

LOUIS SAINT-SIMON

MEMOIRS OF LOUIS XIV
AND HIS COURT AND OF
THE REGENCY. VOLUME
15

Louis Saint-Simon

**Memoirs of Louis XIV and His
Court and of the Regency. Volume 15**

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Содержание

CHAPTER CXIII	5
CHAPTER CXIV	11
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	14

Duc de Saint-Simon

Memoirs of Louis XIV and His Court and of the Regency – Volume 15

CHAPTER CXIII

Few events of importance had taken place during my absence in Spain. Shortly after my return, however, a circumstance occurred which may fairly claim description from me. Let me, therefore, at once relate it.

Cardinal Dubois, every day more and more firmly established in the favour of M. le Duc d'Orleans, pined for nothing less than to be declared prime minister. He was already virtually in that position, but was not publicly or officially recognised as being so. He wished, therefore, to be declared.

One great obstacle in his path was the Marechal de Villeroy, with whom he was on very bad terms, and whom he was afraid of transforming into an open and declared enemy, owing to the influence the Marechal exerted over others. Tormented with agitating thoughts, every day that delayed his nomination seemed to him a year. Dubois became doubly ill-tempered and capricious, more and more inaccessible, and accordingly the most pressing and most important business was utterly neglected. At last he resolved to make a last effort at reconciliation with the Marechal, but mistrusting his own powers, decided upon asking Cardinal Bissy to be the mediator between them.

Bissy with great willingness undertook the peaceful commission; spoke to Villeroy, who appeared quite ready to make friends with Dubois, and even consented to go and see him. As chance would have it, he went, accompanied by Bissy, on Tuesday morning. I at the same time went, as was my custom, to Versailles to speak to M. le Duc d'Orleans upon some subject, I forget now what.

It was the day on which the foreign ministers had their audience of Cardinal Dubois, and when Bissy and Villeroy arrived, they found these ministers waiting in the chamber adjoining the Cardinal's cabinet.

The established usage is that they have their audience according to the order in which they arrive, so as to avoid all disputes among them as to rank and precedence. Thus Bissy and Villeroy found Dubois closeted with the Russian minister. It was proposed to inform the Cardinal at once, of a this, so rare as a visit from the Marechal de Villeroy; but the Marechal would not permit it, and sat down upon a sofa with Bissy to wait like the rest.

The audience being over, Dubois came from his cabinet, conducting the Russian minister, and immediately saw his sofa so well ornamented. He saw nothing but that in fact; on the instant he ran there, paid a thousand compliments to the Marechal for anticipating him, when he was only waiting for permission to call upon him, and begged him and Bissy to step into the cabinet. While they were going there, Dubois made his excuses to the ambassadors for attending to Villeroy before them, saying that his functions and his assiduity as governor of the King did not permit him to be long absent from the presence of his Majesty; and with this compliment he quitted them and returned into his cabinet.

At first nothing passed but reciprocal compliments and observations from Cardinal Bissy, appropriate to the subject. Then followed protestations from Dubois and replies from the Marechal. Thus far, the sea was very smooth. But absorbed in his song, the Marechal began to forget its tune; then to plume himself upon his frankness and upon his plain speaking; then by degrees, growing hot in his honours, he gave utterance to divers naked truths, closely akin to insults.

Dubois, much astonished, pretended not to feel the force of these observations, but as they increased every moment, Bissy tried to call back the Marechal, explain things to him, and give a more pleasant tone to the conversation. But the mental tide had begun to rise, and now it was entirely

carrying away the brains of Villeroy. From bad to worse was easy. The Marechal began now to utter unmistakable insults and the most bitter reproaches. In vain Bissy tried to silence him; representing to him how far he was wandering from the subject they came to talk upon; how indecent it was to insult a man in his own house, especially, after arriving on purpose to conclude a reconciliation with him. All Bissy could say simply had the effect of exasperating the Marechal, and of making him vomit forth the most extravagant insults that insolence and disdain could suggest.

