son." Choisi also mentions, that the Cardinal de Mazarin, having been present when the king, then only nineteen years old,



received the deputies from Bourgoyne, observed to the Marechal de Villeroy : “ Have you remarked how he listens as a master, and replies as a father ? In fact,” adds Choisi, “ his language is kingly ; his extempore rejoinders are superior to the most elaborate harangues of others.” The satirist Bussy-Rabutin, and the Duke de Saint-Simon, neither of whom loved Lewis XIV. nevertheless renders him the same justice. The following portrait is drawn of this monarch by Saint-Simon ; “ Lewis XIV spoke well, in appropriate terms, and with accuracy ; he declaimed better than most other men. . . . . In his private audiences, whatever might be his prepossessions or antipathies,

thies,

thies, he listened with patience, with condescension, and a sincere desire to be enlightened and informed. Throughout his whole life, he displayed a spirit of equity, and a wish to discover truth. In his presence no one was prevented from speaking, if it was done in a respectful manner ; in endeavouring to establish a truth, they might interrupt the king, combat the facts he related, and even raise their voice above his ; and this conduct, far from giving offence, was even praised by the king, who never failed to evince, by his future behaviour, that he had relinquished his former errors. He carried on a private correspondence with several persons.—Never did there escape from his

his lips a disobliging expression: when he had occasion to find fault, which was seldom, it was always done with an air of benevolence, and never with asperity. His air and mien were so noble and commanding, that it was necessary to be accustomed to see him, not to be struck dumb in his presence. Wherever he appeared, he was received with a respectful silence, frequently approaching to a sort of reverential awe. He excelled in every manly exercise: he danced, threw the mall, played at tennis, and conducted a chariot with dexterity: he was, besides, an admirable horseman. He was plain in his attire, and the only one of the royal family who uniformly wore, except on days of ceremony,



ceremony, the cordon blue under his habit. Few of the chevaliers of this order, although permitted to do so, followed, in this respect, his example." (*Memoirs of the Duke de Saint Simon*).

With so many amiable and dignified qualities, and a constant application to business, we yet learn, from the Diary of the Marquis de Dangeau, that this great prince, was *the most paternal king* who had ever ascended the throne of France. He was constantly the arbitrator of any differences which might occur in the families of the courtiers, as well as in those removed at a greater distance from him. It was sufficient to obtain

tain his mediation, that the individual possessed an irreproachable character, or was connected with those whom he esteemed. On such occasions, without interposing his authority, he counselled as a friend, he acted like a father. He frequently reconciled brothers, or relations, who had been disunited, and brought back, in peace, the banished son to his paternal mansion; he prevented law suits, and re-established tranquillity in a great number of families. In collecting, for this work, these and a great many other facts, very little known, but which the author of the age of Lewis XIV. might have readily made himself acquainted with, we were at a loss to conceive, why  
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the writers of the last century, have represented this good king as an imperious prince, filled with arrogance, haughtiness, and pride. It is imputed to him as a fault, that he was so much extolled; but he deserved to be so: it is a homage, of which gratitude is always lavish to great sovereigns. There were more than five hundred panegyrics (says M. Thomas) composed in honour of Henry IV. without reckoning a great number of poems and verses. All these works are fallen into oblivion, and it now seems as if Malherbe alone had praised Henry IV. whilst, on the contrary, the most sublime talents, and the master-pieces of art, have consecrated the praises bestowed on Lewis



XIV. and they conclude, that this prince loved flattery, since so many poets and authors united to celebrate him, with an enthusiasm justified by so much glory. They have, very unjustly, reproached him for an ostentatious device, in the invention of which he had no participation, and which he never assumed, not even at tournaments, or other festivals. It is, besides, well known, that he always reprobated exaggerated eulogiums: he prevented the French academy proposing, as a subject for a prize dissertation in prose, this question: *which, of all the virtues of the king, deserves a preference.* It is recorded, that he even blushed, and was much displeased, at this instance  
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of servility. Lewis uniformly expressed himself in a modest tone. After the victory of Mons and Namur, he learned that, on his return, the academy intended, in a body, to present him with a crown of laurels, which he not only declined, but requested that nothing of a similar kind might be attempted. He replied to their address in these words: "*I see with gratitude the pleasure you take in extolling the little good I have been able to accomplish.*" In short, he laid aside several ceremonies which even Henry IV. had not reformed; he was the most affable and accessible of kings: modern writers have, therefore, given a very false idea of his character, by confounding

• founding dignity with pride, and grandeur with haughtiness. They have also dwelt much on the *austerity* of his manners, during the last twenty years of his reign, that is, from the period he became connected with Madame de Maintenon; but this reproach is not better founded than the others. Lewis XIV. throughout his whole life, loved decency and respected religion, and the regularity of his manners, doubtless, became greater, when his natural virtues were rendered more perfect by sincere piety. But he continued to act as the sovereign, the father, the head of his family, and the most indulgent friend; far from assuming any rigour in his behaviour, he never banished



banished from his court the amusements by which it was rendered so brilliant. Always surrounded by young princesses, even to the end of his life, he entered into their pleasures, and was anxious for their happiness. Besides the spectacles of Saint Cyr, comedies were acted every week, and concerts daily performed at the house of Madame de Maintenon, where they likewise held frequent assemblies during the life of the king. The revocation of the edict of Nantes has also been severely condemned, but those who are acquainted with history, must know that Henry IV. had he dared, would not have been more tolerant: he was well acquainted with the turbulent and restless spirit of the calvinists;

nists : besides, it was necessary to keep some terms with those who had served him with so much zeal in his adversity. Lewis XIV. on the contrary, all powerful, firmly seated on a throne surrounded with glory, thought he would render an eminent service to his successors, by destroying, all at once, a never ceasing source of rebellion. Policy united with religion to produce this determination, which it is difficult to blame, when we recollect to mind the terrible troubles so frequently excited by the protestants. It is probable, that, without this severe measure, the minority which succeeded his reign, would have been as distracted, as it was thus rendered peaceable. It is certainly, altogether, impossible

impossible to excuse the excesses committed in some of the provinces against the protestants; but these outrages were in opposition to the express will of the king, who was much affected at what had been done, punished the authors, and made every reparation in his power to the unfortunate sufferers. Every account transmitted to us, respecting this transaction, and especially that by Dangeau, are full of traits, which prove his humanity and regard to the protestants, whom he believed it was necessary to banish. Every act, which proceeded directly from this prince, was equitable and generous.

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I have spoken of Lewis XIV. from what I read in those works, which should alone guide the historian. I am not, however, sufficiently presumptuous to suppose, that it was possible to delineate his picture, in a work of this kind. I could trace only a sketch, but that sketch is, at least, faithful. The character of Madame de la Valliere is represented more in detail; since it is her life which is more particularly the object of the present publication. I have invented many circumstances, but omitted nothing; the entire history of the Duchess of la Valliere is given, in this volume, with the most perfect accuracy, since, except in the first thirty pages, the facts

facts are wholly drawn from history. The only deviation I have made, is that of representing Madame de la Valliere, as an only daughter, educated in profound solitude, and as having passed the first days of her youth at the court of de Gaston d'Orleans: whereas she only lost her mother after she assumed the veil; and I have also supposed the Marquis de Saint Remi died before the introduction of his daughter at court. I shall only farther observe, that, in contriving several incidents, I have been careful to render them conformable to history. The character of Madame de la Valliere is well known; not only from the interest it must always excite, but because a young

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favourite, who had no ambition, and who buried herself in a cloister, at the age of twenty-eight, could not be hated, and consequently not calumniated by her cotemporaries. It is easy to penetrate the secret motives, which have induced modern authors to detract from the glory of Lewis XIV. They were leagued against the memory of that great prince; but they had no interest to blacken the reputation of a humble carmelite: they pardoned her conversion, because they attributed it to disappointed love. Her profession, as a nun, appeared in their eyes only a species of suicide, produced by despair, and they excused it. Historians agree in representing Madame de



de la Valliere under the same character. The Abbé Choisi, who knew her from her infancy, praises, with enthusiasm, her character and manners. He applies to her figure this verse of la Fontaine :

And grace that charm'd still more than beauty!—

Madame de Sevigné always bestowed on her the appellation of the *humble violet*.

“ Madame de la Valliere,” said the Duke de Saint Simon, “ was modest, disinterested, and uniformly benevolent. She continually combated against herself; and at last, proving victorious, fled from the court to

consecrate the remainder of her days to the most rigid and exemplary penitence.—She paid the greatest respect to the queen, who always loved her.” I have been careful to ascribe to Madame de la Valliere only such sentiments as would accord with her general character. Many, I believe, will discover, that she is not represented as sufficiently *passionate*; but I beg them to recollect, that the *heroines* of the seventeenth century resembled not those of our own days. When they went astray, it was without boldness and impetuosity. They were timid and patient in vice, and only energetic in repentance. Remorse did not destroy: it only converted them. It was impossible to attribute

attribute more *philosophy* to a female, who, in all the brilliancy of youth and beauty, tore herself from the court, to dedicate herself to God. It is not I; it is history that represents her, even in the midst of her errors, and in the height of her favour, as humble, pious, and repentant. Besides, why should we be astonished at her religious sentiments? Our deists themselves never cease to speak of the *Supreme Being*. Do they not constantly address to him long prayers? I can discover between them and rigid devotees only this small difference: that, while the former, in their devotions, extol their own merits, the latter, loaded with remorse, remain covered with confusion.



fusion. I may, perhaps, be censured for not having represented Madame de la Valliere as dying, and in a state of despair, when she finally abandoned Lewis XIV. What I have principally laboured, in this work, relates to the catastrophe; and I believe it is depicted with truth, which was the object I had in view. Although fully aware that a splendid dramatic representation may produce a much greater effect than a real scene, however affecting it may be; because, as an illustrious poet has well observed :

Plain truth no longer strikes the heart,  
And nature pleases less than art.

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It may be affirmed, that, if reason alone can triumph over the passions, it has not the power to moderate the grief occasioned by the sacrifice it requires; since it cannot fill that frightful void left in a heart which has renounced a beloved object.

But religion preserves us from that dejection of mind, by occupying and exalting the imagination and elevating the soul; it is more than sufficient to replace those affections which it condemns; it affords to the pious a great number of pure and delicious sensations, which they would not otherwise have experienced. Although it possessed only this advantage

tage over philosophy, it ought, however, to be revered and cherished as an inexhaustible source of consolation, and of hope under misfortune. The history of Madame de la Valliere is so interesting, and the period in which she lived so brilliant, that it must appear singular no one has hitherto conceived the idea of making it the ground-work of a romance. This subject, however, presents great difficulties: I cannot flatter myself with having wholly overcome them, but, at least, I wish to shew they have not wholly escaped my notice. It was difficult to assign a motive, or even find an apology, for the return of Madame de la Valliere to court



court after her second flight ; it was still more so, to make her remain, for such a length of time, an unfortunate spectator of her rival's triumph, and to reconcile her religious sentiments, her repentance, love, and jealousy, with her long stay at court, and the strange complaisance with which she always received the visits of her rival ; and these were facts too well known, to admit of being suppressed. To conclude, after the lapse of four years, during which she only experienced disgust, humiliation, and misfortune, the catastrophe presented nothing very interesting, because history is almost wholly silent on this subject. It was necessary that

Madame

Madame de la Valliere should tear herself from the court, and not leave it without an effort; a sacrifice, not an exile was requisite. I have discovered in her character, and in that of Lewis XIV. almost every thing I have contrived, in order to fill up the outline of her history, and explain the motives of her conduct. In the execution of this task, I trust I have never outraged probability; of one thing I am certain, that this work contains nothing dangerous, and that its morality is pure, since it is drawn from the only true source of virtue and truth. This is not, perhaps, the merit best calculated to secure the success of a romance; but

but it will procure me the only suffrages of which I am ambitious.

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# THE DUCHESS OF LA VALLIERE.

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Human Grandeur, away ! thy splendour can neither disguise our weaknesses nor our errors. It conceals them indeed from ourselves, but points them out more distinctly to others.—  
*Sermon by BOSSUET, on Madame La Valliere's taking the veil.\**

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I WOULD describe the evils of an unfortunate attachment, and paint the pernicious influence of a guilty passion, on the fate of a female possessing sensibility and virtuous incli-

\* As we have already observed in the preface, history is very faithfully followed in this work. We have added much, but we have omitted nothing. If every historical fact had been pointed out in notes, from the time that the heroine was presented at court, every page of  
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nations. If the colouring be just, the moral effect of such a picture is certain. While the feelings would be interested, those vain illusions which mislead the imagination would be exposed. The heart would at the same time be touched and alarmed. We should behold jealousies and fears, tormenting disquietudes, and the bitterness of remorse extinguishing all the deceitful allurements and charms of love. We should perceive that a breach of the sacred bonds of duty has for its consequence the most odious and deplorable slavery; and, finally, by contemplating the cruel tyranny of the passions, we should be

this book would have been overwhelmed with them. We have contented ourselves with giving but a very few, upon some details which would, perhaps, have appeared to be improbable, or of mere invention, could they not have been proved to be historical.

taught. that virtue, far from being a troublesome burthen, is only a necessary support. All the shades of such a picture are to be found in the history of that interesting victim of love, who never pardoned herself for her weakness—who sacrificed every thing to her lover, without entertaining for a moment the hope of happiness—who, in the midst of all the splendour of a court, and with the greatest monarch in the universe at her feet, sunk under the painful weight of shame—and who found repose nowhere but in an obscure retirement! Oh may I describe all she felt, and all she suffered! For this her historian should attach himself to the severity of truth. If the relation be faithful, how can it fail to interest and instruct?

The estate of La Valliere, situated in one of the finest provinces of

A 2                      France,



France, at the distance of a few leagues from Tours, belonged to the widow of the Marquis of St. Remi. The old castle, built on the declivity of a mountain, commanded, to the south, a view of the enchanting banks of the Loire, and the majestic shade of a vast forest formed to the north a sublime and romantic crescent. The inside of the castle bore every where the marks of magnificence consumed by time; but the brilliant manners of its ancient possessors were remembered amidst the prudent œconomy and noble simplicity of its present inhabitants. Alas! our recollections are now merely personal: like life they are bounded, and even like youth, they frequently extend to only a small number of years. Our forefathers, however, carried them back as far as imagination and memory would permit: they recalled  
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with a tender feeling the actions of their ancestors, and laboured with ardour for their posterity ; the past, as well as the future, had for them, all their immensity ; and they equally enjoyed them in their recollections, their sentiments, their projects, and their hopes. In proportion to the love of the country and its sovereigns, was the desire to retrace those transactions which tended to illustrate them. The most interesting parts of the national history became family traditions, and the glory of one's ancestors was then the most valuable and most esteemed hereditary property. The gothic furniture of old castles was preserved with filial respect and pride ; the worn tapestry, which an old grandmother had sewed, was displayed in the hall ; long galleries were filled with venerated portraits of the relations of the family,

and the sovereigns of the country. Each chamber had its particular history, and retained the name of the prince or great personage who had been there entertained. Nothing announced the frivolous taste of novelty; and oblivion, ungrateful oblivion, never obtained access to these venerable mansions. Every thing bore the noble impression of the solidity of glory and gratitude.

The Marchioness of St. Remi had lived twenty years in this castle, where she devoted all her attention to the education of an only daughter. Her affection was not of that sort, which, in the present times, would have procured for her the reputation of a passionately fond mother; for, in those days, legitimate attachments were distinguished by a prudence and simplicity, which afforded no comparison between them and impetuous emotions.



tions. Persons spoke not then of their sentiments, because their conduct explained them. The mother behaved to her daughter with the indulgence of a parent, and the gravity of a Mentor. Louisa de la Valliere justified, by her virtues, the tenderness of the best of mothers. She had just entered into her seventeenth year. Her figure, which was neither regular nor striking, seemed formed to melt and charm the heart, not to dazzle the eyes. The expression of modesty, candour, and sensibility, embellished her countenance. She was seen without astonishment, but never observed with indifference. Her large dark blue eyes were veiled by long black eye lashes. The purest white diffused over her face a delightful softness. Her timid looks seemed to implore indulgence. Her smile, full of grace, was at once ingenuous, touching, and animated.

animated. Her shape was perfect, though an accident, which happened in her infancy, had rendered her somewhat lame, but even this defect had with her a grace. She could disguise it by walking slowly, and then her motion appeared suited to the delicacy and modesty of her figure. It accorded with her air; it added to the inexpressible interest diffused over all her person. Her mind was pure, noble, and profoundly sensible. She united great dignity of character with the most unaffected modesty. She considered herself so inferior to the objects of her affection, that it was impossible she should become proud of her own qualities; for pride proceeds only from that selfishness and poverty of soul, which leaves us the melancholy faculty of contemplating others, without any illusion, while it deprives us of the useful  
power

power of judging impartially of ourselves. As Mademoiselle de la Valliere possessed all the delicacy which a good understanding and extreme sensibility could bestow, her heart was easily wounded; and then her anguish was the greater, because her gentleness prevented her from complaining. She was frequently accused of inequality of temper, when she lamented, in secret, injuries which she could not venture to reproach; but the painful impression was soon removed. A slight testimony of affection sufficed to persuade her that she had formed a wrong judgment, as if a feeling heart could deceive itself, when it is frequently vexed! She hesitated not to condemn herself, in order to justify those she loved. She had, from her mother, that sentiment inspired by nature, and perfected by religion, which can be compared to



no other; that profound veneration and blind confidence, which resembles religious faith. Mademoiselle de la Valliere did not require to examine her mother's opinions, in order to adopt them, but she endeavoured to comprehend them, that she might fix them the more strongly in her mind. In the sequel, for her misfortune, she loved passionately; but the supreme ascendancy over her mind was never surrendered, except to her who had watched her infancy, instructed her youth, and formed her reason. This tribute of respect and gratitude was due to an affectionate and virtuous mother, and could only be offered by filial piety. The Marchioness of St. Remi had received into her house a young orphan, her relation, older by six years than her daughter, and for whom Mademoiselle de la Valliere felt an attachment, which continued during

during the whole of her life; and which, the young lady, called Eudoxia, was worthy of inspiring. She contributed greatly, by her advice and example, to perfect the character of Madame de la Valliere.

Baron de la Baume, the Marchioness' father, possessed a small estate in the neighbourhood, but he had fixed his residence in the house of his daughter. This venerable nobleman, covered with wounds, had served his country with distinction for fifty years. The recollection of Henry IV. formed the pleasure of his old age. He knew all the anecdotes of the life of that great prince, and the pleasure he experienced in relating them, added to the interest of the narration. Attachment to his kings was always his ruling passion. This sentiment was, in those times, the pledge and the result of the most

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estimable

estimable virtues. It was blended and assimilated with the love of the country. It rested on the basis of gratitude, due for a long series of benefits, and was guaranteed by honour, which alone renders oaths sacred. It is easy to conceive, that the enthusiasm for royalty must have been carried to the highest pitch, at a period when youth, docile, sensible, and generous, listened with respect to the advice of their instructors, and sought for morality only in the precepts of religion; in an age, illustrated by ten years of the paternal reign of Henry IV. by the proud, but brilliant administration of Richelieu, and by the magnificent and dazzling glory of the finest years of Lewis XIV.

Mademoiselle de la Valliere was taught, from her youngest years, to love and venerate her sovereign.—



While walking through the long gallery of the castle, her grandfather would frequently point out the portraits of the kings, and say, these were the benefactors of our family. The portrait of the reigning sovereign was not in that collection, but the baron intended to procure it from Paris. All the public events, which could be supposed interesting to the royal family, were celebrated in the castle of la Valliere. All the traits of greatness and generosity, which distinguished the young king, were there related with enthusiasm, and formed the subjects of almost every conversation. On the news of his marriage with the Infanta of Spain, the castle was illuminated; the peasants assembled; and, in the midst of the pleasures of a rural festival, the patriotic cry of the time was a thousand times repeated, with transport.

port. All voices united in expressing what was the wish of all hearts, a long and happy reign to the king.

Mademoiselle de la Valliere was educated with equal simplicity and care. She was taught only to think justly, and to form her conduct according to the principles she had imbibed; the holy scriptures unceasingly meditated; some books of devotion, the History of France, several odes of Malherbe, and the tragedies of the great Corneille, completed her instruction. She read few works, but those which engaged her attention she always re-perused. Her books did not contradict each other; they presented an uniform system of morality, and their salutary maxims were unalterably engraven in her memory and her heart. Nothing enlarges the mind, and forms the taste, like truth. When one is capable of  
judging,

judging, comparing, and reasoning with perfect justness, there is always grandeur in the ideas. Admiration is not then lavished; it is only felt for objects which are worthy of exciting it, and importance never attached but to objects which possess a real value. With such impressions, we are sure to avoid errors of judgment, and falsity of opinion, which are the principal causes of puerility, extravagance, and littleness of mind: but all the most noble and exalted sentiments of virtue elevated the pure and sensible soul of Madame de la Valliere. The wisdom of her education, and the simplicity of her life, had hitherto preserved her from romantic ideas, and those wanderings of the imagination which in our times have so pernicious an influence on the conduct of youth. The solitude of the castle was rarely disturbed, even in summer,



mer, and the arrival of a stranger formed a striking event. The desire of giving him an agreeable welcome, the pleasure of performing a duty of hospitality, gave a sort of affecting interest even to the least agreeable visits. The cordiality of the reception inspired the guests with a pleasing confidence, and diffused a charm over the most common discourse. In all seasons there frequently arrived some poor friars, fatigued with a long journey on foot. If in winter, the sight of a large fire in the hall served to re-animate them. They were instantly invited to approach, new fuel was thrown into the stove, and the young ladies yielded their places to the good fathers. One would quickly bring two cups filled with wine, and wait respectfully on age and virtue, while the spectators would view with delight the pleasing spectacle

spectacle of innocence, still more embellished by the sublime charm of piety. A venerable friar, called Father Anselmo, came to the castle more frequently than any other. Devoted for forty-five years to religion and humanity, he preached in the neighbourhood, and gave aid to all the unfortunate who required his care. He had more than once exposed his life, in endeavouring to extinguish fires, and, after such disastrous events, he begged charity for the sufferers. He assisted the sick, he instructed the children, and, notwithstanding the natural infirmities of old age, he always found strength and activity when inspired with the hope of being useful. Mademoiselle de la Valliere knew and revered him from her infancy; she carefully preserved all the gifts she had received from him, and, amongst others, a chapel.

chaplet of coral, which the worthy father had brought from Rome. He presented it to her one day, on finding her in a cottage, reading aloud a sermon on piety to a poor paralytic woman. Father Anselmo, on witnessing this action, only said, "*Persistere.*" This word, in the mouth of the father, conveyed both encouragement and praise: the same evening he presented her with the fine chaplet. This day formed an epocha in the life of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and the sensations she then experienced could never afterwards be effaced from her memory.

In consequence of an interesting event, a numerous company met at the chateau de la Valliere. Eudoxia had espoused Count de Themine, a gentleman of the neighbourhood, and the nuptials were celebrated at the chateau, where the relations of  
the



the Count assembled; among whom was the young Marquis de Bragelone, who had newly arrived, in order to assist at the marriage of his cousin-german. At the age of twenty, the Marquis had left the province, in order to enter into the army; under a cold and reserved exterior, he concealed a lively imagination, a cultivated mind, and a sensible heart. Along with great energy of mind, he possessed a violence of temper, which, by an odd kind of contrast, not unfrequently produces a dangerous indecision in the most important concerns of life, if we be not early accustomed to overcome it.

The violent man, who yields to the impetuosity of his feelings, will always become the victim of his enthusiasm: if the strength of his mind be neither exerted to moderate his inclinations, nor subdue his passions,  
it.

it will only render them more impetuous, until, at last, he is enslaved by the very power which might have raised and exalted his character.

Minds of sensibility, who have never passionately loved, have, nevertheless, a vague idea of an unknown, or even imaginary object, that would fix their attachment: our manner of seeing, of perceiving, and of judging, form in us this particular taste, which attaches us, not to the most perfect being, but to the one which nature appears to have created for our pleasure.

The moment the Marquis de Bragelone saw Mademoiselle de la Valiere, he experienced this irresistible attraction: he perceived it with a species of satisfaction, since it recalled to his mind all the ideas of his most interesting reveries, and realised all the confused, but enchanting  
dreams

dreams of his imagination: with his eyes fixed on Mademoiselle Valliere, he impatiently waited until she should break silence, and he started at the sound of her voice, which was so sweet, affectionate, and tender, that it penetrated to the bottom of his soul. She spoke to father Anselmo, and her beautiful features expressed the most affectionate veneration.—The marquis joined father Anselmo, whom he never quitted during the rest of the day, because the holy man ceased not to dwell on the praises of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. “She is an angel,” said he: “all who know, admire her: candour, innocence, and goodness, are displayed in her countenance. Behold her noble and modest deportment! her humble air, when receiving the caresses of her mother and grand-father! observe how attentive she is to her friend,  
and



and with what grace and simplicity she performs the honours of the fete.

“Without obtruding herself on the notice of the company, she directed every thing with the greatest calmness and propriety.—Well; it was thus with her from the most tender infancy.” Here the good father stopped, contemplating, with affection, Mademoiselle de la Valliere. “Continue, good father, I listen to you with so much pleasure!” “Ah!” replied the venerable Anselmo, “the domestics of the castle, and the poor of the village, love her still better!” These words deeply affected the marquis, when Mademoiselle de la Valliere left the saloon: on her return he regarded her with new interest: she appeared to him more than human.

At present the passions are not  
thus

thus formed; the lover wishes for celebrity, and the public opinion decides his choice. Women, possessed of mere superficial accomplishments, dazzle, for a moment, but inspire less affection than those who are adorned with all the charms of superior talents, and a cultivated mind. The name of love is given to that species of sentiment, which is inspired by brilliant conversations and ingenious sallies, by dancing with grace, by singing and playing skilfully on the harp!—Doubtless, because we have created new phrases to paint this *new passion*. We say it *turns the head*, it *seduces*. Is it not better to be loved? But true love is not to be expected by those who excite only a frivolous admiration; such success may be valued by the coquet, but can have no charms for those who wish for a lasting attachment.

What

What so durable and sincere as this passion, when not awakened amidst the tumult of public assemblies, but in the calm of domestic retirement! What sentiment so affecting, so noble, and so pure, as that which originates, and is supported by principles which we revere. Such was the first passion inspired by Mademoiselle de la Valliere: the Marquis Bragelone loved her, as he loved virtue, and it was with enthusiasm.

Mademoiselle de la Valliere was not aware of the sentiment with which she inspired a young man she had scarcely observed. But her friend, the Countess de Themine, a few days after her marriage, became the confidant of his attachment. She delighted to talk of her friend, and soon perceived how much it entertained and interested the marquis.

This



This discovery charmed her: she mentioned it to the Marquis de Saint Remi, in consequence of which a marriage was projected betwixt Mademoiselle de la Valliere and the Marquis de Bragelone; but the youth of the parties prevented them, at the time, from entering into more positive engagements. The marquis set out to join his regiment, and Mademoiselle de la Valliere learned, after his departure, the intentions of her family, in which she acquiesced without joy or repugnance: she knew not he was destined for her husband, but she confided her destiny, without inquietude, to maternal tenderness.

A few months after the marriage of Eudoxia, the Baron de la Baume, yielding to the infirmities of old age, terminated a long life in the arms of his daughter, and Mademoiselle de

la Valliere. The health of the marchioness had long been in a fluctuating state, and about this period her complaint made such rapid progress, that she became convinced her end was not far distant; she viewed death without terror, but not without grief; she was a mother, and her daughter yet required her care.— Death is premature, when our children are unprovided for. Regret is allowable, for we have not fulfilled our destiny.

The father and uncle of Mademoiselle de la Valliere had dissipated nearly the whole of their fortunes, in the service of their sovereigns, and the marquis could only leave to his daughter a small estate, which was considerably mortgaged. She therefore solicited for Mademoiselle de la Valliere a place at court, and she was appointed one of the maids of honour

nour to Madame Henrietta, of England, sister-in-law to the king.

Her fears being thus, in a great measure, removed, as to the future destiny of her daughter, she no longer considered death as terrible, but viewed it with that sweet serenity which religion and a pure heart never fail to inspire.

The marchioness, upon finding her end approaching, desired that Father Anselmo, in whom she reposed the most unbounded confidence, might be sent for; the Countess Themine hastened also to her assistance, and promised, at the request of the marchioness, to introduce her daughter at court. Overwhelmed by a dreadful oppression of mind, Mademoiselle de la Valliere, pale and unconscious, deprived alike of the power either to weep or to speak, remained motionless, at the head of her mother's bed.



She did not recover from this state of stupefaction, till the expiring marchioness turned towards her, in order to bestow her last benediction, upon which she gave a piteous groan, and, bathed in tears, prostrated herself before the bed. The marchioness, then taking out from her bosom a cross, of rock crystal, and passing it round the neck of her daughter, said, "My child, may this precious and sacred pledge always recal me to your recollection! May, henceforth, religion be inseparably associated in your mind, with my memory, and, by being combined with filial piety, sweeten the bitterness of thy sorrows!" In pronouncing these words, the marchioness fell gently into the trembling arms which her daughter stretched out to receive her: it was virtue about to obtain its reward, which reposed upon the bosom of innocence.

innocence. This repose was the sleep of death ! for the marchioness had already breathed her last sigh ! Madame Themine lost no time in forcing her young friend from this scene of sorrow and mourning, in conducting her to her own chateau. A few days subsequent to this event, Mademoiselle de la Valliere received a billet from the Marquis de Bragelone, declaring his passion. The countess took upon herself the charge of replying to this billet doux, in the name of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. The marquis was perfectly satisfied with this answer, which was expressed in such a manner, as neither absolutely to encourage, nor yet wholly to destroy his hopes of eventual success. Mademoiselle de la Valliere did not forget that her mother had sanctioned the addresses of the marquis ; but she had determined,

while her heart was free, not to enter into any irrevocable engagement, and flattered herself she might yet allow a few years to elapse, before it was necessary to reflect seriously on the subject.

Scarcely, however, had three or four months elapsed, since the death of her mother, when Mademoiselle de la Valliere found herself constrained to go to court, in order, as a maid of honour, to occupy the vacant place which had been procured for her; and the countess Themine, conformably to her promise, made the necessary arrangements to accompany her on the journey. On the morning of their departure, Mademoiselle de la Valliere determined, for the last time, to visit the chateau, which she had not seen since the death of her mother.

She felt all her former griefs renewed, on finding herself within the precincts



cincts of the castle, which was now only occupied by two or three domestics in deep mourning. "It was here," she observed to her friend,— "that the days of my infancy and early youth glided happily away!— Here, under the care of a mother, I enjoyed life without alloy! How, indeed, could I go astray, when it was virtue itself that dictated the performance of those duties, which sentiments of love and gratitude could not fail to cherish! Here I had nothing to dread from the snares of vice or the breath of calumny! Here I enjoyed the most pleasing tranquillity, safety, and happiness! I loved, and was beloved. Now, alas! I am about to enter into a world, to me wholly unknown; where I shall only behold strangers, and where the pleasing and sacred commands of a tender mother must be superseded by those of rank

and power ! To obey, when we love, is merely to gratify inclination ; to have failed in respect, on my part, an effort had been necessary. Who can revolt against the union of reason and sentiment ? But what can be more painful than to submit to arbitrary, and, perhaps, capricious dictates, to be forced to depend on those in whom we cannot place confidence, and to receive absolute commands, without having any right whatever to remonstrate ! Ah ! my dear Eudoxia, what vague and ominous fears darken my future prospects ! How frightful is this new course of life into which I am about to enter, without any knowledge of the world, and without friends to direct me with their advice !”

While thus speaking, Mademoiselle de la Valliere traversed, in tears, the desolate apartments of the castle. She stopped in the chamber of her mother,

ther, and there her tears flowed afresh. She threw herself on her knees before the bed in which her mother breathed her last—that nuptial bed, which, during more than a century, was never profaned, and which had witnessed several generations rise and pass away! From thence, Mademoiselle de la Valliere passed into the cabinet where she herself had always slept. “O! may I,” said she, “find elsewhere that sweet repose, which I have here experienced!” “It is innocence which alone can give it,” replied the countess; “you shall every where enjoy it.” “Innocence! yes, I will preserve it: Ah! without it, how should we support life?”

It was with that heart-rending sorrow which is experienced on abandoning our country, that Mademoiselle de la Valliere bade adieu to the chateau of her ancestors. In tearing herself from this dear solitude, the



depository of her sweetest recollections, it appeared to her as if she were about to be exiled into a foreign land. When passing the draw-bridge, she put her head out at the carriage window, and, casting a last look upon the front of the chateau, "Adieu! venerable mansion!" cried she. "Adieu! sweet security! adieu! tender and disinterested friendship! adieu! frankness, candour, truth! Inestimable blessings! I leave you here—I leave you—and I only carry with me fears too well founded, mournful regrets, and sad presentiments!" . . . . .

The two friends set out the following day in the afternoon. They slept at Tours, in a splendid inn called the King's Arms. Mademoiselle de la Valliere found upon the chimney-piece of her chamber a leaf of a newspaper, which, carelessly unfolding, her eyes fell upon an article, which  
caught

caught her attention. It was as follows:—

“ His Majesty, who remains constantly in the camp before Dunkirk, afforded last Monday a new proof of that courage, magnanimity, and goodness, which so eminently characterise him. Whilst the king was on horseback, attended only by the Marshal de Noailles, he perceived a French soldier struggling in the midst of a troop of drunken English. Immediately the king flew to rescue the soldier from the cruelty of these islanders, who appeared bent on killing him. They attempted to resist the king, whom they knew not, and whose language they did not understand. One of them drew his sword, and made a stroke at the king. Marshal de Noailles would have shot him at that instant, had not the king prevented it, and parried off the sword of the Englishman with as

much coolness as address. At the same instant, an officer of that nation coming up, and calling out to them that it was the king of France, they immediately dispersed. The French soldier, whose life the king thus saved at the risk of his own, was grievously, but not mortally wounded. His majesty, with his own hands, made him a handsome present, while he extolled the courage which he had displayed."

This narrative feelingly interested the mind of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. "Alas!" said she, "had my grand-father been now living, what emotions would he not have felt at this heroic trait of character! He would have repeated, with truth, that our sovereign is the worthy grandson of the great Henry!" . . . . .

On saying this, she again took up the paper, and read it over again.—

The



The next morning she rose early to breakfast before again setting out on her journey. On entering into the saloon where Madame Themine waited for her, she perceived a full-length portrait of the King, arrayed in his royal robes. Although this picture was far from being perfect, it yet exhibited a pretty striking likeness, and was delineated with taste. Mademoiselle de la Valliere had long wished to see a picture of the King; she recollected the article she had read in the newspaper, which gave to her curiosity the most lively interest. She approached the picture, and contemplated, with the greatest emotion, this fine and majestic figure, in all the gaiety of youth. Mademoiselle de la Valliere remained immoveable before the picture, forgetful alike of Madame de Themine and the breakfast. It was the first time her eyes had been riveted

veted on the face of a man; but she examined only the expression of the countenance, which was full of dignity and sweetness, and she flattered herself that the mind of the original was in perfect unison with her own.

During the remainder of the journey, nothing remarkable occurred.— They arrived at Paris towards the end of Lent, in the first days of the Holy-week. Madame de Themine was now obliged to resign her friend to the care of the Maréchale de Bellefonds, nearly related to the mother of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. It was agreed that the latter, previous to her presentation at court, should pass eight days at the house of the Maréchale, in order to receive from her some preliminary instructions. The Maréchale was not then at Paris; she had gone to the convent of Chaillot, in order to remain retired, according to the

the custom of that age, all the Holy-week and that of Easter.

The Maréchale caused it to be intimated to Mademoiselle de la Valliere, that she would receive and admit her to a share in her retreat, and, two days after her arrival at Paris, the countess conducted Mademoiselle de la Valliere to Chaillot, and, after presenting her to the Maréchale, bade her adieu, and quitted her, in order to return to her own province. This separation plunged Mademoiselle de la Valliere into the most profound grief; she lost the only friend she had in the world, and the new kinswoman, who became her Mentor, could neither console her, nor even soften her chagrin.

The Maréchale de Bellefonds, who was in her thirty-fifth year, possessed neither wit nor taste; to an insensible heart, she superadded the most cold



cold and repulsive manners: as she could not arrogate any superiority from her personal charms, she boasted only of her birth and fortune; she mistook the attentions which were paid to her rank, as a proof of her merit, and this species of error secured her from envy. In courts, the homage bestowed on persons who have attained elevated situations, appears to originate from public approbation, and sufficiently gratifies those individuals, who have never experienced the pleasure which springs from the applause of the virtuous and discerning few. The Maréchale de Bellefonds would have thought it very singular, that any one should attach more value to the pleasure of being esteemed by a small select circle, than to the glory of being distinguished by princes of the royal family, in presence of the whole court. Influenced by such sentiments,

sentiments, she never suspected that an amiable person might have over her some advantage. In public festivals, had she not been distinguished by queens, and placed near them, whilst Madame de Sevigné remained unnoticed in the crowd?

The Maréchale received Mademoiselle de la Valliere, with a cold politeness; she did not even evince, on her introduction, that natural curiosity which resembles a kind of interest, and which the first sight of a young and handsome person never fails to inspire. To be received at first with indifference, is more disagreeable than the scrutinizing glance of the keenest observer can ever prove embarrassing. Neglect is more hateful, particularly during youth, than the most prying examination. The self-love of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, was not offended: this frigid apathy, however, injured

injured her feelings. Instead of finding a protectress, as she had fondly flattered herself, she found only a stranger, superlatively indifferent to her interests. The attention of the Maréchale, was only excited towards princesses and women of an elevated rank; in her estimation, all others were unworthy of notice. Nevertheless, she could not be accused of being imperious, or of exacting much attention. Although not wanting in respect to her superiors and equals, she never, however, exerted herself to please: as for her inferiors, she deigned not to notice them: had her chamber been crowded with persons of low rank, she would have acted with as much indifference, as if she had been alone, and there had been no witnesses to her actions: but neither on her part did she require any thing from them: those whom she regarded

as



as her inferiors, not attracting her attention, enjoyed in her presence an unbounded freedom; their conduct and discourse being to her perfectly indifferent. In short, her absurdities were so ridiculous, and committed with so much simplicity and honesty, that they excited surprise rather than indignation; for neither in the expression of her ideas, nor the indulgence of her whims, did she ever give offence. She put some unconnected questions to Mademoiselle de la Vallière, but waited not for any replies; afterwards, for form sake, she gave her much general advice as to her behaviour at court, that is, respecting the importance of paying a due attention to etiquette. She did not, indeed, enter into any detail upon this head, for she gravely affirmed, that a knowledge of it could only be obtained by habit and observation.

servation. She particularly inculcated to Mademoiselle de la Valliere, the necessity of preserving an imperious silence. Mademoiselle de la Valliere, immediately profited by this advice, for she fell into a profound reverie; the Maréchale, who was busily engaged in embroidering, having exhausted the subject, ceased any longer to support the conversation: it was only after the lapse of an hour, that, accidentally raising her eyes, she perceived that Mademoiselle de la Valliere was still present; without expressing any astonishment at her silence, she proposed to pay a visit to the prioress of the convent, and Mademoiselle de la Valliere, pleased at the interruption of such a tête-a-tête, hastened to comply. Having never left the chateau of her parents, this was the first time she had been in the interior of a convent. The deep silence

lence and devout calm of this house, were in unison with her character, and the reception which she received from the nuns, was so full of mildness and complaisance, as sensibly to affect her. On leaving the prioress, she returned into the church, in which she had paid her devotions on entering into the house; she required composure — wanted meditation. After having spent half an hour in the church, she found herself in a vast cloister, whose open arcades looked towards a cemetery, in the midst of which there issued from a fountain of white marble, a pure and limpid stream, that flowed gently around the tombs. The murmuring of the water had something in it striking in this asylum of the dead; it was night, and the imperfect light of a clear moon gave still greater effect to this melancholy scene; Mademoiselle de

la



la Valliere, regarded it with interest, as she walked slowly through the cloisters. “It is here,” said she, “it is pleasant to muse on death; I love to contemplate these tombs, they recal to my mind a happy immortality. Those who repose beneath those stones, enjoyed, likewise, during their life, uninterrupted repose; they had no uncertainty respecting the present, nor apprehensions for the future; they were the creatures of their own happiness. In this respectable retreat, nothing is subject to change; all is durable; eternal as virtue and truth;—here, time rolls on unperceived; it brings no vicissitudes; it produces no unlooked-for events; it has lost the power to surprise;—it cannot be feared; it conducts to the end; it overturns not vain projects; it realizes sublime hopes; it terminates existence, without abridging the destinies; the duration of a single day  
is

is here the image of a whole life; at whatever moment death arrives, they are ready; they have nothing more to do; they possessed sufficient knowledge; they fulfilled their destiny.— For us, homicidal and fugitive time is invested with a murderous scythe and wings; here it is under the most noble characters; we see it majestic and immutable; we identify it with eternity! But will these reflections be useless? will they produce no fruit? I am going into a dangerous abode, where vanity, agitation, and tumult only prevail, and providence has conducted me to this mansion of peace. I have lived eighteen years; the future is still before me; I may, like these holy women, also fashion myself; assuredly I may be able to acquire all the knowledge necessary to the due performance of those duties which such a situation requires. Shall

I embrace it instantly, and in its utmost extent? I should always remain tranquil, pure, and virtuous! What weakness to hesitate! what should I sacrifice? not friendship,—alas! only a frivolous curiosity: death and absence have already separated me from all those who are dear to me.—Far from regretting pleasures which cannot satisfy the heart, I should applaud myself for having never known the joys of pride. Can they be tasted without corrupting the heart? and, if we despise them, how insupportable must be the constraint and pain of yielding to the customs and etiquette of the world. Wherefore, then, sheltered from its dangers and temptations, shall I leave this happy retreat, to embark, with fear, without a guide, and without ambition, upon a tempestuous ocean? Ah! remain here; a voice divine whispers to me,



in secret, that *I am called*; ought I to resist this sudden inspiration? But the will of my mother! the place she obtained for me, the project of marriage she formed, and on which she requested me to reflect maturely;—in short, the astonishment this hasty resolution would produce in my family!——” She resolved not to act in this affair with precipitation, and only to put her design in execution after the most mature deliberation.

Wholly occupied with this idea, it recurred to her, at night, in a dream, which she always remembered, and of which a detail is given in her letters\*. She thought that, weeping and flying from a dangerous object,

\* See the Life of Madame de la Valliere, prefixed to a sermon, delivered at her profession, by Boussuet.

she sought refuge in a church; believing herself still pursued, she looked around her with terror, when she perceived a railed gallery: suddenly the rails opened, and a majestic figure appeared in the shade, raising its hands, and pointing to a long veil, of dazzling whiteness: a voice was heard, at the same instant, pronouncing these words:—“ *Conceal yourself under this veil; it is here only you will find peace and security.*” She awoke, bathed in tears. Although her meditations in the cloisters had naturally produced this dream, she was sensibly affected by it, and regarded it as prophetic: the same day she committed an account of it to writing.

In about eight or ten days, the Maréchale quitted Chaillot, in order to conduct Mademoiselle de la Valliere

liere to Saint Germain. On taking leave of the good nuns, to whom she was already much attached, she was extremely affected, and might easily have been persuaded to fix herself among them for the remainder of her life. The world would at that time have termed it a foolish action; nevertheless, it would have saved Mademoiselle de la Valliere ten years of mistakes, of cruel sufferings, and of well merited reproach.

On the road to Saint Germain, Mademoiselle de la Valliere experienced great uneasiness, which was the more painful, because she had no one in whom she could confide. The idea of being presented at court conveyed considerable terror to her mind: notwithstanding the praises she had heard bestowed on the talents and manners of Madame, she feared her extremely. A young per-



son, the least susceptible of flattery, and who has little experience, is always anxious respecting the judgment of those she regards with dread. Mademoiselle de la Valliere had represented to herself Lewis XIV. under the most majestic and interesting form ; she had an ardent desire to behold him, and at the same time she feared him not.

On her arrival at Saint Germain, and after remaining longer at her toilette than ever she had done before, Mademoiselle de la Valliere was presented to Madame, and all the royal family, except the king, who was hunting at Compiégne, from which he did not return until the following evening.

Mademoiselle de la Valliere was very successful on her presentation ; she received from the queen and the princesses a reception which charmed her ; indeed she could never have ap-  
appeared

peared at court under more favourable circumstances, for the king being absent, they found themselves unemployed, and the entrance of a young, beautiful, and modest stranger, by furnishing a subject of conversation, was, on that account alone, received with good will. In courts, timidity, in those of an advanced age, is always mistaken for awkwardness; but even there it is thought becoming in those of an early age: the most affable princes always wish to be regarded with respect, and are secretly flattered by the embarrassment they inspire: I have not unfrequently observed the smile by which they endeavour to reassure the timid; and even this smile, although always gracious and benign, never fails to evince how much they are impressed with a sense of their own vast superiority!