Dubois, stupefied and beside himself, was deprived of his tongue, could not utter a word; while Bissy, justly inflamed with anger, uselessly tried to interrupt his friend. In the midst of the sudden fire which had seized the Marechal, he had placed himself in such a manner that he barred the passage to the door, and he continued his invectives without restraint. Tired of insults, he passed to menaces and derision, saying to Dubois that since he had now thrown off all disguise, they no longer were on terms to pardon each other, and then he assured Dubois that, sooner or later, he would do him all the injury possible, and gave him what he called good counsel.

"You are all powerful," said he; "everybody bends before you; nobody resists you; what are the greatest people in the land compared with you? Believe me, you have only one thing to do; employ all your power, put yourself at ease, and arrest me, if you dare. Who can hinder you? Arrest me, I say, you have only that course open."

Thereupon, he redoubled his challenges and his insults, like a man who is thoroughly persuaded that between arresting him and scaling Heaven there is no difference. As may well be imagined, such astounding remarks were not uttered without interruption, and warm altercations from the Cardinal de Bissy, who, nevertheless, could not stop the torrent. At last, carried away by anger and vexation, Bissy seized the Marechal by the arm and the shoulder, and hurried him to the door, which he opened, and then pushed him out, and followed at his heels. Dubois, more dead than alive, followed also, as well as he could—he was obliged to be on his guard against the foreign ministers who were waiting. But the three disputants vainly tried to appear composed; there was not one of the ministers who did not perceive that some violent scene must have passed in the cabinet, and forthwith Versailles was filled with this news; which was soon explained by the bragging, the explanations, the challenges, and the derisive speeches of the Marechal de Villeroy.

I had worked and chatted for a long time with M. le Duc d'Orleans. He had passed into his wardrobe, and I was standing behind his bureau arranging his papers when I saw Cardinal Dubois enter like a whirlwind, his eyes starting out of his head. Seeing me alone, he screamed rather than asked, "Where is M. le Duc d'Orleans?" I replied that he had gone into his wardrobe, and seeing him so overturned, I asked him what was the matter.

"I am lost, I am lost!" he replied, running to the wardrobe. His reply was so loud and so sharp that M. le Duc d'Orleans, who heard it, also ran forward, so that they met each other in the doorway. They returned towards me, and the Regent asked what was the matter.

Dubois, who always stammered, could scarcely speak, so great was his rage and fear; but he succeeded at last in acquainting us with the details I have just given, although at greater length. He concluded by saying that after the insults he had received so treacherously, and in a manner so basely premeditated, the Regent must choose between him and the Marechal de Villeroy, for that after what had passed he could not transact any business or remain at the Court in safety and honour, while the Marechal de Villeroy remained there!

I cannot express the astonishment into which M. le Duc d'Orleans and I were thrown. We could not believe what we had heard, but fancied we were dreaming. M. le Duc d'Orleans put several questions to Dubois, I took the liberty to do the same, in order to sift the affair to the bottom. But there was no variation in the replies of the Cardinal, furious as he was. Every moment he presented the same option to the Regent; every moment he proposed that the Cardinal de Bissy should be sent for as having witnessed everything. It may be imagined that this second scene, which I would gladly have escaped, was tolerably exciting.

The Cardinal still insisting that the Regent must choose which of the two be sent away, M. le Duc d'Orleans asked me what I thought. I replied that I was so bewildered and so moved by this astounding occurrence that I must collect myself before speaking. The Cardinal, without addressing himself to me but to M. le Duc d'Orleans, who he saw was plunged Memoirs in embarrassment, strongly insisted that he must come to some resolution. Upon this M. le Duc d'Orleans beckoned me over, and I said to him that hitherto I had always regarded the dismissal of the Marechal de Villeroy as a very dangerous enterprise, for reasons I had several times alleged to his Royal Highness: but that now whatever peril there might be in undertaking it, the frightful scene that had just been enacted persuaded me that it would be much more dangerous to leave him near the King than to get rid of him altogether. I added that this was my opinion, since his Royal Highness wished to know it without giving me the time to reflect upon it with more coolness; but as for the execution, that must be well discussed before being attempted.