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It is more particularly in courts that pride, stripped of the repulsive forms, which are natural to it, knows how to assume the most pleasing appearance; it is there that it often displays itself under the garb of indulgence and affability, and it is this which long experience alone can enable us to discern.

Mademoiselle de la Valliere was enchanted with Madame. Henrietta of England was, indeed, one of the most distinguished personages of this brilliant court. She possessed a great portion of animation and beauty, mingled with gaiety, frankness, and the most engaging graces of manner. But frankness, that valuable quality, is frequently productive of inconvenience to persons of high rank. It was accompanied with no indiscretion in Madame. No woman ever knew better how to keep a secret, but, at the same time, no princess could



could ever less dissemble her aversion or disgust. With so much sincerity, it is impossible not to appear frequently unequal to others ; it is even a quality which, when acted upon in the extreme, true wisdom would condemn ; for real goodness of heart induces us to endure, without an effort, things which cause so much to those who do not possess the same perfection of character. Madame had the reputation of possessing, at the same time, great modesty, and a love of truth. She spoke ingenuously of her defects, and acknowledged her errors with a candour mingled with charms ; but, hitherto, nothing had wounded her vanity. Generally admired, and surrounded by enthusiastic adorers, she enjoyed even a still more glorious advantage ; she possessed the confidence and friendship of the king. All the world did justice to the purity

of their connexion, though it was intimate, and though the king appeared pleased to render it more striking, by the most amiable gallantry. It was frequently remarked to Madame, that the kind of sentiment and impassioned admiration which the king displayed towards her, would for ever secure him against a real attachment to any other object. This she believed, and the illusion flattered her too strongly to part with it, without the most violent anguish. The self-love of amiable and sensible princes is neither striking nor visible, while every thing prospers: vanity is only troublesome to others, when it is alarmed; and its perfect security may have the appearance of modesty. How should it shew itself, when fully gratified, and safe from all opposition? Madame encouraged her friends not to disguise from her the imperfections they

they thought she possessed. She even knew them herself, but she was ignorant of the inconveniences and consequences which might result from them. Princes are too often told, that there is something engaging even in their faults, and this flattery they implicitly believe. Their confessions, in this respect, have therefore little merit; and the truth, which, under such circumstances, is spoken to them, is without danger. While she assumed the tone and expressions of pretended modesty, Madame was desirous of every where obtaining the most distinguished preference. She never imagined, that this claim was an ardent desire, inspired by pride, but had succeeded in persuading herself, that it was a right founded in justice.

Mean while Mademoiselle de la Valliere, transported to so brilliant,



and for her so novel a theatre, was remarked, not only for the graces of her figure, but for the air of sadness, diffused over her whole person, and which rendered more striking the mourning dress she still wore. Her sorrow for the death of her mother, and her habitual melancholy, instead of diminishing, had increased since she came to court. Grief may find some relief in a certain novelty of objects, when they are in harmony with it, but it is irritated by contrasts. Mademoiselle de la Valliere did not deceive herself, with respect to the marks of kindness which were here shewn her, but she placed confidence in those she received from the hermits of Chaillot: there is always a sympathy between the recluse and the afflicted; but the lively gaiety which our heroine perceived, on every side, only made her more  
strongly

strongly feel how much she was a stranger to all that surrounded her. Having hitherto lived only with persons, who participated in all her sentiments, she found herself alone in the midst of a brilliant crowd: her solitary situation alarmed her, and she bitterly regretted the loss of the soft consolations, and compassionate tenderness of friendship.

The return of the king, who had been absent for two days, was anxiously expected by all the court. He arrived at last. He first visited the queen mother; and, in half an hour after, waited on Madame. The two folding doors were thrown open: the king was announced. Mademoiselle de la Valliere, who was situated in a corner, behind some of her companions, rose hastily, and advanced to view the king. Madame observed her emotion, smiled, called

to her, and presented her to his majesty. More moved than intimidated, Mademoiselle de la Valliere ventured to lift up the finest eyes in the world. Her soft and expressive glance met the eye of the king. She blushed, and hastened to remove.

Lewis XIV. was not the most handsome man of his court, but, independently of his rank, he was the most remarkable. He had something striking in his air and countenance. His grave and dignified physiognomy impressed respect, but every look was gracious. A penetrating and melancholy regard, a smile full of softness and delicacy, gave to all his features an interesting expression.— Though his education had been neglected, his mind was both solid and extensive, his feelings were pure, and his ideas just. He wrote ill, because he seldom took up the pen, but, at the  
same



same time, no person spoke so well ; and he was extremely fond of the conversation of men of letters, provided they divested themselves of affectation and pedantry. Greatness of mind, and rectitude, were the qualities which eminently distinguished him. Splendour enchanted him, but it was virtue that won his soul.— No prince better understood how to unite a taste for noble and delicate amusements, with grace and dignity, in public affairs. In the cabinet, he astonished, by his wisdom, and by the elevation and justness of his views. He commanded the admiration of foreigners, by the majesty of his appearance in at public audiences and fêtes. He charmed, in private parties, by the infinite delight his conversation afforded, and by his inimitable manner of narration. His great soul profoundly felt all the sublimity

limity of religion. He was sensible how much it contributes to public happiness, and how useful it is to those who govern. Notwithstanding the ardour of his passions, and his taste for pleasure, he never failed to devote, at least, eight hours of each day to labour. At twenty, he wished to replace a prime minister, informed and laborious, though he had to surmount all the disgust and trouble, which ignorance could add to the burthen of affairs; and his perseverance in this respect never relaxed for more than half a century. His affability, which was great, has not been sufficiently commended, because he wanted a certain familiarity of tone and manner, which serve to render that quality more apparent, and often make it be presumed, where it does not exist. He added to his disposition to oblige, a splendour and majesty, which

which confounded it with grandeur, and sometimes with grace and elegance. All the ingenious phrases attributed to him, are distinguished by a perfect generosity; and what good actions could surpass the interesting establishments of the Invalids and Saint Cyr? Finally, he possessed a feeling heart: he enjoyed the happiness which power renders almost always doubtful, and often destroys. He was beloved on his own account. This prince has been reproached with excessive pride, because no sovereign was ever more praised. But was it a fault in him, that he inspired the greatest enthusiasm. A king, whose reign is splendid, cannot prevent men of letters from celebrating his greatness and his glory, except by testifying disdain for the homage they bestow.— But could he do this? Ought he to have



have done it? Henry IV. far from repressing the praises of Malherbe, applauded his verses. Why is it desired, that Lewis XIV. should have imposed silence on the great poets of his age, or that he should have received, with indifference, the eulogies of Corneille, Moliere, Quinault, Racine, and Boileau? It is known that he never allowed those who approached him to praise him in his presence; and that, in private, he always shewed a real contempt for flattery.

Mademoiselle de la Valliere returned to her seat behind her companions, where she remained, in a state of reverie, during the whole evening.—She heard not the conversation around her, but she listened to the king. When he went away, she recollected all he had said, and, in particular, called to mind his look.—

Could she forget that sympathetic regard, the first that had met her eyes since the departure of her friend. The king, on his part, was struck with the noble and interesting figure of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. Next day he looked for her, but could not perceive her. She, however, saw him: she was in her usual place—always aside, always silent and reserved: there she remained, without design, but not without trouble, wishing only to hear and see the king. A new sentiment, of which she had not even an idea, began to diffuse a vague astonishment over her mind. Indecisive and unsettled, she acted altogether mechanically, and by habit. No reflection enlightened her. Her chaste mind bore no distinct image of the king; but every morning she wished for evening, that she might join the circle at Madame's, particularly

larly on those days which Madame devoted to those private parties, in which the king spent all the evening. It is, indeed, easy to conceive, that, without any particular motive of personal interest, that much pleasure would be found in a company, which frequently consisted of the Count de Guiche, the most brilliant nobleman of the court——his friend, the Marquis de Vardes, who joined to great flexibility of character, singular acuteness of mind——the Duke de Roquelame, celebrated for his bon mots, and his gaiety——the Duke de la Rochefoucault, who, amidst the tumult of camps, or the intrigues of a court, could observe with delicacy, and meditate profoundly—Benserade, an amiable poet—the Count de Bussy Rabutin, a satirical writer and courtier, equally witty and flattering——the Count de Gramont, who, by the originality



originality of his follies, and a levity full of grace, obtained pardon for many errors—the Duke de Lawzun, whose character and adventures were equally romantic—the great Condé, who, uniting to all the qualities of a hero, information no less various than extensive, and all the agreeable manners of a man of the world, could charm at once the learned men, and the ladies of the assembly—the Countess of Saisons, intriguing and ambitious, but attractive by her graces—Mademoiselle de Montpensier, who, for her spirit and courage, was worthy of being the granddaughter of Henry IV. and who was, perhaps, the only princess that ever joined the most austere manners to mental enthusiasm, and the bravery of an amazon—the Princess Palatine, whose superior mind, talents, and virtues, the greatest of our orators has

has praised in a manner so sublime—the amiable Countess of Bregi, who has left us such beautiful verses——Madame de Sevigné, Madame de la Fayette, and Mademoiselle de Scudery, frequently admitted to the parties of Madame.

Mademoiselle de la Valliere said to herself, it was very natural the conversation of persons so distinguished should afford her the highest interest, especially when they were animated by the presence of the king, and the desire of pleasing him. One evening, when the king hunted in the forest of Saint Germain, the circle at Madame's was small, but composed of the most agreeable personages. Mademoiselle de la Valliere, however, was inattentive, and listened to no one, until Benserade observed that Saint Germain was really an enchanted spot. “Yes,” replied Mademoiselle

selle de Scudery, "provided the *enchanter* is present."

This expression excited a strange sensation in the breast of Mademoiselle de la Valliere: it explained to her the nature of that secret feeling which before she did not well understand: but, still wishing to persuade herself that the sentiment which engaged her mind was only a common opinion, she said to herself, "Every one thinks as I do." From that day, however, an indefinite disquiet and melancholy was mingled with her admiration for the king. She was restless in his absence, for she durst not venture to fix her imagination on him. His presence plunged her into a profound melancholy, and when she ceased to see him, she trembled to be alone. As if she had reason to reproach herself, she experienced an astonishment, a kind of internal distrust,



trust, which resembled remorse. In this manner did that love, which was to cost her so many tears, begin to shew itself in her heart, by painful agitations and cruel anxieties. The king would never have made this dangerous and deep impression on her heart, had he been distinguished from all other men merely by his appearance, his engaging qualities, and the superiority of his mind; but she remarked in him an active and delicate generosity, which was always uniform: that generosity she delighted to trace in his actions, through all its shades. Nothing of this sort escapes observing love. Blind to faults, that passion is quick-sighted, in discovering even the germs of those virtues, which may serve for its justification. Mademoiselle de la Valliere admired the respectful affection of Lewis for the queen mother; his

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friendship

friendship, his constantly indulgent and generous conduct towards Monsieur; his deference and respect for the young queen; his attentions to the princes of the blood; his desire to please; his graceful ease with his friends; his mildness towards his servants, and his general benevolence.—

Mademoiselle de la Valliere contemplated him with rapture, when he addressed the chiefs of the Fronde, with his natural affability, and when he conversed with the great Condé, on the events of that war, with as much good nature, as if it had not been carried on against him. This kind of sublime generosity is, indeed, one of those traits which best paint the greatness of character and amiable disposition of this prince. It was apparent to all, the moment the troubles were appeased. Then the most flattering homage a sovereign could receive

receive was bestowed upon him.— Gratitude and admiration, desirous of eternizing his magnanimous clemency, struck, on gold and silver medals, the figure of an eagle, holding in his claws a caduceus and an olive branch, with this motto:— *There is neither gall nor spleen in celestial minds.*

Next to the king, of all the royal family, the young queen most attracted the attention of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. There was nothing striking in the figure of that princess, but the most engaging gentleness was painted on all her features: and is not that august expression, particularly for a queen, the first of all charms? The queen, who was a timid and affectionate wife, appeared to Mademoiselle de la Valliere equally interesting, on account of her character and her sentiments.

There



There is no sympathy more real than that which exists between persons who are at once sensible and timid. The queen distinguished Mademoiselle de la Valliere, who was too reserved to approach her majesty. She remarked her affability, but did not venture to profit by it.

Madame was fond of literature, and it is well known that the works of Mademoiselle de Scudery had then great reputation at court. They exhibit, however, only ideal pictures; they do not even paint love, but they always speak of it. Her style was pure and noble; her writings abound with fine sentiments and ingenious ideas, which could not fail to please elevated minds, and delicate tastes. Mademoiselle de la Valliere wished to become acquainted with the novels which formed the constant subject of conversation. That course of read-

ing impressed her with only one false idea ; but that was the most dangerous one a young person could entertain. She was led to believe that a *tender passion* was an inevitable and invincible sentiment, and that, in subjugating the heart, it could not mislead it : as if it were possible that a person should at once be full of attractions, irresistible, supreme, and destitute of all effect ! She was instructed, by these novels, to conceal with care the unhappy secret of a love, contrary to duty, and fly with courage from the object that inspired it ; but an effort more troublesome, that of conquering a rising inclination, was dispensed with ; for it was a maxim, that a *real love* could not be overcome. The religious sentiments which were engraven in the heart of our heroine, combated ideas so contrary to sound morality, and, at her

age, it was remarkable that she should resist the entire adoption of so convenient a system. In her situation, however, it was a great misfortune that she did not perceive all its falsity and danger.

Among the young ladies, distinguished by their beauty, who attended the court, Mademoiselle Charente, and Mademoiselle de Pons\*, were particularly remarked. The latter, a lively witty coquette, was ambitious of attracting the attention of the king. Mademoiselle de la Valliere, notwithstanding her inexperience, was the only person who noticed this attempt; and she discouraged the advances of Mademoiselle de Pons, who appeared to desire her friendship. She connected herself, how-

\* Afterwards Countess of Hendicourt, and the friend of Madame Maintenon.



ever, with a much more dangerous person, Mademoiselle d'Artigni, who, destitute of external charms, had all the vices, which, in society, and particularly in a court, are capable of being passed off, for a time at least, as amiable qualities. Extreme flexibility of character gave her the appearance of gentleness and equanimity. Excessive ambition rendered her capable of a regularity of conduct, and an assiduity in the duties of her situation, which was attributed to the perfection of her reason. Thus a good reputation may be usurped by the artful management of defects, but it cannot be long preserved by such means. The preference which Mademoiselle de la Valliere gave to Mademoiselle d'Artigni, was founded on the best motives; but those motives proceeded from an error in her judgment, the consequences of which were  
very

very disastrous. Young persons, who, like Mademoiselle de la Valliere, wish to form none but virtuous connexions, ought to seek, ought to cultivate friendships only with those of a riper age. They are enabled to judge of persons advanced in life, before they know them; for esteem, long acquired, is almost always well founded.

During the journey from Fontainebleau, in one of the finest evenings of summer, as the king was walking on the terrace of the castle, he observed, at a distance, four young ladies, who, after crossing the parterre, hastened to enter the shrubbery. It was too dark to recognize them, and the king experienced that sort of curiosity, which, with princes, is often the offspring of indolence or ennui. He desired Beringhen to follow him, and proceeded to the grove,

where the young ladies, seated on the verdant turf, were engaged in discourse. The subject of their conversation was a fete, given on the evening before, by Madame, at which the king, and some gentlemen of the court, had danced. Concealed by the foliage, the king and Beringhen listened attentively to this conversation. They were discussing the merits of the dancers: one said the Marquis d'Alincour (afterwards Marshall de Villeroi,) was the most elegant and agreeable; another gave the preference to M. d'Armagnac, and the third declared for Count de Guiche. The fourth remained silent; the others pressed her to give her opinion: the softest and most touching voice was then heard.—“Is it possible,” said she, “that any body can take notice of those you have mentioned, when the king is present?”---“O! then it is necessary



necessary to be a king to please you!"  
---"No; his crown adds nothing to the charms of his person, but it diminishes the danger of those charms. He would be too irresistible, were he not a king; that is, at least, some preservative against his attractions." The king retired with emotion, forbid Beringhen to speak of this adventure, and returned to the castle. All night his mind was occupied by the secret he had discovered, and which so strongly flattered his self-love. But who was she who had preferred him with so little prejudice, and so much sincerity?----She must be one of Madame's maids of honour; but how had he not observed her? He was certain he had never heard her speak, for her enchanting voice must have struck him.---That touching voice he was sure would discover her. He resolved not to look for her, but to

listen to all the ladies of the court. His ear alone would inform his heart, and direct his vows. The next day he repaired early to the assembly of Madame: he turned his eyes towards the maids of honour, and caught a glimpse of a beautiful countenance, concealed behind Mademoiselle d'Artigni: it recalled to his mind the young female, in deep mourning, who had been presented two months ago, of which the noble and melancholy figure appeared to him so affecting, and who, from that time, had been so retired, that he had never again beheld her. *Could it be her?* He was inclined to believe it, and the idea conveyed to his mind inexpressible anxiety. During the arrangement of the parties for play, Lewis joined a groupe of the maids of honour: he addressed himself to Mademoiselle de Pons, but  
his

his eyes were fixed on Mademoiselle de la Valliere;---she cast her's down, and blushed. The king advanced, and spoke to her: she started, turned pale, and replied to him in a tremulous voice, but which could not be misunderstood.---*Ah! it was her.*

From this moment he saw only Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and the delicacy and ardour of his passion augmented in proportion to the care with which he endeavoured to conceal it. He took every opportunity to acquire information, respecting the object of his affection, and all he heard only tended more closely to rivet his chains. Her wit, her candour, and her genius, which every one admired, joined to the simplicity of her education, all concurred to render her interesting in the eyes of the monarch; and

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they gave to her the appearance of greater youth than the companions of her own age. The coquetry and cunning of the old, may, perhaps, be mistaken for experience, but simplicity must always be considered the greatest ornament of youth.

On the following day the court returned to Saint Germain, and next morning the king proposed an excursion to the forest of Vincennes. Lewis conducted himself the calash of Madame, and Mademoiselle de la Valliere was seated in one of the other carriages: in the wood a pavillion was formed, of the green branches of trees, underneath which the whole court partook of the refreshments that were provided in abundance. They were saluted by the sound of rural music, the wood-nymphs and shepherds having assembled around them, from all parts, singing

singing the charming couplets of Bensearde: the shepherds presented flowers to the ladies, and Mademoiselle de la Valliere selected, from their baskets, a lily; when, raising her eyes with timidity, they met those of the king, who was, at that moment, by her side, and she said, while a blush overspread her beautiful countenance, "this flower is likewise the emblem of innocence." This action, however natural, produced, in the mind of the king, a sad, though not unpleasing sensation. "Innocence!" said he, "ah! what a charm you have given to it!" The approach of Madame prevented any farther conversation, and Mademoiselle de la Valliere hastily dropt the lily, which she held in her hand, into a flower-basket that stood before her, on a table, and took up a rose in its stead. A moment's reflection, however, dis-

covered to her the imprudence of this concealment, and embittered her enjoyments for the remainder of the day. The company remained in the pavillion until evening, when they went to walk in the wood, but a heavy shower of rain soon obliged them to fly for shelter beneath the trees.— Mademoiselle de la Valliere was left behind, and the king offered her his arm, which, far from supporting, rather retarded her faltering steps.— Lewis promised to conduct her by the shortest path, and this path never ended, and, agitated and trembling, Mademoiselle de la Valliere remained silent. Her distress and surprise became extreme, when the king, taking advantage of such a favourable opportunity, made a declaration of the sentiments with which she had inspired him. His painful embarrassment equalled her emotion; but several persons,



sons, in search of the king, appearing from a turn in the road, he, in vain, urged her to answer him. Had he been more experienced, or less under the influence of passion, he would have known how to appreciate this silence; as it was, he remained melancholy during the rest of the day. From the known politeness of the king, it created no astonishment that he should have remained to conduct Mademoiselle Valliere, or that, for a whole hour, he should continue uncovered, notwithstanding the rain fell in torrents. Such was, at that period, the respect paid to females in France, that even their enemies admitted they were the most gallant nation of Europe. The passionate and respectful declaration of the king, but too sensibly affected a heart, already prepossessed in his favour. The joy she felt, on discovering the passion of  
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the king, at once convinced her of the violence of her own, which before she had only regarded as a simple preference.

“What!” said she, “do I rejoice in a triumph, the most fatal and the most criminal! It is an unlawful love which I inspire! and whilst I durst not speak, my heart glowed with rapture! Have I thus been able to forget the dignity of my sex, and the principles which are so dear to me? I remained silent. May I not thus have encouraged a presumptuous hope! What will he think! Doubtless he despises me!—I will this very moment repair my error and imprudence! Alas! at what a price ought I not to purchase his esteem, since it is the only sentiment to which I can aspire!”

The most virtuous resolutions were the fruit of these reflections. For  
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some days M. Valliere abstained from attending Madame, and the young queen, which prevented the king from renewing a conversation nearest to his heart. He determined to write to her. Ignorant that the most persuasive eloquence flows from the heart, and entertaining an exalted idea of the abilities of M. Valliere, and of his own inferiority, he knew not how to perform his task. He longed for a confidant, and his choice fell on Benserade. He corrected the king's letter; or, to speak more correctly, rendered it much worse by the substitution of some spiritual phrases, and brilliant sallies, for the language of sentiment. Lewis did not confide to Benserade the name of his enslaver, who supposed the letter to be intended for Mademoiselle de Pons.—Benserade, at the age of forty-five, always gallant, and still amiable, was deeply





deeply enamoured of Mademoiselle Valliere, who, ignorant of the nature of his attachment, almost regarded him as a father; and, in return for the little services he rendered her, bestowed on him her friendship and her gratitude. Mademoiselle Valliere received the king's letter. She loved!—and it appeared in her eyes a masterpiece of attachment and genius. Lewis solicited a reply—but how could she answer such a letter? She durst not hope, and yet she wished to impress on his mind a favourable opinion of her talents. This letter was the first, and would be the last she should write on the subject, and she attached to it the greatest importance! In her embarrassment, she resolved to consult Benserade, without, however, avowing to him the name of her lover. In the evening she met him at the house of Madame,

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and requested he would visit her the following afternoon. Benserade, transported at thus obtaining an interview, which he had not dared to solicit, waited with the greatest impatience for the hour of appointment, when he flew to the house of M. Valliere, whom he found alone, and threw himself on his knees before her. Believing that he only meant to thank her for the confidence she bestowed on him, she smiled at such an exaggerated demonstration of gratitude. "I wish," said she, "to consult you respecting the answer I should send to a letter I have just now received. I require parental advice, and shall, I am confident, receive it from your wisdom." Almost petrified by these few words, Benserade rose, and seated himself on a chair, when Mademoiselle la Valliere, not wishing to shew the signature of the king, read the letter

letter aloud. Convinced, from the beginning, that it was the letter he had composed, Benserade, who was more a courtier than a lover, quickly consoled himself for the loss of his mistress, by reflecting on the advantages he might secure to himself by this double confidence. When, therefore, Mademoiselle la Valliere had, in a low and trembling voice, finished reading the letter—"Now," exclaimed her confidant, "I have penetrated your secret. It is the king alone who could write thus!" M. la Valliere, naturally simple, acknowledged the truth of his conjecture. Benserade found it difficult to compose an answer to the letter that would satisfy Mademoiselle Valliere. Some of the expressions were, in her opinion, equivocal; but, convinced that the correspondence would not quickly terminate, he wished her answer to be conveyed



conveyed in haughty and rigorous language. Mademoiselle Vallière, when left to herself, re-perused this answer with the greatest emotion, and it appeared to be written in too harsh and unfeeling a tone. She resolved, therefore, not to send a letter she herself had not dictated. Is not artifice always blameable, whatever may be the motive for its employment?—This reflection, so conformable to the character of Mademoiselle la Vallière, would have regulated her conduct in this affair, independently of a secret motive, which she durst not avow, even to her own mind. She wrote another letter, which she sent to Benserade, requesting him to present it to the king. The friend of Mademoiselle la Vallière, readily obtained the confidence of the king, who, from this moment, resigned himself entirely to his guidance.

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He persuaded Lewis, that, unless he could obtain a personal interview, he would never receive a favourable reply to his letters. He promised to gain over to their purposes, Mademoiselle Artigni, whose apartments communicated with those of Mademoiselle Valliere. The chambers appropriated to the maids of honour were situated at the top of the chateau, and it was possible to reach them by the roof; but even then, they could only be entered through the windows, which opened into a kind of terrace. It was, besides, necessary that Mademoiselle Artigni should leave her window open, that through her apartment Lewis might pass into that of Mademoiselle Valliere. The negociation for this purpose succeeded: Mademoiselle Artigni was ambitious, and when this passion is not checked by the principles

ples of religion, it frequently hurries on its votaries to the commission of the greatest crimes.

About midnight, the king, unquiet and agitated, scaled the roof, and reached the terrace in safety; he found the window open, entered the apartment of Artigni, who conducted him to the chamber of Mademoiselle Valliere. She had only retired about a quarter of an hour, and was seated in an arm-chair, perusing the king's letter. She heard the door open, and, on turning her head, she perceived the king; she uttered a faint shriek, raised herself up, and again fell back, almost lifeless, into the chair. Lewis threw himself at her feet:—he perceived his own letter which she still grasped, and saw that she was occupied with himself:—he endeavoured to calm and re-assure her, protesting that his sentiments were as pure as they



they were ardent. Mademoiselle Valliere replied, at first, only by a flood of tears; afterwards she assumed courage to reproach the king, for a temerity by which she would be dishonoured: he assured her his visit would remain a secret, and promised, on his honour, to take no step which might discover it without her own consent: in short, he questioned her respecting the sentiments he had inspired, but she refused, with firmness, the confession he solicited; he informed her, he had overheard the nocturnal conversation in the wood, on which she covered her face with her hands, and her tears again flowed in abundance. The delicacy and respect, evinced by the monarch, at length somewhat re-assured her; when Artigni entered to inform them, that day already appeared, soon after which the king departed.

Next

Next morning, the Duchess de Navailles, governness to the maids of honour, was informed, by the centinel, that, during the night, he had perceived a man upon the terrace, which led to the apartments of the Mesdemoiselles Valliere and d'Artigni; on which she immediately ordered their windows to be grated. The manners of Madame Navailles were austere, but her reputation was spotless; she possessed so much self-love, that she made virtue a kind of merchandize; she was anxious to acquire a greater share of personal consideration than others; although her practice was in unison with her principles, and she could not be accused of hypocrisy, she might frequently be reproached with exaggeration, and especially an unbounded love of applause. In her youth, she listened only to the dictates of religion, and her conscience;

but

but the end she had in view, took from her actions a great part of their merit. She acted only for fame: vanity, is, perhaps, inevitable, when an individual is destined to act a part on the most brilliant theatre; and it is thus that, in courts, the true end of virtue is forgotten; it is frequently converted into a farce, and too often is merely the speculation of ambition.

Mademoiselle la Valliere was terrified when she saw the grates put upon her windows, and those of her companion; rightly judging that the suspicions would fall on herself, as the age of Mademoiselle d'Artigni would protect her reputation. She immediately wrote to Benserade, and painted her grief in the most lively colours; he sought the king, and communicated to him the event; the king, without losing a moment, ordered the duchess to cause all the windows of  
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the maids of honour, without exception, to be grated in the same manner, and to make it known, that it was done at his express order. Obedience to the mandate of the king could not be evaded; and the duchess consoled herself by reflecting on the praise she would obtain for her care and vigilance in the discharge of her duty; but this precaution, which saved the honour of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, plunged her companions into the utmost distress and anxiety: she heard their complaints, saw their tears flow, and accusing herself as the author of all their sufferings; she experienced the most heart-rending affliction.

In order to divert the attention of the court from a subject which attracted so much notice, the king proposed to give a fête to Madame, in the gardens, after supper.

Madame, attended by the whole

court, repaired, at eleven o'clock, to the park: the king conducted them into the thicket, where he had overheard the nocturnal conversation between M. de la Valliere, and her companions. She had been secretly informed, by Benserade, of what, indeed, she could not doubt; that, on her account alone, the fête had been given, and in which she must have been confirmed on entering the thicket. It was magnificently illuminated, and decorated with wreaths of lilies, which, at that season, are extremely rare. She blushed, and recalled to her recollection the branch of lily, which she had imprudently selected in the wood of Vincennes: upon a bench of green turf were seated the Graces, who appeared to be conversing together: at their side, was a superb decoration, representing a mysterious temple, without inscription,

tion, and without attributes. The Graces rose, and presented to the princesses, and all the ladies, branches of lilies; on which, one of the gates of the temple was thrown open, and a melodious voice was heard singing the following couplets.

Ah! none have loved as I can love!—

Let lovers claim their MYRTLE wreathes!  
To paint a novel sentiment,  
For me a novel emblem breathes!

To Hope's bright shrine what suppliants crowd!  
There, vows and incense they dispense!  
I ask not Hope—far happier, I  
Adore a spotless innocence.

Majestic flower, bright LILY shine,  
Let me thy fairer leaves extol!  
A lovely, tender symbol, thou  
Shew'st all the candour of the soul.

To Beauty's form a beauty lend;  
Breathe all thy brilliant freshness there;  
Oh attribute of Modesty!  
Adorn the object of my care.



Madame was enraptured by the verses, which she imagined were addressed to herself; during the whole evening, she was remarkably gay—never was vanity so much gratified—never did an imaginary, or even a real triumph, produce greater intoxication. Whilst she was thus inflated by an error, the true object of the fête endeavoured to conceal herself in the crowd, and trembled lest any one might divine the truth. Agitated, confused, and restless, she received, with the most profound sensibility, this delicate and ingenuous homage, whilst, at the same time, she reproached herself with the excess of her gratitude; and she dreaded to betray herself in the midst of so many curious and prying observers, who she conceived might easily penetrate into her secret.

When once more alone in her chamber,

chamber, she re-called, with terror, the events of the last eight days; "it is necessary to fly," exclaimed she, aloud, "it is necessary!—Surrounded by temptations, and receiving the most pernicious counsels, I ought to fly from my present danger, at least for a time, in order to collect myself, to become calm, and, if possible, reflect maturely on my situation."

The Maréchale de Bellefond was at Saint Germain; Mad. de la Valliere obtained leave to pass fifteen days at Paris, and she set out with the Maréchale. Lewis, admired by his courtiers, was deservedly beloved by the Parisians. During the scarcity of 1662, he supplied the people with bread, by causing a great quantity of grain to be distributed to poor families, at the gate of the Louvre.\*

\* Age of Lewis XIV.

He had remitted to the people three millions of taxes ; he had acquired Dunkirk ; re-established the finances ; tranquillized the minds of the people ; annihilated factions ; and evinced so much clemency and firmness in all his measures, that his government was respected at home and abroad ; in short, since he held the reins of the state, all his actions had been useful, noble, and beneficent. Mademoiselle de la Valliere, far from finding at Paris the forgetfulness she sought, was still pursued by the image she wished to erase from her memory. A picture of the king hung in the saloon of the Maréchale ; she found this cherished image under every form ; in the public monuments, in the squares, in the shops, and she even retraced it daily on the different coins ; sculpture, painting, engraving, all the arts disputed the glory of multiplying



multiplying it; the name of Lewis resounded continually in her ears; it was written in every publication, and repeated every where; in every conversation, the king was always spoken of with enthusiasm; his eulogy was pronounced at the public spectacles, and the most amiable people of the universe were seen applauding, with transport, the verses which celebrated an adored sovereign; they even seized, and formed the most flattering allusions for the king. Whence could she fly, and how forget him?—It could not even be to the sanctuary of religion; for there public vows were constantly offered up for his happiness and glory. These tokens of approbation and esteem were more estimable than those he received in his court, because they were more sincere. Kings are only flattered in their presence, but when the voice of an

united people is continually raised to bless them; when they are proud of being their subjects; these acclamations of the multitude are the just reward of a well-earned renown. To obtain such homage, is to merit it:—a king knows how to reign, when he knows how to gain the hearts of his people!—his true glory is to be loved.

Mademoiselle de la Valliere, more distressed than ever, wrote to her friend, the countess of Themine, without, however, developing the secret of her heart; she mentioned, in her letter, that she was unhappy, and placed in the most dangerous situation; that she had need of her advice, and conjured her to come to her aid. A little reassured by this step, she remained somewhat more composed, by reflecting that she had thus placed herself under the direction

tion of a faithful friend, on whose wisdom she could repose with the most perfect confidence.

Benserade, however, who was deputed by the king, came to urge Mademoiselle de la Valliere to return to the court: he spoke in high terms of the delicacy and purity of the king's sentiments. "Ah!" replied Mademoiselle de la Valliere, sighing, "I possess only a shallow understanding, but religion informs me, that an adulterous passion, to which we yield, cannot be allied to that purity of heart of which you speak." "He was not able to overcome it." "He could, however, conceal it from me." "He wishes to sacrifice it to your repose." "Has he told you so?" "He wishes, if you consent to it, to occupy himself with your establishment." "The king!" "Yes. It is understood that the Duke de Langeville



gueville loves you ; the king intends to propose him to you as a husband."

" I will never accept him. My mother had formed for me another alliance. I never made any engagement ; but, if I determined to sacrifice my liberty, I should prefer the husband whom my parents had selected." Mademoiselle de la Valliere made this reply in a kind of dry manner, which was not natural to her. This observation did not escape Benserade ; but, feigning not to remark the slight shade of chagrin and vexation which the countenance and looks of Mademoiselle de la Valliere betrayed, he persisted in urging her to return to Saint Germain, and she promised to depart within a few days. The proposal of marriage was not an artifice : the king, in fact, since his interview with Mademoiselle de la Valliere, had conceived for her

her so much esteem and admiration, that he formed, in reality, the virtuous resolution of respecting her principles, and of sacrificing his love to her repose. This resolution had at first wounded the feelings of *Maiselle de la Valliere*; but, on farther reflection, she perceived how much such a scheme would exalt the character of the king: she trusted there was no longer any reason to fear him who could acquire so many claims to her esteem and gratitude. This confidence completed her destruction. On returning to Saint Germain, and again seeing the king, the emotions she experienced were rather those of sympathy and joy, than of apprehension. His own peculiar sentiments had uniformly produced in her mind less fear than those which she herself inspired. Love, in the heart of a chaste and

virtuous female, never excites those impetuous passions which are produced only by an ill-regulated imagination: it does not forcibly take possession of the soul, but glides insensibly into it; it is not transient, but durable; it is so modest, and so veiled, that it appears tranquil; it is so generous, that it resembles friendship; it burns not, but consumes!

On her arrival at Saint Germain, Mademoiselle de la Valliere did not re-occupy her former apartment, but had another appropriated to her use, much nearer to those of Madame.—

Adjoining to her new apartment, was a ruinous anti-chamber, several chinks in the wall of which opened into a kind of gallery, through which the royal family passed, on their visits to Madame. The king requested, through the medium of Benserade, that Mademoiselle de la Valliere would  
suffer



suffer him to converse with her, through this wall.\* She hesitated not to comply with this request, conceiving it would be the blackest ingratitude to harbour the least distrust of the king. So true is it that the mind is never at a loss for ingenious pretexts to sanctify its imprudence. In short, we frequently conjure up imaginary duties, in order to excuse the performance of those which are legitimate. Those who are incapable of abusing the confidence of others, frequently endeavour to deceive themselves; a sort of duplicity is always mingled with the passions; uprightness, and the most perfect sincerity, are the attributes of virtue alone.

In order to avoid being surprised, the time fixed for the meeting between the king and Mademoiselle de la Valliere, was at day-break; Lewis spoke to her in a manner as noble

\* An historical fact.

and affecting as it was sincere; he renewed the proposition of marriage with the Duke de Langueville, which Mademoiselle de la Valliere positively rejected. The king did not insist upon it; he again cherished hope, and spoke only of his own passion, to which she listened with agony, and had the weakness to consent that he should return to the same place the following day. It was not without remorse, that she consented to this second meeting: there were no more pretexts to render it necessary; no more projects of marriage to discuss: but he had evinced sentiments so generous, and respect so affecting; he talked so well on virtue!—how could she resolve mortally to wound and afflict him? Twice did he revisit her in the same manner, until the vigilant duchess of Navailles, having perceived the chinks in the wall, ordered

them to be repaired. The king expressed his disappointment, in several letters, but he vainly requested another meeting. Mademoiselle de la Valliere firmly refused to admit him into her apartment. The assiduities of the monarch became towards Madame more marked than ever. He conducted himself with so much prudence, in respect to the object of his love, and with such bewitching gallantry towards Madame, that the most quick-sighted among his courtiers had not the least suspicion of his real sentiments; but they readily perceived those of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. The Duke de Langueville, young, amiable, virtuous, and in possession of an immense fortune, loved her to distraction; yet she had refused such a brilliant establishment. It was not difficult to read the heart of Mademoiselle la Valliere: the Count de Guiche



Guiche was the first who suspected her attachment. He made several jests on this romantic passion: Madame, believing herself certain that the king could not return it, appeared to pity Mademoiselle de la Valliere. "Madame, in fact, owes her some compassion," said the Count de Guiche, "because, on her account, she is condemned to an unfortunate passion; the king will always remain blind, but to the object which effaces all others." Madame listened with complacency to such flattering discourses. She assured the count, sighing, that he was deceived; for that the king felt for herself no other sentiment but that of friendship; nevertheless, she felt no pain from her assertion being contradicted. Mademoiselle de la Valliere was fully aware how much Madame was pleased with supposing his majesty felt for her

her sentiments of affection. Hence it was easy to perceive how great would be her vexation, on being undeceived. This idea preyed on the mind of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. She pictured in imagination every thing she would be condemned to suffer from her injured pride: a frivolous incident completely betrayed her, and fully discovered the state of her heart. One evening, in presence of the king, Madame, after having spoken of a romance, by Mademoiselle Scudery, bestowed on all those who composed her society, according to their characters, the names of the personages of this work. Madame, as might have been expected, received the name of the principal heroine; her friend, the countess of Soissons, assumed that of the confidant: they all agreed that the king alone ought to preserve a name he had immortalized,

talized, but that all the rest might select one from the romance: they agreed to substitute it for their christian name, and to sign with it the letters they might write to any of the members of the society. “We have forgot Mademoiselle de la Valliere, in this distribution,” said the Marquis de Vardes, suddenly perceiving her: they proposed the name of an insipid princess, which no person was willing to receive. Mademoiselle de la Valliere replied, ingenuously, that she was attached to her own baptismal name, and unwilling to substitute another in its stead. They enquired what was her name, and, however simple the question, it appeared to confound her: a hasty reflection produced this anxiety!—Madame, astonished at her confusion, reiterated the question. Mademoiselle de la Valliere perceived how ridiculous it was to



to hesitate before making a reply, and this idea increased her emotion. Timidity and sensibility of character are seldom accompanied with great presence of mind: embarrassment, when it is extreme, usually ends in complete discomfiture. Mademoiselle de la Valliere, blushed, turned pale, cast down her eyes, filled with tears, and had not the power to articulate a single word. The king endeavoured to change the subject, but Madame insisted on it with a kind of authority: Mademoiselle de la Valliere submitted, and, in a tremulous voice, and with enchanting simplicity, she said, that she was called Louise!—A murmur of ridicule ran through the circle. Madame, sighing, with an air of pity, assured them she had not designed to embarrass Mademoiselle la Valliere. “I believe it,” replied the king; “what cruelty would

would it have been to have formed a project of intimidating such ingenuousness, sweetness, and modesty!"—These words, pronounced in a severe tone, and with visible emotion, caused much surprise, and produced a sudden change in the countenance of his auditors: their malicious smiles were quickly converted into an air of benevolence, with the exception of Madame, who could not dissemble her displeasure. The following day, however, the king resumed his accustomed grace, and she became persuaded that pity, alone, for Mademoiselle de la Valliere had produced the lively interest she had witnessed: she preserved, however, against her a species of rancour, but did not yet experience the least distrust.

The queen mother frequently established a lottery of jewels, the tickets of which she gave to the members of  
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the royal family, and their favourites. One day, when the court was assembled around her, Mademoiselle de la Valliere being present in the suite of Madame, the queen mother proposed one of these lotteries. The king gained the first prize, which was a pair of magnificent bracelets, that every one admired for their uncommon beauty. Madame, in particular, praised them with ecstasy; but how much would their value be augmented, when they were bestowed by the king!—and to whom would he offer them? The young queen desired, without hoping to obtain them: in admiring them, one of the company observed that they were without price: “Not yet,” replied Madame, “but they will soon be so.” The king, however, took the box from the table, on which it was placed, and threw his eyes around the chamber,

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in search of an object never absent from his mind; he traversed the apartment, not without embarrassment, but with an air of triumph; so haughty and bold are those who have resolved to avenge a beloved object! Lewis approached Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and presented to her the bracelets, not with an air of gallantry, but with all the expression of respect, and all the dignity of a sentiment which did him so much honour. Never was homage rendered with so much sincerity and nobleness; never did the countenance of Lewis appear more assured and majestic. Mademoiselle de la Valliere, affected, penetrated, filled with inquietude, fear, and gratitude, appeared to understand that the king only shewed her these superb bracelets: "They are very beautiful," said she, in a low voice, returning them to him. "Accept

cept them, Mademoiselle," rejoined the king; "they are the offering of a sincere and well-founded esteem." Mademoiselle de la Valliere found herself so much affected, that she replied only by a profound inclination of her head; and, on the king leaving her, hastily concealed the bracelets in her work-bag, and retreated behind the persons by whom she was surrounded.

The general astonishment was extreme, and the vexation of Madame so violent, that she could not avoid shewing to the king a degree of spleen, which was evident to the whole company, although she endeavoured to disguise it under a tone of gaiety; but these pleasantries were so constrained, and mixed with such severe sarcasms, that it was impossible not to perceive the mortification she experienced. The king endeavoured

voured merely to parry her sarcasms, by an inalterable sang-froid, or an air of complete indifference. This conduct still more enraged Madame, who was frequently on the point of rendering herself ridiculous. She saw that her conduct excited surprise; that several persons observed her malignity, divined the cause of her jealousy, and enjoyed her confusion: she perceived, also, that what had been said, failed of its effect: she believed herself sported with: humbled in the eyes of the whole court, deprived, for ever, of the affection of the king, and she vowed eternal hatred towards Mademoiselle de la Valliere. It was thus that a cause, so frivolous, agitated and perverted a character the most amiable. The passions always mislead, and often without our perceiving it; but excessive vanity contracts the mind, debases



debases the soul, and drives from the heart every just and generous sentiment. How sublime is that inflexible morality, which pronounces such a terrible anathema against pride, and which teaches us that the source of reason, of justice, and of every virtue, will never be found, by frail, imperfect beings, but in mild and disinterested humility !....

Next day the king waited, as usual, on Madame: his deportment was unaffected, and his air serene, but he paid her only those attentions which politeness required; and, without affectation or restraint, he dedicated all the evening to Mademoiselle de la Valliere. There no longer remained any doubts as to his sentiments: immediately two parties were formed at court: the one against Mademoiselle de la Valliere, composed of the partisans of Madame:

the other in her favour, comprehending those whom she had interested, and who disliked Madame, or hated her favourites. Princes have a considerable interest in admitting into their confidence only those who possess public esteem, since the disgust inspired by their minions is frequently reflected back on themselves. The friends of Madame did not endeavour to moderate her ill humour: they were themselves provoked to observe the princess, whom they governed, lose the ascendancy which she had hitherto possessed over the king; and it was impossible to mistake the sentiments of Lewis, every thing declared the ardor of his love, and this passion was the first he had ever experienced! In short, they durst not accuse Mademoiselle de la Valliere of coquetry: her modesty, and extreme reserve, would have given  
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the lie to their assertion: her conduct was irreproachable: it was evident that she loved, but that she resisted this attachment, and that she avoided every action, which could give to the monarch the least hope. It was impossible to interpret her actions with malignity, they therefore calumniated her character. One pretended that her mildness and modest simplicity were profound artifice, and concealed ambition. They supposed her capable of the designs which they themselves would have had in her situation; and thus, in drawing an imaginary picture of her, they painted their own: in declaiming against her, they pronounced their own condemnation. Reflection augmented the indignation and confusion of Madame: the present but too well elucidated the past: it was evident, that the king had loved Mademoiselle de la Valliere several months:



months: she recalled a variety of circumstances, which left no doubt of this fact; from that period, therefore, all the fêtes had been given in honour of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. Thus Madame, without owning to the king the knowledge of his love, had furnished a pretext for concealing it from the eyes of his court. The king had not scrupled to deceive and render her an object of ridicule!—where is the woman, under the dominion of vanity, who could pardon similar injuries?