Whilst I spoke, the Cardinal pricked up his ears, turned his eyes upon me, sucked in all my words, and changed colour like a man who hears his doom pronounced. My opinion relieved him as much as the rage with which he was filled permitted. M. le Duc d'Orleans approved what I had just said, and the Cardinal, casting a glance upon me as of thanks, said he was the master, and must choose, but that he must choose at once, because things could not remain as they were. Finally, it was agreed that the rest of the day (it was now about twelve) and the following morning should be given to reflection upon the matter, and that the next day, at three o'clock in the afternoon, I should meet M. le Duc d'Orleans.

The next day accordingly I went to M. le Prince, whom I found with the Cardinal Dubois. M. le Duc entered a moment after, quite full of the adventure. Cardinal Dubois did not fail, though, to give him an abridged recital of it, loaded with comments and reflections. He was more his own master than on the preceding day, having had time to recover himself, we cherishing hopes that the Marechal would be sent to the right about. It was here that I heard of the brag of the Marechal de Villeroy concerning the struggle he had had with Dubois, and of the challenges and insults he had uttered with a confidence which rendered his arrest more and more necessary.

After we had chatted awhile, standing, Dubois went away. M. le Duc d'Orleans sat down at his bureau, and M. le Duc and I sat in front of him. There we deliberated upon what ought to be done. After a few words of explanation from the Regent, he called upon me to give my opinion. I did so as briefly as possible, repeating what I had said on the previous day. M. le Duc d'Orleans, during my short speech, was very attentive, but with the countenance of a man much embarrassed.

As soon as I had finished, he asked M. le Duc what he thought. M. le Duc said his opinion was mine, and that if the Marechal de Villeroy remained in his office there was nothing for it but to put the key outside the door; that was his expression. He reproduced some of the principal reasons I had alleged, supported them, and concluded by saying there was not a moment to lose. M. le Duc d'Orleans summed up a part of what had been said, and agreed that the Marechal de Villeroy must be got rid of. M. le Duc again remarked that it must be done at once. Then we set about thinking how we could do it.

M. le Duc d'Orleans asked me my advice thereon. I said there were two things to discuss, the pretext and the execution. That a pretext was necessary, such as would convince the impartial, and be unopposed even by the friends of the Marechal de Villeroy; that above all things we had to take care to give no one ground for believing that the disgrace of Villeroy was the fruit of the insults he had heaped upon Cardinal Dubois; that outrageous as those insults might be, addressed to a cardinal, to a minister in possession of entire confidence, and at the head of affairs, the public, who envied him and did not like him, well remembering whence he had sprung, would consider the victim too illustrious; that the chastisement would overbalance the offence, and would be complained of; that violent resolutions, although necessary, should always have reason and appearances in their favour; that therefore I was against allowing punishment to follow too quickly upon the real offence, inasmuch

as M. le Duc d'Orleans had one of the best pretexts in the world for disgracing the Marechal, a pretext known by everybody, and which would be admitted by everybody.

I begged the Regent then to remember that he had told me several times he never had been able to speak to the King in private, or even in a whisper before others; that when he had tried, the Marechal de Villeroy had at once come forward poking his nose between them, and declaring that while he was governor he would never suffer any one, not even his Royal Highness, to address his Majesty in a low tone, much lest to speak to him in private. I said that this conduct towards the Regent, a grandson of France, and the nearest relative the King had, was insolence enough to disgust every one, and apparent as such at half a glance. I counselled M. le Duc d'Orleans to make use of this circumstance, and by its means to lay a trap for the Marechal into which there was not the slightest doubt he would fall. The trap was to be thus arranged. M. le Duc d'Orleans was to insist upon his right to speak to the King in private, and upon the refusal of the Marechal to recognise it, was to adopt a new tone and make Villeroy feel he was the master. I added, in conclusion, that this snare must not be laid until everything was ready to secure its success.

When I had ceased speaking, "You have robbed me," said the Regent; "I was going to propose the same thing if you had not. What do you think of it, Monsieur?" regarding M. le Duc. That Prince strongly approved the proposition I had just made, briefly praised every part of it, and added that he saw nothing better to be done than to execute this plan very punctually.