Madame was little capable of dissimulation; but her friends prevailed on her to treat Mademoiselle de la Valliere with decency, and to receive the king without ill-humour. With a malignant intention towards Mademoiselle de la Valliere, she gave several balls at her house: Mademoiselle de la Valliere did not dance, and all the friends of  
Madame

Madame united to display the accomplishments of Mademoiselle de Pons, who was the best dancer of the court. The king danced several times with her, and appeared smitten with her charms; on observing which, Mademoiselle de la Valliere became pale and agitated. One evening, in the midst of the ball, she disappeared: the king, after having danced a country dance with Mademoiselle de Pons, had seated himself near her. He spoke to her in a low voice, and with vivacity. In order to enjoy a triumph, Madame had the cruelty to send for Mademoiselle de la Valliere: she appeared, with red eyes, and a most dejected air: the king observed her, was moved, and immediately left Mademoiselle de Pons. On the following days, he did not come near her, nor was he willing to dance. Thus the hope was destroyed, which

had been assumed with so much exultation.

The passion of Lewis for Mademoiselle de la Valliere became every day more violent, and he sacrificed to it all the pride and rectitude of his character. With renewed solicitations, he pressed for a meeting, not in the house of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, but in that of Mademoiselle d'Artigni, and in her presence. She at first refused, afterwards hesitated, but at length consented to see him, at the end of two days. On the morning of that appointed for their interview, Mademoiselle de la Valliere received a billet, which excited the most lively emotion: it was from the Countess de Themine, and dated from Paris. No sooner had this faithful friend arrived from the country, than she immediately announced her visit, and that the messenger, whom



whom she had dispatched to inform her, should only precede her one hour. Six weeks before, Mademoiselle de la Valliere had written to conjure her to come to her assistance; and now the idea of seeing her produced the most painful embarrassment! She reflected, with pain, how much her heart was changed, since she feared the admonitions of virtue? — Her principles, however, had not been shaken: she had been led away, without being seduced, and had always the same hatred of vice. She was only blind respecting the king's intentions, which she believed innocent, and never conceived that it was possible, while meditating to betray, he could display so much esteem: nevertheless, she was fully sensible, that a powerful and friendly arm was necessary to support her through the slippery path, upon which she had en-

tered. When Madame de Themine arrived, Mademoiselle de la Valliere received her with inexpressible emotion: her presence, however, recalled her back to herself; and, from that moment, forming a proper judgment respecting every thing which she had to communicate, and foreseeing what would be the sentiments of her friend, she determined neither to palliate, nor justify her errors; neither, although fully aware that a heart-rending sacrifice would be proposed to her, did she, for a moment, entertain an idea of opposing the powerful voice of honour and friendship: but this resolution was the mere effort of despair. She made a brief and candid recital of what she had suffered. Far from endeavouring to disguise her sentiments, she painted them such as she had never hitherto, even for a moment, dared to confess them to be, even to herself:  
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she experienced a kind of consolation in thus braving the severity, of which she was to become the victim. Pale, and oppressed with grief, she yet expressed herself with a firm and tranquil tone, without shedding a single tear. Madame de Themine heard and regarded her with equal pain and astonishment. When she had done speaking—

“Alas!” said Madame de Themine, “in a situation so dangerous, what course do you mean to pursue?”—

“To follow that which you shall prescribe. Subjugated by a criminal passion, I am no longer capable of regulating my own conduct.” . . . . .

“You must fly from him” . . . . . “his image haunts me every where . . . . .—

in what places is he not adored?”—

“In a convent, you will no longer hear his name mentioned. It is necessary you should retire into one for some time.”—“I willingly consent to



it for ever." "I do not propose to you any such sacrifice. Let us depart for Chaillot, where you have already been. There you will write to Madame, to solicit your dismissal; and, when this step is taken, we shall proceed together for Touraine: there you will recover your former tranquillity, and, within a year, be able to satisfy the wishes of the amiable man, whom your virtuous mother had destined for your future husband." . . .

"What! shall I deceive an honest man, and give myself up to him with a heart stained with a criminal passion?" . . . — "You will have overcome this dangerous attachment." . .

"I shall never overcome it." "You believe so at this moment, but it is an error. You think also that the rank of the king adds nothing to your present sentiments, but, believe me, although you may have no ambition, you

you deceive yourself. Can any one behold, without infatuation, the object whom they love, and almost deify? If Lewis XIV. had not been seated upon the throne, you would neither have loved him so ardently, nor to such a dangerous excess.—Come, my friend, tear yourself from the illusions which surround you—you are yet uncontaminated, and happiness yet awaits you!” . . . . “Happiness! ah! never.” . . . “We must set out to-morrow, before break of day.”——“To-morrow! and I have promised to see the king to-morrow evening!” . . . .—“It is this imprudent promise which should make you hasten your flight.” “He will be in despair.” “You shall write to him from Chaillot—he will respect your motives, and always esteem you. To what distress will you reduce him!—He will be consoled, without doubt;

but no woman will ever supply your place in his heart."

This last idea sensibly affected Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and re-animated her courage. "Yes," said she, "I ought no longer to hesitate—dispose of me as you please." "I am to sleep in the city, but I will return to take you up an hour before day-break."

"I will be ready to attend you." At these words, Madame de Themine arose, embraced her unfortunate friend, kept her a long time clasped in her arms, and, at last, tearing herself away, left her in the most agonizing situation. It was five hours after mid-day, and Mademoiselle de la Valliere ought to appear, at eight, in the circle of Madame. She, at first, resolved to avoid going, under the pretence that she was indisposed, but afterwards, she thought that the king would be vexed, and that he would, perhaps,



perhaps, take some imprudent steps; besides, she wished to see him for the last time; and, after much irresolution, she at last determined to appear at Madame's, and thither she went. All the company were struck with the change which had taken place in her looks. She complained of a violent head-ach, and sat, as usual, in the most obscure part of the room. Her heart seemed torn, when she saw the king enter. Before he was able to perceive her, she heard him speak with a tone of gaiety; and this want of unison between them filled her soul with anguish! She then reflected on the grief he would experience next day. It appeared to her that she was deceiving—betraying him; and she began to think that her flight would expose her to all his indignation, and, perhaps, subject her to his hatred. This horrible thought froze her

her soul. The king, who was looking for her, approached, and was shocked at her appearance. He expressed his sorrow with a sensibility which completely overcame her. He would not engage in play—he sat down beside her, and conjured her to tell him what was the matter with her. She then said, “that she had seen her only friend, after a separation of seven months, which had recalled to her recollection some melancholy circumstances, and that the impression thus produced still remained on her mind.” The king imagined that she alluded to the death of her mother: the explanation, therefore, appeared to him simple and natural, and he was perfectly satisfied. But it is impossible to describe what Mademoiselle de la Valliere felt this evening. She envied every one:—all the personages who surrounded the king,  
and

and who were to remain near him, were, in her eyes, blessed. The king said not a word which did not convey to her a particular and affecting meaning. He had never appeared to her so amiable and so worthy of being loved. In proportion as the evening passed away, her strength seemed to be exhausted. An insurmountable sadness made her every moment fear that she would not be able to repress her tears: in particular, when she was obliged to speak, it required a prodigious effort to prevent her from weeping. This terrible constraint, and the certainty of being observed by malicious eyes, completed the torment of her situation. When the king rose to go away, her courage altogether abandoned her. She shuddered when the folding door closed on him, and said to herself, "I shall never see that door open



open again. Happiness——hope——soothing expectation——all are fled from me ! Nothing remains, but unceasing trouble, regret, repentance, bitter and painful reflections !” She was standing, leaning on a pillar, and she felt herself so weak, that she durst not venture to cross the room to go away. Happily, she was near a small private door. She approached it, opened it, and disappeared ; but, after having passed along a corridor, she fell senseless on the first steps of a staircase that led to her apartment.—A few minutes after, two of her companions passing, came to her assistance, and conducted her to her room.

Having no hope of enjoying a moment’s repose, she did not go to bed.—It was now about the end of autumn ; and, when Madame de Thermine came for her, at five in the morning, it was still dark. Mademoiselle

selle de la Valliere, without saying a word, rose, seized the hand of her friend, and went out with her immediately. They passed quickly through the castle, got into a carriage, and departed. Mademoiselle de la Valliere no sooner felt the motion of the carriage than she melted into tears. Her friend did not break silence, but affectionately pressed her hand, which she held between her own. Mademoiselle de la Valliere perceived that she wept, and threw her arms round her neck. "O! wise, O! virtuous Eudoxia!" exclaimed she, "can you pity my inexcusable weakness? You, to whom it is impossible for you to conceive it!"—"Ah!" replied Madame de Themine, "I admire you as much as I pity you."—"You believe I have courage, but I possess none: I am only submissive; but this tormenting grief I shall never

never surmount." "Such is, such must be, the credulity of passion. I have already told you, that time will undeceive you." "Never; I obey you, but I have neither hope of cure nor consolation." "Attend to me; do you think that, after the lapse of two or three years, you will regret the painful sacrifice you are now making?"—

"No," replied Mademoiselle de la Valliere, with animation, "it is impossible to repent of having done my duty." "Well then," resumed Ma-

dame de Themine, "you must be sensible, that the same virtue which prescribes this sacrifice, will, at last, become its reward; for if we found not some kind of recompence, we should repent." This reflection

struck Mademoiselle de la Valliere.

"Alas," said she, "to you it belongs to feel all the power of virtue, and to  
think



think it supreme; why should I be surprised that I know it not !”

The two friends did not arrive at the convent of Chaillot until eight o'clock: they found the nuns occupied in a melancholy ceremony; they were performing the last duty to one of their companions. It added to the sadness of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, when she learned that the deceased was a young nun of twenty, who had testified particular friendship for her. As the weather was beautiful and serene, Mademoiselle de la Valliere wished to remain in the cemetery. She sat down with her friend, beside the fountain, and looking at the grave of the young nun, who was just interred:—“ Happy Seraphina,” said she, “ how enviable is thy lot ! Thou never hast partaken of any but innocent joys; all thy affections were legitimate; thy soul was

was as pure as thy life: guilty sentiments, unlawful desires, shameful regrets, never disturbed thy tranquillity. Thou didst fear, thou didst disdain vice and error. Thou hadst no enthusiasm but for eternal truth. Thy heart, full of sublime piety, always calm, and always satisfied, enjoyed supreme happiness: it loved without uneasiness, without repentance, and yet without measure! Ah, for thee was sensibility, indeed a gift from heaven! That divine quality the Creator bestowed upon us to exalt our virtue, and when it is profaned, it becomes our punishment!" In saying these words, she hid her face on the shoulder of Madame Themine: afterwards making an effort, she rose, took the arm of Themine, and proposed a walk in the cloister. After taking a few steps, she stopped. "Alas!" said she, "with what pain do I remember

member the reflections with which this spot inspired me, seven months ago ! O why did I not yield to the desire I then felt ! Why did I leave this peaceful asylum. How delightful must it be to come here with innocence, and with the full command of reason ! How painful to seek refuge here, with all the passions the place reproves ! In this austere solitude, every thing once accorded with my sentiments ; now every thing is in opposition to them ! With an agitated, over-whelmed soul, how can I enjoy the mild influence of the calm air that is breathed here ! Oh ! frightful thought, to form the most striking contrast with peace and perfect virtue !”

As Mademoiselle de la Valliere pronounced these last words, she heard an extraordinary noise, and, at the same moment, several nuns crossed the  
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the cloister: all their veils were down, and they passed rapidly as shades, without replying to the questions of Madame de Themine. Mademoiselle de la Valliere felt a sudden emotion;—she was agitated;—she trembled.—She leans against a pillar—she dares not guess—she fears—she expects—she scarcely breaths.—Meanwhile, the noise increased, and she heard the large grate of the convent open. The two massy folds of iron, turning on their hinges, produced a noise, which resounded through the cloister, and announced the arrival of a bishop, or a prince; for that gate was never opened, except for great personages. The heart of Mademoiselle de la Valliere palpitated with involuntary joy, while, at the same time, astonishment and anxiety seemed to petrify her, and  
render

render her motionless ! A groupe of nuns, with their long veils extended, after advancing in confusion, dispersed on each side, and the lost Mademoiselle de la Valliere perceived the king darting towards her. “ O, my friend,” she exclaimed, throwing herself into the arms of Madame de Themine, “ save me !” A sudden and involuntary movement made her take flight. She rushed into the cemetery, and fell at the foot of a large iron cross, placed in the midst of a tuft of grass, by the side of the fountain. Madame de Themine, who did not dare to follow, but was incapable of abandoning her, remained standing in the embrasure of the arcade, about twenty paces from her, and looked earnestly towards her. The king flew to Mademoiselle de la Valliere. “ What do you fear ?” said he,

he, seizing one of her trembling hands: "is there here any other unfortunate being, any other suppliant besides me? But I need not implore you: I need not complain: I have to ask of you justice against yourself? Have I merited this barbarous treatment? Why fly from me? Why reduce to despair him who has constantly shewn you so much respect and submission? What have you to reproach me with, which could excuse this flight? What have I required? What have I attempted? What have I obtained? What could you do more, if you had to resist the most rash attempts, or to avenge the most injurious audacity? No: you are not capable of so much ingratitude. You have been brought here, against your inclination. You would not abandon me—come." In saying these words, Lewis endeavoured to



carry off Mademoiselle de la Valliere. She resisted, and putting her arm round the cross, took fast hold of it. In this struggle her long hair loosened, and fell down on her shoulders. Her violent emotion gave a supernatural lustre to her complexion.— Her attitude, and the expression of her countenance, had something sublime: never before had she appeared so beautiful in the eyes of Lewis.... He tried gently to raise her. Mademoiselle de la Valliere looked at her friend, and called to her with an accent of grief. Madame de Themine ran forward, while the king, turning round, darted a terrible look at her. Madame de Themine lowered her eyes, but advanced boldly.—“Come,” said the king, “a carriage waits for us: to delay longer would be to exhibit an extraordinary scene in this place: come!”—“What! Sire!” said Madame

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dame de Themine, "at her age, to go alone in a carriage with your majesty!"—The king, for the second time, looked angrily at this young lady, who was unknown to him, and who dared to oppose his will. His terrible look, which expressed all the royal indignation, could not disconcert Madame de Themine, whose eyes were still cast down. Her countenance, though respectful and modest, was assured, and indicated the firmness of her character. After a moment's silence, the king said, "Well, Madame, come you to St. Germain with her." "No, Sire," replied Madame de Themine, "I would shed my blood, were it necessary, to prevent her from returning. I shall follow her there, if your majesty so order it, but I will never voluntarily conduct her there." "She shall go there with me," said the king, with animation,

mation, "and if that be an irregular step, the care of justifying it remains with me." "No, no," cried Mademoiselle de la Valliere, sighing, and still opposing him. This long resistance, and, above all, the presence of Madame Themine, irritated the king. "Would you render me a tyrant," cried he, with a formidable voice, "you shall obtain your wish."— This menacing tone made Mademoiselle de la Valliere tremble; but whilst her mind revolted, her strength increased. "No force shall tear me from hence," said she, clasping more closely the cross. The king, in his turn, was as much surprised as alarmed at this vehemence, which he, for the first time, saw her assume; and which struck him the more, because her angelic countenance expressed, at the same moment, the most painful terror.--- "Ah! be tranquil," said he, throw-



ing himself on his knees before her:  
“ Can he who loves you cease to be generous!---Can you be devoid of pity, when my past conduct must convince you that the happiness of seeing you is to me sufficient! When I renew the oath, to respect for ever your principles, would you renounce the unhappy friend, who cannot exist without you? How vain is the power which fate has given me, if I possess no influence over your heart?—Oh! come, and reanimate this disconsolate heart; restore me to emulation, and a sense of my duties: without you I am nothing, but with you I cannot fail to reign in splendour! Your mere presence will inspire me with the enthusiasm of virtue; it will bestow on me every good quality, even the courage which is necessary to moderate the ardour of that passion which alarms you”...:This seductive  
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tive language made but too much impression on the heart of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. A high-spirited, dignified monarch lay suppliant at her feet, with his eyes bathed in tears.— Mademoiselle de la Valliere became pale, her arms relaxed, and she loosed her hold of the cross. The king seized that moment, rose, and carried her off. “ Unfortunate,—” exclaimed Madame de Themine.— Lewis hastened away, while Mademoiselle de la Valliere, sighing, distracted, and scarce able to move, did not yield as if impelled by love, but allowed herself to be conducted like a victim. She lifted up her head, as she approached the gate, but it was only to experience a deep sense of confusion and shame, when she observed that the astonished nuns were enveloped in their veils, and lowered their heads, as if to avoid seeing her, when

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the gate was opened. — “Great God!” said she, “have I returned to this respectable asylum, only to profane it.” They now passed through the gate, which was instantly closed behind them. A carriage, with six horses, waited in the court. Thither Lewis led Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and seated himself beside her:—they drove off. The king renewed his vows of unbounded respect. He had the delicacy not to speak of his love, and dwelt only on his admiration and gratitude. Yielding to the charm of hearing him, Mademoiselle de la Valliere easily persuaded herself that he was sincere, and that henceforth he would require from her only the confidence of an intimate friendship. When she recovered herself a little, she enquired how he became acquainted with her flight; and the king informed her, that, while he was giving



giving audience to the Spanish ambassador, he heard her name mentioned, in a mysterious manner, by the Duke de St. Aignan, and the Marquis de Sourdis, who were conversing together, at a window. Recollecting the state in which he had left her the evening before, he approached, with anxiety, to the Duke de St. Aignan, and questioned him on the subject. The duke replied, that Mademoiselle de la Valliere had retired to the convent of Chaillot. The king then left the ambassadors abruptly, to order a coach; but, being too impatient to wait for it, he went into a stable, saddled a horse himself, and rode off, desiring his attendants to follow him to Chaillot, with the carriage\*. The king then observed that, as there was

\* This is an historical fact.

nothing criminal in his sentiments, and as the conduct of Mademoiselle de la Valliere was irreproachable, he would openly declare the truth. He would state that Mademoiselle de la Valliere had, without his knowledge, left the court, with a determination not to return, and that he had only done every thing in his power to bring back one who justly merited all his esteem, and possessed his confidence.

In fact, on his arrival at Versailles, the king immediately waited on the queen mother, and made a declaration to this effect. "Indeed," replied the queen, "you are not a master of yourself." "At least," replied Lewis, "I shall prove that I am the master of those who offend me.\*" He alluded to Madame, and the

\* These are the words which really passed between the king and queen.

Countess of Soissons, who could not dissemble their hatred to Mademoiselle de la Valliere. Her other enemies were cautious how they exhibited such sentiments; and even the Count de Guiche, and the Marquis de Vardes, notwithstanding their intimate connexion with Madame, and the Countess de Soissons, conducted themselves with so much address and hypocrisy, that the king was persuaded they wished well to Mademoiselle de la Valliere; and, under that idea, he continued to shew them his favour. He spoke also to the young queen, of the flight of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, which he attributed to the caprice and enmity of Madame. The queen, whether from prudence or credulity, shewed no signs of being offended. She treated Mademoiselle de la Valliere with more kindness than ever. From that moment, she



received her visits without Madame, and admitted her to her private parties,—a distinction which was not bestowed on any other of Madame's maids of honour. The king, at last, had a conversation on the subject with Madame. He began, by speaking to her in a tone of confidence: He avowed his tender attachment to Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and pronounced an eulogium on her virtue and her character. Madame, with a disdainful smile, replied, haughtily, “that she could neither be a party to such confidence, nor favour an intrigue of that kind.” She added, “that the authority of his majesty was the only thing that could induce her to continue Mademoiselle de la Valliere near her; but as she could now no longer be considered as personally attached to her, she would not take her in her suite, nor admit

her to her private parties; and that she would only receive her on those days on which her house was open to all who were presented \*." "It is my will," said the king, coldly, "that Mademoiselle de la Valliere should retain a place to which she does honour: in other respects, Madame, I prescribe no rule to you. I shall see her at her own house, without any mystery, and also at the queen's, where she will be received with the respect which is due to a person, whose conduct is irreproachable, and whom I revere as much as I love." At these words the king rose, and quitted Madame, leaving her agitated by rage, almost to fury. The Count de Guiche was absent for fourteen days,

\* The reply of Madame is here considerably softened. To have stated the precise expressions she used, would have been a violation of good taste.

and Madame had no one to consult but the Countess of Soissons, who gave her violent counsel, which she was but too much disposed to adopt. She sent for Mademoiselle de la Valiere, to repeat to her what the king had said. But that was done in the most contemptuous manner, and with expressions which shewed that she entertained an injurious opinion of her conduct. Mademoiselle de la Valiere, in the ordinary circumstances of life, was easily intimidated; but she possessed as much elevation of soul as modesty. Still pure, and confident in the testimony of her own conscience, she considered it a duty not to allow herself to be degraded by this excess of injustice. "I shall obey the king," said she, "in not quitting a place he wishes me to preserve. I am happy to have it in my power to give him this proof of respect and attachment—



tachment——in doing so, I am certain I shall lose none of the dignity which belongs to an irreproachable character, nor sacrifice any of the reputation which a spotless conduct merits." The firmness of this reply confounded Madame. In a transport of passion, she exclaimed, "that she was not surprised to find that Mademoiselle de la Valliere now belied the appearance of mildness she had assumed." She accused her of falsehood and hypocrisy; and, at last, losing all reason, as well as all moderation, she declared that she would complain to the king of her *insolence*. "The king," replied Mademoiselle de la Valliere, calmly, "will not only refuse to believe what does not exist, but he will not even believe what has really happened, were any one tempted to give him an account of this scene. He never could be persuaded  
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that Madame had so far forgotten her own dignity." At these words, Madame, bursting with passion, ordered Mademoiselle de la Valliere to leave her presence. Mademoiselle de la Valliere obeyed, without saying another word. She preserved the strictest silence respecting this affair: but Madame, who had no opportunity of mentioning it to the king, because he no longer visited her, made a bitter complaint on the subject to the queen mother, who heard her very coldly, and gave no reply, except that of exhorting her to have more moderation. On the two following days, Madame having only her private parties, Mademoiselle de la Valliere did not attend them: but the next day, being that on which Madame received a large circle, it was her duty to be present.