It was agreed afterwards that no other plan could be adopted than that of arresting the Marechal and sending him right off at once to Villeroy, and then, after having allowed him to repose there a day or two, on account of his age, but well watched, to see if he should be sent on to Lyons or elsewhere. The manner in which he was to be arrested was to be decided at Cardinal Dubois' apartments, where the Regent begged me to go at once. I rose accordingly, and went there.

I found Dubois with one or two friends, all of whom were in the secret of this affair, as he, at once told me, to put me at my ease. We soon therefore entered upon business, but it would be superfluous to relate here all that passed in this little assembly. What we resolved on was very well executed, as will be seen. I arranged with Le Blanc, who was one of the conclave, that the instant the arrest had taken place, he should send to Meudon, and simply inquire after me; nothing more, and that by this apparently meaningless compliment, I should know that the Marechal had been packed off.

I returned towards evening to Meudon, where several friends of Madame de Saint-Simon and of myself often slept, and where others, following the fashion established at Versailles and Paris, came to dine or sup, so that the company was always very numerous. The scene between Dubois and Villeroy was much talked about, and the latter universally blamed. Neither then nor during the ten days which elapsed before his arrest, did it enter into the head of anybody to suppose that anything worse would happen to him than general blame for his unmeasured violence, so accustomed were people to his freaks, and to the feebleness of M. le Duc d'Orleans. I was now delighted, however, to find such general confidence, which augmented that of the Marechal, and rendered more easy the execution of our project against him; punishment he more and more deserved by the indecency and affectation of his discourses, and the audacity of his continual challenges.

Three or four days after, I went to Versailles, to see M. le Duc d'Orleans. He said that, for want of a better, and in consequence of what I had said to him on more than one occasion of the Duc de Charost, it was to him he intended to give the office of governor of the King: that he had secretly seen him that Charost had accepted with willingness the post, and was now safely shut up in his apartment at Versailles, seeing no one, and seen by no one, ready to be led to the King the moment the time should arrive. The Regent went over with me all the measures to be taken, and I returned to Meudon, resolved not to budge from it until they were executed, there being nothing more to arrange.

On Sunday, the 12th of August, 1722, M. le Duc d'Orleans went, towards the end of the afternoon, to work with the King, as he was accustomed to do several times each week; and as it was summer time now, he went after his airing, which he always took early. This work was to show the

King by whom were to be filled up vacant places in the church, among the magistrates and intendants, &c., and to briefly explain to him the reasons which suggested the selection, and sometimes the distribution of the finances. The Regent informed him, too, of the foreign news, which was within his comprehension, before it was made public. At the conclusion of this labour, at which the Marechal de Villeroy was always present, and sometimes M. de Frejus (when he made bold to stop), M. le Duc d'Orleans begged the King to step into a little back cabinet, where he would say a word to him alone.

The Marechal de Villeroy at once opposed. M. le Duc d'Orleans, who had laid this snare for him, saw him fall into it with satisfaction. He represented to the Marechal that the King was approaching the age when he would govern by himself, that it was time for him, who was meanwhile the depository of all his authority, to inform him of things which he could understand, and which could only be explained to him alone, whatever confidence might merit any third person. The Regent concluded by begging the Marechal to cease to place any obstacles in the way of a thing so necessary and so important, saying that he had, perhaps, to reproach himself for,—solely out of complaisance to him, not having coerced before.

The Marechal, arising and stroking his wig, replied that he knew the respect he owed, him, and knew also quite as well the respect he owed to the King, and to his place, charged as he was with the person of his Majesty, and being responsible for it. But he said he would not suffer his Royal Highness to speak to the King in private (because he ought to know everything said to his Majesty), still less would he suffer him to lead the King into a cabinet, out of his sight, for 'twas his (the Marechal's) duty never to lose sight of his charge, and in everything to answer for it.