She knew that the king would not attend it; and, for the first time, she  
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was decked with the superb bracelets which she had received from him, and which, till that day, she had never ventured to wear. The hands and arms of Mademoiselle de la Valliere were extremely beautiful, and these brilliant ornaments rendered them still more striking. She wore gloves, and, in order to avoid all appearance of affectation, she determined not to take them off but on sitting down to play. Chance, however, supplied her with a much more favourable opportunity. Madame, while the tables were arranging for play, in going through the circle to speak to the ladies who composed her court, dropped her fan. Mademoiselle de la Valliere, who, at that instant, was two steps from her, advanced, stooped, and took off her glove, according to the etiquette, in order to present the fan, which she had picked up. Upon offering



offering it, the sight of the magnificent bracelet, of which Madame preserved a lively remembrance, so painfully affected her, that she could not prevail upon herself to receive her fan from the hand of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and, darting towards her a contemptuous and angry look, desired her to place it upon the table. Mademoiselle de la Valliere obeyed, without betraying the least emotion. Immediately afterwards, she took off her other glove, and displayed the fine bracelets; every body admired them. When Madame sat down to play, the other maids of honour, observing her hatred openly directed against Mademoiselle de la Valliere, treated her with extreme coldness, in obsequiousness to Madame, whom nothing constrained, since the king was not present. But Mademoiselle de la Valliere was not, however, deserted

serted in this numerous assembly. All her friends were there; the duke and duchess of Saint Aignan, the duke de Langueville, still cherishing a hopeless passion; Beringhen, Benserade, the duke de Roquelaure, and the marquis de Saurdis: all these persons surrounded her, never quitted her during the whole evening, and appeared solely devoted to her. This conduct threw them into open and complete disgrace with Madame, who, afterwards, altogether excluded them from her parties.

The king, however, prevailed upon Mademoiselle de la Valliere, to receive him, sometimes, at her house, on condition that he should not come alone, and that she should be allowed to admit, at the same time, three or four ladies of the court, who had been disrespectfully treated by Madame, and who found an extreme pleasure in insulting her, by making

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ing their court to the king. The visits of the king to a young unmarried female, who, far from having the title of his mistress, displayed uniformly the same modesty, and the same principles, made a great noise at Saint Germain. The friends of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, publicly affirmed, that the king, in granting this extraordinary distinction, wished merely to make her amends for the injustice of Madame, and they added, in private, that Mademoiselle de la Valliere was the intimate friend of the king, because she had not agreed to become his mistress.

Those persons who disbelieve whatever is out of the common order of things, laughed at this opinion; while others thought, with greater reason, that Mademoiselle de la Valliere would sink under the danger to which she was exposed by her innocence



cence and inexperience. In short, the conduct of the king, and that of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, were admired by those generous and credulous people, who are usually called, in derision, romantic characters: in reality, such persons judge often erroneously, because they love with fervour whatever is most dignified on earth; the sublime in sentiment and virtue. This sublimity is, doubtless, extremely rare, but it is not ideal: happy they, who preserve always the noble illusion which exhibits it, or the hope of discovering it! The king, faithful to his promise, never went to the house of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, but when accompanied either by Beringhen, or the Duke de Lauzun. Certain of being beloved, perhaps, at the bottom of his heart, he expected every thing from time, but he considered it as due to his fame, to bestow on  
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Mademoiselle de la Valliere all the honours to which she was entitled by her virtues. To confound her enemies, and to deprive Madame of the power of calumniating her, not only did he never attempt to intrude upon her, without witnesses, but only saw her when surrounded by the company which resorted to her house. He affected never to seat himself by her side, nor to speak to her in a mysterious manner: he never uttered a word which could betray his affection; he never wrote to her: but he made himself amends for this constraint, by the delightful pleasure he felt in honouring the object he adored; by the happiness which he experienced in displaying his sentiments of admiration; in elevating her above all other females; and, lastly, by the satisfaction of avenging her innocence, and of humbling the pride of Madame. A  
conduct

conduct so virtuous, noble, and disinterested, served still more to increase the enthusiastic and dangerous attachment of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. Persuaded, by all that surrounded her, that every person, without exception, did justice to her character and sentiments, and that even her enemies, although endeavouring to calumniate her, yet, in reality, entertained the same opinion, she was led to consider this triumph over prejudice, as much less owing to herself than to the king, to whom she attributed all the merit of obtaining it: he alone, in her eyes, deserved all the praise and admiration. These delightful ideas afforded to her mind a serenity which she had never yet experienced, and which rendered her no less amiable than she was interesting. She charmed all those who approached her, by the elegance



elegance and justness of her remarks, by a graceful vivacity, an equanimity of temper, and an expression of sweetness, tenderness, and benevolence, which were never belied.

Such was the state of the court, when the Count de Guiche revisited it, after an absence of six weeks. He was terrified at the imprudence in which Madame had indulged: she herself, although as much irritated as ever, began to repent of her conduct. She saw, notwithstanding the elevation of her rank, how much the homage rendered to birth alone is different from that which is lavished by attachment. The Count de Guiche promised, beforehand, to avenge the injuries she had suffered. At the same time, however, he convinced her how necessary it was that she should make some concessions to the king, if it were only in appearance: he acted less  
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with a view to regain the friendship of the king, than to make it believed that a reconciliation had actually taken place, or at least to render this circumstance doubtful, which he knew would produce nearly the same effect on the minds of the courtiers, as the most complete certainty; since, in courts particularly, probabilities alone have a powerful influence on the conduct.

The count lost no time in endeavouring to bring about the wished-for reconciliation;—without informing Madame, who he knew would oppose such a step, he sought Mademoiselle de la Valliere, to whom he painted Madame, afflicted, forsaken, having a profound regard for the king, and unable to support a coldness which almost entirely separated her from him. Others, placed in the situation of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, proud

proud of receiving this voluntary confidence, would have replied with formal expressions of respect; but, in all the bitterness of offended pride, they would have exaggerated the resentment felt by the king, repeated their own personal injuries, and attached great merit to their mediation. Mademoiselle de la Valliere, however, replied with her usual candour: she displayed a sincere regret, at being the innocent cause of the disunion of the king and Madame, and evinced a sincere desire to see them reconciled. In short, far from wishing to assume any merit to herself in this affair, she advised the count to speak to the king, and carried her modesty so far, as not even to say she would support his application by her influence. On the following day, however, she wrote privately to Lewis, giving him an account of her conversation



sation with the Count de Guiche, and, urging every thing which she thought would be most likely to interest him in favour of Madame. The king visited Madame in private; they were much embarrassed, conversed with dryness, but honesty, and separated very little satisfied with the explanations which had taken place; nevertheless, the friends of Madame asserted, openly, that she had been charmed with the king. Lewis again attended the circle of Madame, and she caused it to be intimated to Mademoiselle de la Valliere, that she might re-appear among her other companions: here she frequently met the two queens, but they always treated her, if not with disdain, at least with extreme coldness.

The constraint which Madame had imposed on herself, and which was so much in opposition to her true character,

racter, still more increased her hatred towards an object that had deprived her of her former favour and credit, and forced from her a kind of reparation; in short, she saw her rival triumphant, adored, and yet irreproachable; black envy entered her soul, and banished hence every sentiment of justice and generosity. The winter passed in this way; the passion of Lewis assumed new strength, and produced a visible alteration on his temper: he became melancholy, absent, and pensive. In short, he wrote no more to Mademoiselle as a virtuous friend, but as a discontented and passionate lover. Mademoiselle de la Valliere now saw how much she had been deceived. Under the first influence of surprise and grief, which this discovery occasioned, she returned a severe answer, which threw the king into a state of despair.

despair. Angry and chagrined, the virtue which Lewis had so much admired, only appeared to him the blackest ingratitude: he swore to forget her. But how could he banish from his heart, and his imagination, the enchanting remembrance of a modest, sensible, and virtuous woman? When a lover recalls only the talents, the graces, and the beauty of his mistress, he may forget, or change, by comparing her to other females. But few objects of comparison are found, when he retraces the charms of candour, and of innocence! . . . . . Nevertheless, Lewis appeared cold and distant towards Mademoiselle de la Valliere. The Countess de Soissons fixed on this instant to introduce at court Mademoiselle de la Mothe Houdancourt, a young person possessing the most brilliant beauty, and who Madame immediately added



to the number of her maids of honour. The king was dazzled, and fell into the snare. This intrigue, however, which terminated in about two months, afforded but a slight interruption to his passion; he returned to Mademoiselle de la Valliere, with the most repentant submission, and with increased ardour; but inflexible, and fortified, perhaps, by the passing infidelity of the king, she persevered in the same line of conduct, in consequence of which Lewis fell into a profound melancholy, which produced a visible influence on his health. In this state of mind he longed to open his heart; Beringhen, and Benserade had only partly known the secret of his love; he now found the consolations of friendship necessary, and fixed on the Duke de Lauzun for his confidant. Among all his courtiers, this nobleman

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was the one whom he loved best. Lauzun had high ideas of chivalry, and a certain odd turn of mind, which naturally would have displeased the king, who possessed good taste and simple manners. But princes love originality, which is rarely to be found among those by whom they are surrounded! Custom and etiquette, which regulates their habits, compliments, and conversation, give to courtiers an insipid resemblance. The manners of Lauzun differed from those of all the others; he had an exalted attachment to the king, which he manifested on all occasions, by the most singular traits of conduct: a sincere and ardent enthusiasm gave to him the sole privilege of praising Lewis, with excess, in his presence. These eulogies, however far-fetched, and often extravagant, never resembled flattery, because they assumed the tone of passion;

sion. The king, as Madame de la Fayette ingeniously observed, *pretended that he laughed at him\**. But at the bottom of his soul all these follies amused him; his jests appeared to him poignant; and his devotedness affected him without limit. Besides the valour of Lauzan, his romantic gallantry and his magnificence pleased Lewis: he justly thought, that one possessed of such keen and brilliant wit, could never be ridiculous, whatever might be his singularities.

Lauzun, after receiving the confidence of the king, sought Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and solicited, in behalf of Lewis, an explanation, that is, a private meeting, which was refused. He became angry and empasioned, but could obtain nothing. Lewis, wounded and sincerely afflicted, had neither strength to over-

\* Memoirs of Madame de la Fayette.



come, or dissemble his chagrin. The same day he had an accession of fever, and next morning was so feeble that he could not leave his bed: the physicians declared his disease to be of a serious nature. The fourth day Lewis became delirious, and talked continually of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, —he called on her name, believed she was present, and spoke to her\*.

Mademoiselle de la Valliere, in the full possession of her intellects, suffered more than the king. Lauzun constantly conveyed to her exaggerated accounts of his danger, which wounded her to the soul; she became herself so ill, as to be obliged to lose some blood. Even the most incredulous were now convinced that Mademoiselle de la Valliere, although herself deeply enamoured, had resisted the passion with which, for more than a year, she

\* Bussy's Memoirs.

had inspired the king, although it was reciprocal. The state into which he had fallen, the profound melancholy which had preceded it, left no doubt as to the fact. The queen mother sent several times to enquire after her health, and Madame had the mortification to see almost the whole court feel a lively interest in her behalf. The king quickly learned all these circumstances. Lauzun induced him to hope, by informing him of all Mademoiselle de la Valliere had suffered, and promised to prevail on her to visit him in private. In fact, he next day ventured to make this proposition to Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and persuading her that the life of Lewis depended on her compliance, she consented to accompany him. At the decline of day, Lauzun conducted her through some galleries, not  
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much frequented; they descended a small stair-case, at the bottom of which was a door that opened into the apartment of the king, and of which Lauzun had the key. His majesty had left his bed to receive her, although he had still some considerable remains of fever. Lauzun, supporting Mademoiselle de la Valliere, approached Lewis with an air of triumph: he cast his sword and gloves at the feet of the king, exclaiming, "Sire, be you at all times the depository of my sentiments and my honour: who loves not thus, merits not to be loved\*." After this strange action, which was intended as a lesson to Mademoiselle de la Valliere, Lauzun walked on a terrace adjoining to the apartment of the king. Mademoiselle de la Valliere, was so much

\* Memoirs of Madame de la Fayette.



affected, that she could not articulate a single word; she regarded the king, who was so pale and thin as scarcely to be known. Lewis at once perceived the full extent of her attachment; he did not require to be told what she had suffered, or the excess of her love; it was visible in her countenance, and in the appearance of her whole person. He gently complained; every word insinuated itself to the bottom of the heart of Mademoiselle de la Valiere: he requested permission to visit her in secret, and, at last, obtained the consent she had so long refused. Terror for the life of Lewis had produced in her mind a fatal revolution, and annihilated, in a moment, projects the most wise and firm. . . . Mademoiselle de la Valiere had with her, at present, one of her kinswomen, who intended to remain

main, for a month or six weeks, at court; and she consented to receive the visits of Lewis, when her friend had departed. The joy and ecstasy of the king made her quickly perceive the importance of the engagement into which she had so imprudently entered, and she burst into tears. The king blamed her emotion.—“Alas,” said she, “I am about to sacrifice my reputation, and my repose:—but live—be happy!—” As she pronounced these words, she rose, recalled M. de Lauzun, and hastily left the apartment of the king.

A few days after this interview, the king was able to receive company, and transact business with his ministers. During the five weeks that he waited, with anxiety, for the meeting he had so long ardently desired, he directed preparations to be made for some grand fêtes, which were to con-

tinue during four days, and which were projected in compliment to Mademoiselle de la Valliere. At the end of a month, he set out, with his whole court, for Paris, to pass some time at the Louvre. Mademoiselle de la Valliere knew, beforehand, the intention of these entertainments, but she was ignorant of the plan. At first a tournament was held, opposite the Thuilleries, in a large enclosure, which retains to this day the name of *La Place du Carrousel*. Five troops of horse entered the lists at this tournament; the king was at the head of the Romans; his brother commanded the Persians; the Prince de Condé, the Turks; his son, the Duke d'Enghein, the Indians; and the duke of Guise, the Americans. This duke of Guise was celebrated by his enterprise on Naples, by his imprisonment, his duels, and the great number of his romantic intrigues. Some one observed,



observed, on seeing him run with the great Condé, "*Behold the heroes of history and of fable.*" The queen and the ladies of the court were seated under a canopy, to view the spectacle. The Count de Saulx, son of the Duke de Lesdiguiere, gained the prize, which he received from the hands of the queen mother. The second day, those who entered the lists were arrayed in the costume of the ancient chevaliers; the king represented *Roger*; all the diamonds of his crown glittered on his dress, and on that of his horse; he eclipsed all the lords of his court, by his magnificence, but still more by the grace and majesty of his figure. The chevaliers were preceded by heralds at arms, pages, and esquires, who carried their shields, on which were painted their devices, and verses, in letters of gold, composed by Benserade. Be-

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fore the commencement of the games, all the chevaliers paraded before the queen, and three hundred ladies, placed under triumphal arches, superbly decorated for the occasion\*. The device of the king was in allusion to the modesty and beauty of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. It was a half-blown rose, partly concealed under its leaves, with these words:—*Quanto si mostramen; tanto e piu bella*†, a device which might be applied to every young person, but which was intended for one alone. In passing under the triumphal arches, the king regarded only Mademoiselle de la Valliere: she was seated behind one of her companions: a vivid blush

\* Age of Lewis XIV.

† *The less she is shewn, the more she is beautiful.* See a collection of devices by Father Bouhours.

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overspread her beautiful countenance, the half of which was only perceived by the king; he, however, snatched a soft look; but, leaning to the other side, she was soon concealed from his view. Lewis cast his eyes on the device; he there found at least her image, especially at this moment, for the allegory was complete.

Four times the king carried away the prize; he was anxious to obtain this; for he fought under the eyes of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. But not receiving the prizes from her hand, he left them to be afterwards disputed by other chevaliers, to whom he abandoned them\*. The other feats were held in that part of the gardens of Versailles that were finished. The king was present, with his court, composed of about six hun-

\* Age of Lewis XIV.



dred persons, who, with their suite, had all their expences defrayed by him,—as well as others, who contributed, in any way, towards these entertainments. The king, and the youth of his court, represented all the divinities of fable. An elegant car first appeared, strewed with roses, in which Madame reclined, in the character of Aurora; next followed the chariot of the sun, conducted by the king, representing Apollo: this chariot, sparkling with gold, was eighteen feet high, fifteen in width, and twenty-four in length. The four ages, of gold, silver, brass, and iron; the celestial signs; the Seasons (among which, Mademoiselle de la Valliere represented spring); and the Hours all followed at the feet of this chariot. All was perfectly characteristic. The last chariot, that of Diana, (represented by the young queen) surrounded

surrounded by her nymphs, closed the procession. This chariot was of silver, decorated with garlands of poppy, and followed by Night and her attendants. The queen mother, and all the other spectators, were under arcades, formed of leaves and flowers, ornamented with five hundred glass and silver chandeliers, in which candles were lighted up towards evening: a railing of gold enclosed this vast square, which these divinities of Olympus slowly traversed several times, in the order we have described.

During this time, from a well-appointed orchestra, on the outside of the inclosure, there was heard vocal and instrumental music. The words of the airs, chanted in chorus, and composed for the festival, were full of delicate and satirical allusions to the personages who represented the heathen deities, and to the passions which  
animated

animated the court. Sometimes the music ceased all of a sudden, the march stopped, and one of the actors recited verses, composed in honour of the queens or princesses. Benserade, approaching the car of Apollo, addressed the following verses to the king :

Not Phæton's ambitious fate is thine ;

Nor Daphne's cruelty shall wake thy sighs ;  
He, too ambitious, perishes to shine,

And she, too cruel, from her lover flies !

Not in these fables we your fortune read ;

No woman flies you ! and no man can lead !

At the termination of these entertainments, and at the approach of night, numerous girandoles were lighted up ; and, beside these, four thousand large lamps served completely to illuminate the space, where the festivals were held. A moving mountain, tastefully illuminated, and covered with verdure, with flowering shrubs,



shrubs, and wood nymphs, advanced at the sound of field instruments: the god Pan was seen descending from it, followed by the Hamædryades, the nymphs of the meadows, and a great crowd of shepherds, who formed a dance, and who afterwards, laid out the tables: the nymphs, who had not danced, placed upon these tables all the delicacies which the woods and fields produced.

After the collation, the tables were removed: the mountain was then suddenly transformed into a theatre, on which was first represented *the Princesse d'Elide*, a production from the pen of Molière: various pastimes were exhibited between the acts of this drama, which was full of delicate and ingenious touches, calculated to please such an assembly. On the following day fêtes, of a different kind, but still more magnificent, were given.

given. In the park were erected numerous shops, filled with jewels and diamonds, purchased by the king, and all the ladies were invited to chuse that which best pleased their fancies. Afterwards, in order to give still greater brilliancy to this fête, another spectacle was brought forward, which accompanied the first representation of *Tartuffe*. When such fêtes present the union of every thing the most magnificent which gallantry, wit, and genius can devise, they leave behind them an indelible impression, although reason must doubtless censure such prodigality; but such amusements served, at least, under that reign, to encourage talents and advance the arts: far from inspiring, in general, a passion for luxury, they produced only a dislike to every thing which was mean and little; it is only a puerile  
taste

taste which ruins individuals. This noble magnificence of Lewis had no hurtful influence upon manners, because it was above all imitation: this prince did every thing in such a grand style, that, however much it might be admired, it could not be imitated. Besides, it was impossible that individuals, however generous they might be, should have such men at their command, to regulate and adjust their festivals, as Racine, Moliere, Quinault, and Boileau.

In the midst of all these voluptuous entertainments, and of every species of dissipation which could dazzle her, who was the object of them, the king frequently paid his court to Mademoiselle de la Valliere, in order particularly to recal to her recollection the private interview, which she had promised to grant him. This imprudent promise was not forgotten,



gotten, but how could she retract it? The king, two days afterwards, repaired privately to the apartments of Mademoiselle de la Valliere: he spent two hours with her: he was always respectful and reserved, but he no longer constrained the expression of his sentiments: for the first time, she presumed not to impose silence upon him.....She answered him involuntarily, and frequently without knowing it: did she comprehend herself, or, at least, did she perceive the force of these involuntary words, which escaped from the bottom of her heart? And did she know that a look, a smile, or a sigh, revealed her inmost thoughts?.....When Mademoiselle de la Valliere was left alone, she found it impossible to banish the reflections which crowded on her mind. She had granted one interview, and fixed another! She had participated in, she had

had authorised a criminal passion !..... Every one of these ideas excited in her a shivering and a painful emotion, which appeared to dissipate all the influence of passion : with a mind not vitiated, she could no longer blind herself, after a conduct so culpable : the reflections produced by remorse soon dispelled the illusions which her mind had unfortunately, but too much cherished. Having sunk in her own estimation, she could no longer depend upon herself : she saw herself on the brink of an abyss, the depth of which no illusion or imposture could conceal : she surveyed, attentively, shame and repentance, in their true colours. What hope of happiness could be allied with this frightful image ? She preserved nothing of her passion, but a sensibility that could not be overcome. Love, as to her, was henceforth despoiled of all

its charms: it might tyrannize over, but could not seduce her. subdued without being vitiated, she retained only one fatal error. She said, "*should I fly from him, he will not survive my loss.* Virtue may make me amends, but nothing could console him for my desertion: he would die"..... This sentiment fixed her destiny. . . . She passed this evening at home; in undressing herself for the night, she disengaged from her neck the cross of crystal, which she had received from her dying mother: "O inestimable treasure," cried she, "far dearer to me than life, I have profaned thee; and, in losing my innocence, have lost the only consolation which thou canst afford! . . . . I am no longer permitted to wear thee, but every day thou shalt be watered with the bitter tears of repentance!" —

Knowing that it was the intention  
of



of the king to revisit her the following morning, Mademoiselle de la Valliere was frequently prompted to fly from the court, and to seek an asylum in Touraine; an empassioned letter from the king, deprived her of all courage, without rendering her less irresolute. She saw him again at the house of Madame, where his presence, his conversation, and his manner, in some measure, reassured her confidence: she soothed her troubled mind by flattering herself she should summon courage to speak to him with frankness, with decision, and to solicit permission to absent herself, at least, for some time. An hour before the rendezvous, Mademoiselle de la Valliere went home to wait for the king: during this interval, she experienced the most violent and painful agitation; all the reflections which she had made in the morning, crowded upon her imagination. Terrified at her own temerity,

merity, she was unable to rest: she rose, traversed her chamber, cast her eyes upon the clock, and saw, with terror, the hour at hand; the least noise made her start. "O torment of an illegitimate passion!" cried she, sinking into an arm chair; "Ah! could I but have foreseen all that I suffer, what efforts would I not have made to prevent my ruin! What then, is there not yet time? .... But who will tear me hence! I am solitary and forsaken, and look in vain for the support of a friendly arm! .... Is flight then impossible?" .... As she pronounced these words, on looking wildly round her, she heard a soft step; her door opened; she was ready to faint; it was the king; her extreme trouble and confusion operated to embolden him; he knew how to avail himself of the ascendancy which the passion, the fear, and the timidity

timidity he had inspired, gave him in this interview. The victim of her own imprudence, Mademoiselle de la Valliere, while she preserved her principles, sacrificed virtue:—this was to immolate herself.

Whatever may be the caprices of chance and of fortune, there is in life only one revolution truly grievous and terrible; it is that which is produced in a generous and sensible mind, by a deviation from virtue, which rends asunder all the ties of duty: . . . What so frightful as to lose at once the happiness of self-esteem; to find no harmony between our sentiments and actions; still to possess in our heart the love of virtue, whilst we are treading in the paths of vice; to compare ourselves with horror to what we formerly were; to cast a glance of envy on the past, and to anticipate the future with terror and



dismay ! . . . In the midst of misfortune, the mind feels a charm in recalling the idea of departed joys, but the remembrance of innocence aggravates the torments of the guilty; their crimes dissever them from their past actions; they no longer reflect on them any honour; they belie them; they abjure them; what shall I say, they condemn them !—What a situation !—What derangement of the ideas !—What laceration of the heart !—and how much time must it require, in such a situation, to become accustomed to oneself, that is, to support, without despair, this frightful transformation ! . . . . Mademoiselle de la Valliere, bending under the weight of her guilt, opposed to the machinations of her enemies, and the haughty treatment of Madame, only a profound humility. She had formerly evinced, even in her presence,

presence, a mildness, joined to spirit, that repressed or diverted the desire of rendering her situation disagreeable; being, however, no longer supported by her conscience, and having nothing to reply to the calumnies of her enemies, she found herself without defence against their hatred.— This abasement, and the striking change in her conversation and manners, did not pass unobserved; and it was at first supposed the king had forsaken her; but this conjecture was quickly discovered to be groundless: then they examined the actions of Lewis—they reflected, and at last divined the truth!

Mademoiselle de la Valliere flattered herself her crime might yet remain undiscovered, or, at least, that it would not be certainly known. What then were her feelings, when, in a few months, she perceived she carried

about with her a proof of her dishonour?—Lewis could only calm her despair, by persuading her that it was possible, with the most perfect prudence, the secret might remain unknown. No person was the confidant of it—not even her own domestics. Lewis formally promised to confide nothing to Lauzun, and he kept his word. Notwithstanding this discretion, and the best-laid precautions, Madame and her friends were soon in possession of some mysterious intelligence respecting the two lovers, consequently their suspicions were known to the whole court, and regarded as certainties. The young queen alone remained ignorant in this respect. It was too dangerous to speak to her openly on this subject, as she would repeat what was said to the king; and it was, besides, an odious task. They vainly endeavoured to awaken her suspicions,



suspensions, without compromising their own character, by those equivocal expressions, that air of mystery, and that studied demeanour, which says so much. Sometimes they appeared to pity her, in regarding her rival—they sighed, shrugged up their shoulders, or affected in her presence to treat Mademoiselle de la Valliere with remarkable coldness. Madame, in particular, evinced towards this unfortunate woman the most revolting disdain. Mademoiselle de la Valliere turned pale, cast down her eyes, and stifled her tears. It was visible in her countenance, that not one of the insults she daily experienced had failed in their effect; she was unable to repel them; they wounded her proud and sensible heart, which judged itself with so much severity. Believing she merited such outrages, she always supported them with a melancholy

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lancholy resignation, without being able to accustom her mind to receive them with indifference. These malicious arts, however, failed to excite the distrust of the queen: she was jealous of Mademoiselle de la Motte, for whom the king had formerly a predilection; and this preconception, which, for a long time, occupied her mind, preserved Mademoiselle de la Valliere from becoming the object of her suspicions. Madame, and her friend, the Countess of Soissons, grieved at the inutility of their efforts to open the eyes of the queen, consulted, in a secret committee, the Count de Guiche, and the Marquis de Vardes; the last of whom proposed a plan the most extravagant and dangerous; but they hoped this baseness would prove the destruction of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and hatred, still less considerate than love, did  
not

not hesitate to adopt a measure, the employment of which promised a prompt and successful issue. Madame had in her possession a letter from the king of Spain, the queen's father, by means of which they were enabled to counterfeit his hand-writing, and to fabricate a letter, in Spanish, as if from him to the queen, in which was fully detailed the intrigue of Lewis and Mademoiselle de la Valliere. The letter concluded, by exhorting the queen to demand from Madame the dismissal of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. They conceived, justly, that, in time, the queen would detect the fraud which had been thus practised on her; but they flattered themselves, that, in the first instance, she would be its dupe—that she would never discover the authors—that she would complain to the queen mother, whom the king respected so much—



that she would require from Madame the banishment of Mademoiselle de la Valliere—and that at least this unfortunate woman, so mild, timid, and sensible of her guilt, would no longer appear, but remain for ever far distant from the court !

If we did not know the baneful effects which immoderate ambition, united to hatred, to envy, and wounded pride, produce on violent characters, it would be impossible to conceive that so vile a conspiracy should have been formed by persons of such rank, by women so young, and who, till then, had displayed so many amiable qualities.

As the king did not intend to sleep at Saint Germain, it was agreed that, the same evening, the Countess de Soissons should go to pay her court to the queen, and that she should slip, slyly, the forged letter into the  
bed

bed of that princess. This, in fact, was executed, but la Molina, a Spanish waiting-maid to the queen, having found this letter, instead of mentioning the circumstance to her mistress, gave it, the next morning, to the king. Lewis thought that he recognized, in this letter, the hand-writing of the king of Spain ; but, not understanding Spanish, he caused it to be translated, by la Molina, who, after having read it, told him, that the language was so bad, and so contemptible, that it could not be the performance either of the king, or even of a Spaniard. We may easily judge how great was the rage and indignation of Lewis. Anxious to have this affair immediately elucidated, his impatience did not allow him to wait for Lauzun, who at that time was not at Saint  
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Germain, but he instantly sent for the Count de Guiche. He trembled, on entering the cabinet of the king, when he saw and recognised the forged letter in his hand. He believed himself undone. The king, too much agitated himself to observe his confusion, quickly removed his apprehensions by charging him to discover the authors of this forgery. The count endeavoured to direct his suspicions towards Mademoiselle de Montpensier. Lewis replied, that he esteemed her too much, to think her capable of such baseness. The count did not persist, and promised faithfully to execute the commission given him. A few days afterwards, he impeached the Duke and Duchess de Navailles; and to this atrocious calumny he added several circumstances, which rendered it so probable, that  
the



the king did not doubt of its truth. Mademoiselle de la Valliere, whom he immediately informed of every thing that had passed, endeavoured in vain to mitigate his rage; but, notwithstanding her tears and solicitations, the duchess and her husband were both exiled. On discovering this event, however, la Molina told the king that she had discovered a circumstance which excited in her mind great suspicions against another person; and she recounted that the young Philippa, a little Spaniard, attached to the queen, having sat down behind a window-curtain, in the chamber of that princess, on the evening in which the letter had been put into the bed, saw the countess de Soissons enter alone, and by stealth, into the chamber, approach the bed, lift up the coverlid, and afterwards retire with precipitation. This account

count was conclusive. The king, upon this information, went to the house of the countess, and, without ceremony, affirmed, he had indubitable proofs that she was the writer of the letter.—When a man is detected in the commission of any crime, he may contradict himself, and his answers may be at variance with each other, but he generally persists in denying it; whilst the woman, who wants presence of mind, for the most part, instantly confesses every thing. In general, women cannot struggle against destiny. The Countess de Soissons, although naturally artful, admitted immediately that she had written the letter; but she had the meanness to accuse Madame, and the Count de Guiche. She was immediately commanded to leave the court. The Count de Guiche and the Marquis de Vardes were exiled, a punishment

ment too mild for such an offence: under a prince less generous they would have lost their liberty. The Duke and Duchess of Navailles were recalled; and Lewis, conceiving it necessary to make them an ample amends, bestowed upon the duke a place which he had long anxiously wished for, but which he had never ventured to solicit.

The king was much irritated against Madame, and, for some time, did not visit at her house, to which, however, at the pressing solicitations of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, he was induced to return. Madame was sufficiently punished in not having been able to injure the object of her hatred, and in losing, at the same time, the esteem of the king, her friend, her lover, and the hope of retaliation. All these intrigues sensibly afflicted Mademoiselle de la Valliere. “I have hitherto



hitherto only produced evil," said she, "it is I who have caused these disputes and these exiles: the sufferers have just reason to hate me! . . . . Ah! . . . . that at least they had not a right to despise me!" . . . . The bitterness of this last reflection was still farther aggravated by an incident which made a deep impression upon her mind. She had brought from Touraine a young waiting-maid, to whom she was extremely attached, because this young woman, having been educated with herself, had acquired greater knowledge and accomplishments than usually fell to the lot of persons in that situation.

Rosalie (that was her name) loved and revered her mistress; she always regarded her as a model of virtue, because she was ignorant of her love, and of her weakness. One day, bathed in tears, she fell at her feet, and avowed  
that,

that, deceived and seduced, she was about to become a mother. “Unfortunate Rosalie,” cried Mademoiselle de la Valliere, with extreme emotion.

“Ah! Mademoiselle,” replied Rosalie, “I know how inexcusable you think me!—But he evinced so much love!”

“Is he single?”—“O heavens! Mademoiselle, do you believe me sufficiently wicked to suppose I would have yielded to a married man?”—

This simple reply was distressing, and produced all the effect that might be expected on a delicate and sensible heart! Mademoiselle de la Valliere concealed her face with her handkerchief, and remained silent; Rosalie continued to intercede for pardon. “Ah! Rosalie,” said she, “would to heaven we had yet remained in the happy province where we were born! . . . But, however, since your lover is unmarried, you may yet become

become happy" — "Alas ! I mourn my guilt, and his inconstancy ; he abandons me !" . . . . "Has he then ever loved you ?" — "His passion was extreme ; it has undergone a change." "Is it possible ?" — "Yes, among men." At these words Mademoiselle de la Valliere shuddered, and the tears fell from her eyes in abundance . . . She embraced Rosalie, and promised never to forsake her.

Madame de Themine wrote constantly to her friend, who being no longer able to support the eulogiums she bestowed on her character, determined to make her the confidant of her guilt. But females the most sincere never make such confessions without some reserve ; she spoke only of her weakness, but concealed its consequences, She received from Madame Themine, a reply containing the following words :

"What



“What, I! cease to love you, when you are more than ever to be pitied! Ah! my friend, you have no need to paint to me the pains which wound your heart; in acknowledging your guilt, you have informed me what you suffer. One crime in a life so pure, is it not the most fatal reverse? . . . . Could you fear me? Could you suppose that, knowing you from your infancy, it was possible for me to *despise* you? . . . . If this melancholy secret be discovered, mankind, it is true, have a right to judge you with severity, to disbelieve your remorse, and your disinterestedness, and to believe you are alone actuated by a culpable ambition; but me, can I, at the bottom of my soul, mistake you; can I calumniate you a single instant in my thoughts? . . . . I boast not of my conduct, I have only to rejoice in my good fortune.

“I have

“ I have not quitted the happy solitude where, thanks to heaven, I am fixed for ever. Your example explains to me all the danger of the seduction which surrounds you, and, knowing that you have not been able to withstand it, I am taught to distrust myself. The error you deplore, instead of raising me in my own estimation, serves only to render me more humble. Do you not still entertain the same sentiments and the same opinions? Did you forsake them when you was misled? Doubtless not. The same relations still subsist between us:—your soul is unchanged. Our perceptions, our judgments, our feelings, are similar. Your affection is most dear to me. I am always proud of my friend; but, alas! with what bitterness are those sensations now intermixed. I participate your sorrows. The anguish which  
torments

torments you, and the tears which you shed, are all present to my mind. Your sufferings break my heart, and yet, I have no consolation to offer you. I love your sincere and profound repentance: it weighs heavy on you; but, were it even in my power, I would neither wish to relieve you from it, nor mitigate its force. Hitherto, I would have made any sacrifice to have saved you from pain; but now, to find you contented and happy, would be to me the greatest misfortune. How strange this subversion of ideas and sentiments!—My friendship for you is unchangeable. Your confidence, on the contrary, would, if possible, draw closer the ties, and the tender compassion I feel, renders it yet more lively. But your error has destroyed its charm! Ah! restore me that charm; you can yet restore it!---



it!—Why postpone the return to virtue, without which, you must want even the illusion of happiness. It would be uncommon! it would be noble to resolve, without hesitation, on the sacrifice which, assuredly, you must one day make! O my friend, it is not a rigid censor who condemns thee: it is the companion of thy infancy who with sighs recalls thee! Come—these peaceful shades, which were so dear to thee, are not changed: Return, and find once more in them the consolations of friendship and repose! Thou wilt bring back an inflamed, agitated heart; but a great action, once performed, inspires a thousand times more force, than was necessary for its execution. Thou wilt return triumphant, and say to me—‘when I was under the strongest influence of passion, and when I was the object of the most flattering

flattering adoration, I tore myself from all the seductions of love! Come then let us weep together: consider, that time always dissolves criminal bonds: have courage then, and instantly burst them asunder---dare to break a shameful chain---a chain which is at once ponderous and fragile, and can only fix an indelible stain on those who are so infatuated as to persist in wearing it.

“ Would you persevere in so dreadful a course? No, I am sure you must, at the first step, recoil with a horror, which will for ever confirm you in the happy path of virtue; a path which you will never again quit, because you have learned that pain is the consequence of deviating from it. Repentance, when tardy, has the appearance of lassitude, but how noble is it, when accompanied with all the lustre of youth and beauty. Shall

Shall I go for you? Say but the word, and I will set out that moment. It seems to me, that the ardent friendship, the pure affection I feel for you, ought to give me over you the authority of a mother. Alas! if thy parent existed, she would open to you her arms: could you refuse to throw yourself into them?--- Come to me;---I supply her place;--- I have all her tenderness;--- I feel all the sorrow she would have experienced! Recollect, that, when dying, she ordered me to watch over your future life. I owe it, therefore, to the memory of my benefactress, and, above all, to our friendship, to require of you this prompt and rigorous sacrifice; but are not my prayers and my tears sufficient to obtain it? Would you prefer the transient pleasure of a day, the fleeting passion of a season, to the permanent



manant consolations of virtue? You are afraid to afflict him, who has ruined you; but have you no pity for your faithful friend? A royal lover may find means to divert his grief, and compensate his loss. But how shall I avoid your image, in a spot where every thing reminds me of those days of innocence and happiness which we spent together?—How painful will be my sensations, when passing through the walks of young willows, where every tree still bears the initials of *Louisa* and *Eudovia*—in those meadows, which recal all the sports of our childhood—in that forest, where, during our long walks, we formed so many virtuous projects. Tell me not, *there is no longer time*. At nineteen, an extensive prospect of life lies before us, and the error of a moment ought not to pollute, at once, the future and the past. Hasten to

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me then. When you breathe again your natal air, such is its pure, mild influence, you will imagine you have commenced a new life, and recovered all your former innocence. If you hesitate, an odious celebrity will soon be the result of your weakness. You will no longer be able to disguise your situation, and friendship, abashed, will be incapable of defending you. Your name will be conveyed to the extremities of the earth, but you will be known only for your dishonour. The most reserved of women will be rendered the most conspicuous. Her modesty and dignified feelings will prove her torment.—Her noble qualities will only add to her confusion, and augment the poignancy of her regret. But what will become of me? I, who used to take so much pride in your virtues and in your reputation. What will be my feelings, when

when I shall no longer be able to hear your name mentioned without blushing?

“ If, notwithstanding my wishes, and my pressing solicitations, you give me a refusal, still I will expect you.—My arms shall always be open to you. I never can visit the place you inhabit, except to tear you from it. But I shall always be ready to receive you. Dear, unfortunate friend, adieu! If ingratitude and inconstancy should one day make you heave a sigh, recollect that there is yet one heart, which knows no change towards you: a heart still faithful, feeling, and compassionate—*that of your Eudoxia!*”

The grateful enthusiasm with which this letter inspired Mademoiselle de la Valliere was so powerful, that, if her situation had permitted her to undertake so long a journey, she would

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have



have departed immediately; but, in the condition she then was, how could she return to her own province, and appear before her friend. She replied, in expressions of the most lively sensibility, and made a formal and sincere promise to quit the court in two or three months.

Mean while the crisis which was so terrible, and so much feared, arrived at last. Mademoiselle de la Valliere having suffered, in silence, during a whole day, felt, towards evening, such violent pains, that she sent notice to the king, who hastened to her immediately, with the physician, to whom he had entrusted the secret, a nurse, and Mademoiselle d'Artigni, now the Marchioness de Sourdis. The pains of Mademoiselle de la Valliere were greatly prolonged by the constraint she imposed on herself. Afraid of being heard, she allowed not a cry, or  
a groan,

a groan, to escape her. The physician exhorted her not to repress the expression of her pains. "Ah!" replied she, "I have no right to complain." Lewis never appeared so tender, and so passionately fond. He would not leave her for a moment. Bathed in tears, he every moment put questions to the physician, and no answer could satisfy him. He saw her pain—he feared the worst—he cried, wildly, *Save her! Save her! My life depends upon hers! Save her, and all I possess is yours.*

It was not until the next morning that Mademoiselle de la Valliere, forgetting her pains, her fears, and her shame, found herself a mother, and clasped her child in her arms! The king, in his transport, embraced all, who were in the apartment. His joy was no less than had been his sorrow. Proofs of so great tender-

ness still more inseparably riveted the attachment of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. How powerful is gratitude when united with love ! From that moment the engagement formed with Madame de Themine was retracted. A vow, which cost less, was taken. She promised, from the bottom of her heart, never to abandon him who knew so well how to love !

Mademoiselle de la Valliere, after a few hours rest, awaked in a kind of fright, her mind being impressed with the idea of the queen's coming at noon to her chamber. In fact, this princess, who went every day to mass, in a private chapel, was in the habit of passing through the apartment of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, to avoid a long winding passage. It was, at first, proposed to prevent her entrance, but Mademoiselle de la Valliere, to avoid every suspicion, formed



formed suddenly the stranger's resolution of receiving her. She caused the room to be filled with flowering plants. Her bed was surrounded by them, and she inhaled a perfume, which, in her situation, was dangerous to her. But, though she believed she was endangering her life, she hoped to save her honour. The queen came: all the doors were thrown open, and she was told that Mademoiselle de la Valliere was indisposed. The queen, perfumed with amber, approached the bed of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, and spoke to her with great kindness. Half an hour after, Mademoiselle de la Valliere fainted. Next day, however, she had the courage to rise and dress herself to receive the queen, to accompany her to the chapel, and, in the evening, to appear, for a moment, in the circle; at Madame's.

Notwithstanding so much courage and precaution, this event was un-

known only to the queen : every one else was informed of what had passed, and Mademoiselle de la Valliere had not even the consolation of deceiving herself in that respect. A thousand circumstances convinced her that her dearest secret was published. She redoubled her schemes of caution and concealment. Too ingenuous, and too sincere, to dissemble her sentiments, she wished, at least, that no one should be able to reproach her with open indecorum ; and that if she could not altogether escape suspicion, no one should have the dreadful right of accusing her with certainty.

The passion of the king, far from diminishing, seemed daily to increase. The gentleness and sensibility of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, even her remorse, and the mystery with which she endeavoured to cover her conduct, served always to renew the charms

charms of their meetings, and to augment the ardour of their love. It was vainly calculated that a passion, which had lasted more than three years, must be on its decline; and new attempts were still unsuccessfully made to entrap the heart of Lewis. Neither the beauty of Madame de Monace, or of Madame de Soubise, nor the seductive graces of the Princess Palatine, could detach Lewis from her whom alone he loved, and who possessed all his confidence. No advantage was obtained, except that of exciting some alarm in the heart of Mademoiselle de la Valliere. Her anxiety, expressed with all the delicacy of the tenderest sentiment, served only to render her more interesting in the eyes of her lover, and his care in removing her uneasiness, rendered still more striking the love with which she inspired him. Hatred is less sti-



mulated by vengeance, than by fruitless efforts. Of all the passions, it is most fed by vain desires and deceitful hopes. The enemies of Mademoiselle de la Valliere, became more ardent in proportion as the constancy of the king, and the excess of his passion obliged them to conceal their animosity, and assume the appearance of moderation.

The health of the queen mother had been long declining; her disorder suddenly grew worse, and the physicians declared it mortal. The king, who was the most affectionate and best of sons, displayed, on this occasion, a sensibility truly affecting. Mademoiselle de la Valliere shared his sorrows, mingled her tears with his, and was transported with joy to see him so worthy of being loved. During this last illness of the queen, she never left Madame, who remain-

ed constantly in the apartment of the dying princess. The king was deeply afflicted, and every one else appeared to be no less sorrowful. Mademoiselle de la Valliere experienced an inexpressible pleasure in weeping freely with the king, notwithstanding the presence of so many witnesses; in publicly uniting herself to his regret, his wishes, and his sentiments; in expressing truly all that others pretended to feel; in no longer confining the emotions of her heart, while every one else regulated theirs by his: and, finally, in the thought that she alone could console him! She saw him pass three successive days and nights by his mother's pillow, without quitting her for a moment, even to change his dress. She saw him faint at a time when the queen, being about to fall asleep, closed her eyes. Lewis, believing she

had expired, became immediately senseless. The queen died of a cancer, which had an effect so very offensive, that her attendants could not approach her until they had bathed themselves with spirits. Lewis, however, took none of these precautions. Seated by his mother's pillow, and within the curtains of her bed, he constantly held one of her hands in his. He passed days and nights with his head close to the diseased bosom of her who gave him life ; and, doubtless, his filial piety was a salutary balm, which mitigated her sufferings. On the evening of her death, the queen gave her will to the king, begging of him to read it with attention, to make such changes as he might think proper, and afterwards to sign it. Lewis signed it immediately, without reading it. After her death, though he



he was unwell, he proceeded immediately to business. It was a duty which he had the courage to perform: but six weeks elapsed before he appeared in public. To the memory of this dear and respected mother, he paid the most pointed attention. It was at this time, he ordered that beautiful medal to be struck, the design of which he planned himself. It represented, on the one side, the profile of Ann of Austria; on the other, Religion and Modesty, embracing, and reclining on an altar.\*

The king had long burned with the desire of rescuing Mademoiselle de la Valliere from the imperious authority of Madame, and of relieving himself from a disagreeable constraint, by pub-

\* See the work, with engravings, by Pere Menetuar, on the medals struck during this reign.

licly declaring the criminal choice of his heart. The certainty of mortally afflicting the queen mother had hitherto alone been capable of repressing so violent a desire: but feeling this restraint no more, he was now desirous of realizing a project which had long been dear to him. He suggested it to Mademoiselle de la Valliere, who opposed it with equal force and sincerity. The first objection was, the just sorrow which such a circumstance would cause to the queen. "You deceive yourself respecting her sentiments," replied Lewis: "I assure you she has no passion for me." "Ah! that is impossible," exclaimed Mademoiselle de la Valliere: "O, I conjure you do not add to the weakness with which I have to reproach myself, the crime of insulting and afflicting virtue: I am sufficiently guilty, do not render me

me odious; but, above all, consider your own glory, which is now also mine, for I can have no other! Leave to me the oblivion of the world; obscurity, if it be possible: splendour and fame would, to me, yield only shame. Ah! since I have ruined myself for you, at least preserve for me that unstained reputation, of which I have still a right to be proud. What sentiment of honour would remain to elevate my soul, if you ceased to merit the enthusiasm you now inspire? The admiration with which you are regarded cannot justify me, but it excuses me, and, above all, it consoles me. Do not lessen that admiration, by publicly testifying a contempt of conjugal fidelity;—by giving a daring example, which cannot fail to have a most pernicious influence on public morals? Your foibles will be respected so long as you seem



seem careful to conceal them, and while they cannot be discovered but with difficulty. But what indulgence will be due to you if you publish them yourself? What too would be my despair, to see the public veneration for you decay, and to know that I was the fatal cause of the change!—Adduce not the example of your grandfather; he loved only ambitious women, who were solicitous of obtaining the shameful title of favourites. They braved hatred and contempt, in order to rule and accumulate riches. Would you confound me with them? Would you have history transmit my name to posterity among names already marked with dishonour.”