Upon this, M. le Duc d'Orleans looked fixedly at the Marechal and said, in the tone of a master, that he mistook himself and forgot himself; that he ought to remember to whom he was speaking, and take care what words he used; that the respect he (the Regent) owed to the presence of the King, hindered him from replying as he ought to reply, and from continuing this conversation. Therefore he made a profound reverence to the King, and went away.

The Marechal, thoroughly angry, conducted him some steps, mumbling and gesticulating; M. le Duc d'Orleans pretending to neither see nor hear him, the King astonished, and M. de Frejus laughing in his sleeve. The bait so well swallowed,—no one doubted that the Marechal, audacious as he was, but nevertheless a servile and timid courtier, would feel all the difference between braving, bearding, and insulting Cardinal Dubois (odious to everybody, and always smelling of the vile egg from which he had been hatched) and wrestling with the Regent in the presence of the King, claiming to annihilate M. le Duc d'Orleans' rights and authority, by appealing to his own pretended rights and authority as governor of the King. People were not mistaken; less than two hours after what had occurred, it was known that the Marechal, bragging of what he had just done, had added that he should consider himself very unhappy if M. le Duc d'Orleans thought he had been wanting in respect to him, when his only idea was to fulfil his precious duty; and that he would go the next day to have an explanation with his Royal Highness, which he doubted not would be satisfactory to him.

At every hazard, all necessary measures had been taken as soon as the day was fixed on which the snare was to be laid for the Marechal. Nothing remained but to give form to them directly it was known that on the morrow the Marechal would come and throw himself into the lion's mouth.

Beyond the bed-room of M. le Duc d'Orleans was a large and fine cabinet, with four big windows looking upon the garden, and on the same floor, two paces distant, two other windows; and two at the side in front of the chimney, and all these windows opened like doors. This cabinet occupied the corner where the courtiers awaited, and behind was an adjoining cabinet, where M. le Duc d'Orleans worked and received distinguished persons or favourites who wished to talk with him.

The word was given. Artagnan, captain of the grey musketeers, was in the room (knowing what was going to happen), with many trusty officers of his company whom he had sent for, and former musketeers to be made use of at a pinch, and who clearly saw by these preparations that something important was in the wind, but without divining what. There were also some light horse posted outside

these windows in the same ignorance, and many principal officers and others in the Regent's bedroom, and in the grand cabinet.

All things being well arranged, the Marechal de Villeroy arrived about mid-day, with his accustomed hubbub, but alone, his chair and porters remaining outside, beyond the Salle des Gardes. He enters like a comedian, stops, looks round, advances some steps. Under pretext of civility, he is environed, surrounded. He asks in an authoritative tone, what M. le Duc d'Orleans is doing: the reply is, he is in his private room within.

The Marechal elevates his tone, says that nevertheless he must see the Regent; that he is going to enter; when lo! La Fare, captain of M. le Duc d'Orleans' guards, presents himself before him, arrests him, and demands his sword. The Marechal becomes furious, all present are in commotion. At this instant Le Blanc presents himself. His sedan chair, that had been hidden, is planted before the Marechal. He cries aloud, he is shaking on his lower limbs; but he is thrust into the chair, which is closed upon him and carried away in the twinkling of an eye through one of the side windows into the garden, La Fare and Artagnan each on one side of the chair, the light horse and musketeers behind, judging only by the result what was in the wind. The march is hastened; the party descend the steps of the orangery by the side of the thicket; the grand gate is found open and a coach and six before it. The chair is put down; the Marechal storms as he will; he is cast into the coach; Artagnan mounts by his side; an officer of the musketeers is in front; and one of the gentlemen in ordinary of the King by the side of the officer; twenty musketeers, with mounted officers, surround the vehicle, and away they go.

This side of the garden is beneath the window of the Queen's apartments (when occupied by the Infanta). This scene under the blazing noon-day sun was seen by no one, and although the large number of persons in M. le Duc d'Orleans' rooms soon dispersed, it is astonishing that an affair of this kind remained unknown more than ten hours in the chateau of Versailles. The servants of the Marechal de Villeroy (to whom nobody had dared to say a word) still waited with their master's chair near the Salle des Gardes. They were, told, after M. le Duc d'Orleans had seen the King, that the Marechal had gone to Villeroy, and that they could carry to him what was necessary.