The king was affected by this noble resistance, and appeared to yield to the force of the reasons she urged, but he was far from renouncing a project

project to which he attached all the happiness of his life.

Some time after this conversation, Mademoiselle de la Valliere followed Madame to Compiègne, where the court remained for six weeks, and the king frequently hunted in the forest. On one of those occasions Mademoiselle de la Valliere was, during the chase, in the carriage of Madame. Her eyes were fixed on the king, who, on horseback in particular, surpassed all the brilliant youth by whom he was surrounded, for no man ever rode with more grace and spirit. His majesty, wishing to cross part of the ground, was stopped by a broad ditch. Some of his attendants advised him to return by the way he came, and Mademoiselle de la Valliere trembled, when she heard him say, with a smile, that no obstacle should ever make him turn back.—In truth, what danger

ger can dismay the lover when he is animated by the presence of his mistress? Lewis spurred his horse, and instantly cleared this enormous ditch, but the animal fell, after the effort, and threw the king. Mademoiselle de la Valliere saw nothing more. She gave, from the bottom of her heart, a sigh which seemed to be her last, and, closing her eyes, sunk down without sense or motion. The king had broke his arm; but, notwithstanding the great pain he felt, he rose immediately. Madame's carriage rapidly approached him; but, in this moment of trouble and alarm, no one thought of assisting Mademoiselle de la Vallière, who was still in a swoon. The king was requested to enter the carriage, and he consented. When he saw Mademoiselle de la Valliere pale, inanimate, and motionless, with her head lying on the shoulder of the lady



lady who sat next her, he then began really to feel pain.—“Great God!” he exclaimed, “attend to her—” saying these words, he seized a smelling bottle, which Madame had drawn from her pocket, and held it to Mademoiselle de la Valliere. She opened her eyes, perceived the king, and melted into tears—the tears of Lewis were mingled with hers. Madame, secretly offended, sought to avenge herself, by affecting to shew how much embarrassment she felt on account of this scene. It was in her power to have diminished its notoriety, by testifying, on her own part, some sorrow for the accident which had caused it; but her cold, distant air served only, by the contrast, to render the extreme sensibility of Mademoiselle de la Valliere more striking.

At this moment, no one attempted to express so much regret for the king's

king's misfortune, as on any other occasion they would have affected to feel. Every one, in some degree, secretly envied the involuntary emotions which had betrayed so passionate an attachment. It was evident that all other testimonies of affection would now appear feeble. In such a situation, when it is impossible to surpass, or even to equal, what has been already done, this sort of flattery is renounced. There is too much discouragement to feign it, and vexation often gives the appearance of insensibility, where it really does not exist.

After Mademoiselle de la Valliere was recovered, she observed one of the king's carriages approaching, and wished to leave Madame, in order to make more room for the king. This, however, Lewis would not permit, but went himself into his own. It was not known

known that his arm was broken, but from the report of the surgeons. How much did Mademoiselle de la Valliere admire his courage! how tenderly was she affected by so much love. Her anxiety for the situation of the king prevented her from reflecting on the imprudence of her conduct: but Lewis knew how to take advantage of what had passed. He observed to her, that, after so public an expression of their attachment, it would be in vain to pretend to make any longer a mystery of it. He added, that he could no longer see her subject to the pride and affected disdain of Madame. In a word, he pressed, conjured her with the most earnest solicitations:—he was sick, and in pain:—still, however, he could not procure from her a formal consent,—but he conducted himself as if he had obtained it.

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The magnificent buildings at Versailles were almost finished. As soon as the king found himself convalescent, he proceeded with all the court to this spot, which was of his own creation. He purchased the Hotel de Biron, with an intention of giving it to Mademoiselle de la Valliere. When every thing was ready for the execution of this design, he bethought himself of the two children still in the cradle, of whom Mademoiselle de la Valliere was the mother. He purchased the estate of Vaujour, which he created for her into a duchy, in her own right, and gave to her the title of Duchess de la Valliere, which, from that time, she always bore at court.

It was in vain that the greatest monarch in the universe exerted all his influence to elevate the object of his love. The unfortunate Duchess de la Valliere,

Valliere, notwithstanding all the splendour of her new fortune, felt herself more than ever weighed down by an accumulating load of shame!—After the public act which secured to her children the rank of princes of the blood, she earnestly entreated the king to allow her to live in retirement, at Versailles; and she rejected all his presents, till urged, by the united influence of love and authority, to accept them.

Sovereigns may confer rank, and bestow riches; but neither rank nor riches can redeem virtue. The splendid favours which Mademoiselle de la Valliere was continually receiving from the king, only furnished her with fresh subjects of self-reproach. It was impossible to take leave of Madame; she could not support her presence; she requested her dismissal

sion in the most respectful manner; and, penetrated with a sense of profound humiliation, shut herself up in the superb mansion, which love had embellished on her account. “Here, then,” said she, “behold me ranked in the despicable class of proud and sordid females, whom impartial history has for ever stamped with the badge of infamy! The pageantry with which I am surrounded, while it manifests my shame, deprives me of every thing that could palliate it. Alas! I have sacrificed myself, and mankind will be persuaded that it was to gratify my ambition! What is this, in fact, but to appear the declared mistress of a king?—the most celebrated courtesan of a nation!—Oh! how is it possible to support this load of ignominy!” This painful reflection made so strong an impression



pression on her mind, that, notwithstanding the entreaties of the king, she remained upwards of fifteen days in a state of seclusion, before she could resolve to go abroad, and receive even her most intimate friends.

There had been placed, in her chamber, a jewel-box, filled with diamonds and precious stones: all of these she sold, and, with the money which they produced, founded two hospitals: the one for poor old men, and the other for the education of young female orphans.

The king expressly required that Mademoiselle de la Valliere should reappear at court; but when, in compliance with this request, she left her own house, she was struck with terror at seeing, around her carriage, a multitude of people, whom curiosity had collected: she conceived that an expression of insolent contempt, or of

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concealed hatred, was visible on their countenances. Pale and trembling, she scarcely dared to raise her eyes, and her distress was still more augmented on entering the chateau: all the courtiers whom she met eagerly crowded around her, but this homage served only to increase her shame. She had nearly fainted, on appearing in the presence of the queen: she could not utter a single word: her emotion was so evident, that even the queen appeared to pity her: she spoke to her with that condescension which uniformly characterised her: the duchess was very respectful, and her eyes were filled with tears: her feelings were much less injured by the conduct of Madame, who received her with the most chilling indifference.

The Duchess de la Valliere flattered herself, it would not be necessary that she should frequently return  
to

to court : never since her connexion with the king, did she find herself so unfortunate : never had her remorse produced so much bitterness : a tragical event filled up the measure of her misfortunes.

The Marquis de Bragelone, who had formerly conceived for her, at the chateau de la Valliere, a very ardent and tender passion, still retained the same sentiments, notwithstanding an absence of five years. Madame de Themine had, for a long time, spoken in high terms of the duchess ; but, although she afterwards ceased to write, the marquis, being always at a distance with his regiment, attributing the interruption of this correspondence merely to the difficulty of transmitting letters, experienced no uneasiness : he thought only of rendering himself worthy of her whom he adored : he distinguished himself in several bril-

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liant actions. The reputation which he should acquire, by augmenting his hopes, seemed to increase his passion ; and, influenced by enthusiastic sentiments of love and glory, he availed himself of some moments of leisure and liberty to fly to Versailles, wholly unconscious of what Paris had known for several weeks. Having travelled with the greatest haste, and having questioned no person upon the road, he immediately, on his arrival at Versailles, enquired after Mademoiselle de la Valliere, in the suite of Madame. This question appeared strange, and the answer operated as a stroke of thunder on this unfortunate lover !... What a misfortune to lose, at once, suddenly, all the illusions which gave a charm to life, and every hope of happiness and consolation !... A dreadful oppression rendered him speechless for some minutes ; but very soon  
collecting

collecting all his energy: "I will go," said he, "and, before taking an eternal farewell, see her once more!"... He hurries to the Hotel de Biron. In order to secure a more ready access, he contrives to say, that he came from Madame de Themine: on pronouncing this name, all the gates are immediately opened; no enquiry is made as to his own. He traverses, with an indignation which oppresses him, a long suite of magnificent apartments. He afterwards enters a closet, where he discovers Madame de la Valliere more beautiful, more affecting than ever, alone, in the melancholy and dejected attitude of a person, buried in a profound reverie. She was sitting on a sofa, opposite to a large portrait of the king... At the unexpected sight of the Marquis de Bragelone, she starts, blushes, and covers her face with her hands.... He

stopped a few paces from her; and, supporting himself against a table, pale and motionless, he regarded her attentively... She thought he was a spectre...

“Ah! fly,” said she; “fly! an infamous woman! wholly unworthy your affection!” . . . . . “Fallen angel!” he exclaimed. At these words, the duchess could not restrain her tears. “Alas!”—replied he,—“would that I could also weep!” . . . Oh!” continued he,—“thou, whom I adored as the model of every virtue, I discover yet in thee that celestial image, and my greatest torment is to discover, on beholding thee, that thou hast not gone astray, without losing, for ever, even the shadow of repose! . . . . Alas! you were bound by no promise to me! I have no reproach to make; I know it: but, in ceasing to admire you, I lose the idea of happiness, and all the happy enthusiasm



thusiasm of an ardent and virtuous mind. . . . . On seeing you the victim of seduction, I have ceased to exist!" . . . "Ah!" said the duchess, "at least reputation and glory will console you!" . . "Glory!" . . replied he; "and for whom should I fight? what hand could bestow upon me the reward of valour?" On pronouncing these words, he cast his eyes on the portrait of the king: he groaned, and after a moment's silence,—"Farewell!" . . . said he,—"farewell! . . . hope—emulation—ambition—patriotism—you have destroyed all the sentiments of this lacerated heart! . . . this is to root out life! . . . . . farewell!" . . . . Then, making a last and powerful effort, he rushed out of the apartment. Hardly had he reached the bottom of the staircase, when he saw the king's chariot enter the archway; he leaned upon the ballustrade,

saying, with a voice almost inarticulate, "This is too much!" . . . The king sprung out from the carriage, and passed so quickly, that he saw not the unfortunate Bragelone placed side-ways by the staircase, and half concealed by a massy ballustrade covered with gilding. Exerting, however, his remaining strength, to tear himself away from this fatal spot, the marquis staggered on a few steps:—but a thick cloud obscures his sight; he calls his people, and falls senseless under the arch-way. They place him in his carriage, and convey him to an inn: he recovered the use of his senses: but a frightful paleness, convulsive startings, and oppressed respiration, but too clearly announced his imminent danger. His host, and his people sent in search of a physician. "Ah!" . . . said the Marquis, putting his hand to his heart, "The

“The stroke is there! . . . . it is mortal!” . . . . In fact, all aid was useless. This unfortunate nobleman, at the end of a few hours, breathed his last!—

Madame de la Valliere was deeply and painfully affected by this deplorable catastrophe. “Alas!” said she, “had I preserved my innocence, he would now have lived! . . . . . He could not exist without esteeming me! That heart, so noble and generous, could not support the disgrace of her whom he loved! . . . . And as for me, I live in spite of remorse! . . . I neither can, nor ought to stifle this sentiment—every thing excites and augments it; nevertheless, I must conceal it! . . . . and especially from him who has caused it! . . . . Could he be happy were he acquainted with the real sentiments of this heart, always at variance with itself, always irresolute, although humble? Could



he esteem me, when I am constantly forming the dreadful project of bursting asunder the tender ties which connect us? Thus, in order to secure his peace, and not to diminish his happy security, I am compelled to deceive him, to conceal from him my repentance, and to appear in his eyes more unworthy his esteem than I am in reality! . . . . . Nevertheless, days and years glide away! . . . . .—Great God! . . . . . Shall I grow grey in this career? Ever agitated, ever irresolute, regretting the past, viewing the future only with dismay, abhorring vice, without being able to return to virtue, too feeble to yield to remorse, and too sensible and too constant to triumph over an unfortunate passion! . . . Ah! . . . I would not desire to extinguish it—I have never formed this chimerical wish! . . . But, would to heaven that I had the courage

rage to sacrifice it ! . . . . How 'can we cease to love, since oblivion is impossible ? Yes—if he could exist without me, I should be more happy at a distance from him, supported alone by his remembrance ! . . . . In the most profound solitude I should hear him spoken of, and his glory celebrated throughout France ; I should live under his empire and his laws ; I should love him in silence, and without reproach ! . . . . I should weep without bitterness, I should fear nothing from the influence of time, of rapid and destroying time, which unceasingly preys upon youth, graces, and beauty.”

Dwelling continually on such reflections, the duchess fell into a deep melancholy, which, notwithstanding all her efforts, appeared in all her actions, and in every conversation. Lewis was sensibly struck with this change : he lamented it with

anxious solicitude, and the embarrassed answers of the duchess did not tend to dissipate his apprehensions. He spent almost every evening at her house, with a few of her most intimate friends. Benserade observed, one evening, that Madame de la Fayette was composing a romance; and, on being requested to give some account of the work, he replied, "that her plan was to delineate the unhappy effects of an unfortunate passion." "Is this passion then not legitimate," said the duchess, sighing. "No," replied Benserade, "and it is an interesting female which experiences it."—"Does she yield then to her passion?"—"No, she resists it."—"Ah!" the author will not attain her end! she paints not all the torments which are occasioned by love.

Lewis, at the time, affected and wounded, put an end to this dialogue,  
by



by changing the conversation: When he was again alone with Madame de la Valliere, he still complained; and, for the first time, this was in all the bitterness of irritated self-love. The duchess, who possessed as much delicacy as candour, perceived, that he was particularly offended that she had spoken thus before witnesses; he wished it to be generally believed, that the woman he loved was perfectly happy. Nothing is so displeasing to souls of sensibility, as the susceptibilities of pride; they can pardon all the faults which flow from the heart, but they are severe on those produced by vanity. The duchess, offended in her turn, replied with vexation. "Lewis, surprised and irritated, did not dissemble what he felt, he expressed himself with a haughtiness which completed the disgust of the duchess." Princes, in love as well as in friendship, when irritated,

ritated, naturally assume a tone of superiority!—It is then, we clearly perceive this sentimental equality to be illusory, which they know how to maintain with so much grace, when every thing is in conformity to their wishes!---The duchess displayed a spirit which Lewis mistook for coldness, and he quitted her with ill humour and repressed anger, that resembled insensibility: he left her in despair.

Oh! how acutely is the first discontent, the first quarrel felt by a passionate lover! It is an event so extraordinary, so unforeseen!---The duchess remained confounded, and humbled with surprise and grief. He had spoken to her with anger, he had quitted her with coldness. She had suffered him to depart without endeavouring to soften his rage! And in this cruel disposition, he had been able to leave her for twenty-four hours!

hours !---After having traversed her apartments, he did not return ! What a disturbed and agitated night did she pass !.....The king, on his part, was not more tranquil ; he feared the love of the duchess towards him had abated ; he could conceive no idea of her remorse. He knew only, imperfectly, her religious sentiments, and he interpreted, in the most erroneous manner, the sadness he had observed in her, especially since she became an inhabitant of the hotel de Biron. Next morning he waited on the duchess, whom he could not find in any of her apartments : the attendants informed him, that she had descended, as was her daily custom, to the second story. This second floor of the hotel contained only the chambers of the domestics, and Lewis recollected that, on coming once before, at the same hour, he had received similar information. When the mind is  
in



in a state of discontent, the most trifling incidents become a source of uneasiness, and every thing singular inspires a sort of distrust. On the appearance of the duchess, she was pale and dejected, and the king conceived she approached him with an air of embarrassment; he enquired whence she came; she eluded, however, his question, which he pressed no further, but remained cold and absent. He came with an intention of soliciting forgiveness for the irritation he displayed on the foregoing evening, but he now avoided all explanation, and, shortening his visit, left Madame de la Valliere, more afflicted and more to be pitied than before. He secretly questioned a valet-de-chambre of the duchess, from whom he learned that she had selected, for her own use, in the second story, a cabinet, in which she regularly shut herself up every morning,

ing, at the same hour. Curious to penetrate into this mystery, he procured a key of the cabinet, which he entered unexpectedly one morning, when the duchess had retired to it; but what was his surprise at perceiving her alone on her knees, before a picture of her mother, which hung on the wall, along with the crystal cross she received from her on the morning of her death.... Surprised and startled; the duchess turned round, and displayed a face bathed in tears. ....

“Great God!” exclaimed the king, with the most lively emotion, “is it thus then that you love me? Every day you groan in secret!”.... “Ah!” replied she, “it is when you are not present!”.... “And me, I support your absence only by remembering you!”.... “Your image, then, produces the only charm of my life, and mine afflicts you!”.... “My tears flow from the heart; to weep is to love!”

“But

.... "But do we abandon ourselves to regret and melancholy, when we love and are adored? What brings you to this dreary and mysterious place? Do you come to nourish regrets which drive me to despair? Do you meditate my destruction? Do you form the project of abandoning me?—I here request of heaven a courage, which I am not able to attain?—Hear me; if you have the barbarity again to fly me, know that there is no sanctuary upon earth which can screen you from my love; you have given me the right to follow you; and, to whatever part of the world you retire, I shall find means to discover your retreat, to bring you back, and to keep you near me. The opinion of mankind, the fear of the noise which would resound throughout all Europe, nothing shall prevent me. Your loss is the only thing I possess not courage to support. I will never submit to  
such



such a terrible misfortune..... If you wish to transform a happy and submissive lover into a tyrant and a ravisher, fly me; but know for certainty, that henceforth, in spite of fate, and your inclinations, death alone shall separate me from you."

The king spoke with a fire and impetuosity that at first produced a kind of terror in the mind of the duchess. Nevertheless, even this violence delivered her from the punishment of continually meditating on a hasty retreat, or, at least, of repeating to herself that it was her duty to leave the court. It was consoling to think that such a plan was now impossible, or would only be productive of the most disgraceful scenes. With greater firmness of mind, she might easily have fled, and concealed herself, at least for a short time, until the king had become calm, when it was possible he might have approved

proved of her retreat. She possessed not, however, sufficient fortitude to execute this project, and she therefore loved to believe it was really chimerical. By ceasing to think of it, she experienced at least one torment less. Many others still remained behind! Her extreme delicacy furnished an inexhaustible source of distress. Almost every general conversation affected her, especially in the presence of the king. The eulogium of a virtuous woman was to her a reproach; she applauded her from the bottom of her soul,—but with what bitterness! . . . . The most frivolous discourse, even that which turned on romances, sensibly affected her. In these times, romances were so pure!—they condemned vice with so much severity! . . . . One evening, at her house, the king spoke of the famous Christina, queen of Sweden. He said, the greatest singularity

riety of this princess was that of being at the same time learned, simple, and unaffected; of having a grotesque appearance, without being ridiculous; of having odd manners, however agreeable; and an inexpressible charm, although she had neither taste, dignity, nor beauty. The king added, that, notwithstanding his aversion to learned women, he had found Christina as amiable as original, on her first journey, before the murder of Monaldeschi had inspired him with a just horror against her character.—Lewis afterwards related, that this princess had paid a visit to Ninon; on which some of the company remarked how indecent it was, in a young queen, among all the females of France, to attend only to a courtesan;—whilst it was answered, by others, that, however destitute of morals she might be, yet Ninon could not be considered in the light of a courtesan,



courtesan, because she had always refused the gifts of her lovers, and, when able to enrich herself, had remained contented with a small fortune, which she inherited from her parents.

Courtiers are so accustomed to regard the declared mistress of a great king, as a female who fills the most enviable situation at court, that no one imagined Madame de la Valliere would apply this last remark to herself; but the unfortunate duchess was oppressed by it; a profound humiliation blighted her soul; and, during the remainder of the evening, she found it impossible to assume the least part in the conversation. With what joy would she have quitted this ostentatious title, which recalled her shame! With what satisfaction would she have given back to Lewis all his debasing gifts!—Not being permitted to reject a fortune which love and  
pride

pride forced her to accept; she employed it for the most noble purposes. She was remarkable only for the most extreme simplicity; always attired with an elegance, which she owed to her natural taste, and the grace of her person, she had banished, as much as possible, from her dress, all pageantry, and every kind of expensive ornament; in short, she performed immense charities. Her solitary hotel, always shut against intriguers, was continually open to the unfortunate; and she, herself, frequently went to search for them. But, in diffusing so many benefits, she was far from believing that such generosity could repair, or justify, the irregularity of her conduct. She knew that the morals of her religion admitted no dispensation for the indulgence of criminal weakness; that a right to live in vice could not be purchased with money; and that, in order to  
expiate

expiate a crime, it is necessary to renounce it. "Doubtless," said she, "I may satisfy myself by opening my heart to pity; but in succouring the unfortunate, I, perhaps, corrupt them; they know what I am, and gratitude may enfeeble that salutary horror which is experienced in most minds against unlawful love; in serving the cause of humanity, I may injure morals!—It belongs then only to virtue to perform good actions with proper effect, or, at least, with perfect utility!"—These painful reflections, induced Madame de la Valliere to exercise her charity without any ostentation. At other times, when circumstances allowed, alms were distributed by her in the name of the king, without informing him of it.

END OF VOL. I.



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