I received at Meudon the message arranged. I was sitting down to table, and it was only towards the supper that people came from Versailles to tell us all the news, which was making much sensation there, but a sensation very measured on account of the surprise and fear paused by the manner in which the arrest had been executed.

It was no agreeable task, that which had to be performed soon after by the Regent; I mean when he carried the news of the arrest to the King. He entered into his Majesty's cabinet, which he cleared of all the company it contained, except those people whose post gave them aright to enter, but of them there were not many present. At the first word, the King reddened; his eyes moistened; he hid his face against the back of an armchair, without saying a word; would neither go out nor play. He ate but a few mouthfuls at supper, wept, and did not sleep all night. The morning and the dinner of the next day, the 14th, passed off but little better.

CHAPTER CXIV

That same 14th, as I rose from dinner at Meudon, with much company, the valet de chambre who served me said that a courier from Cardinal Dubois had a letter for me, which he had not thought good to bring me before all my guests. I opened the letter. The Cardinal conjured me to go instantly and see him at Versailles, bringing with me a trusty servant, ready to be despatched to La Trappe, as soon as I had spoken with him, and not to rack my brains to divine what this might mean, because it would be impossible to divine it, and that he was waiting with the utmost impatience to tell it to me. I at once ordered my coach, which I thought a long time in coming from the stables. They are a considerable distance from the new chateau I occupied.

This courier to be taken to the Cardinal, in order to be despatched to La Trappe, turned my head. I could not imagine what had happened to occupy the Cardinal so thoroughly so soon after the arrest of Villeroy. The constitution, or some important and unknown fugitive discovered at La Trappe, and a thousand other thoughts, agitated me until I arrived at Versailles.

Upon reaching the chateau, I saw Dubois at a window awaiting me, and making many signs to me, and upon reaching the staircase, I found him there at the bottom, as I was about to mount. His first word was to ask me if I had brought with me a man who could post to La Trappe. I showed him my valet de chambre, who knew the road well, having travelled over it with me very often, and who was well known to the Cardinal, who, when simple Abbe Dubois, used very frequently to chat with him while waiting for me.

The Cardinal explained to me, as we ascended the stairs, the cause of his message. Immediately after the departure of the Marechal de Villeroy, M. le Frejus, the King's instructor, had been missed. He had disappeared. He had not slept at Versailles. No one knew what had become of him! The grief of the King had so much increased upon receiving this fresh blow—both his familiar friends taken from him at once—that no one knew what to do with him. He was in the most violent despair, wept bitterly, and could not be pacified. The Cardinal concluded by saying that no stone must be left unturned in order to find M. de Frejus. That unless he had gone to Villeroy, it was probable he had hid himself in La Trappe, and that we must send and see. With this he led me to M. le Duc d'Orleans. He was alone, much troubled, walking up and down his chamber, and he said to me that he knew not what would become of the King, or what to do with him; that he was crying for M. de Frejus, and—would listen to nothing; and the Regent began himself to cry out against this strange flight.

After some further consideration, Dubois pressed me to go and write to La Trappe. All was in disorder where we were; everybody spoke at once in the cabinet; it was impossible, in the midst of all this noise, to write upon the bureau, as I often did when I was alone with the King. My apartment was in the new wing, and perhaps shut up, for I was not expected that day. I went therefore, instead, into the chamber of Peze, close at hand, and wrote my letter there. The letter finished, and I about to descend, Peze, who had left me, returned, crying, "He is found! he is found! your letter is useless; return to M. le Duc d'Orleans."

He then related to me that just before, one of M. le Duc d'Orleans' people, who knew that Frejus was a friend of the Lamoignons, had met Courson in the grand court, and had asked him if he knew what had become of Frejus; that Courson had replied, "Certainly: he went last night to sleep at Basville, where the President Lamoignon is;" and that upon this, the man hurried Courson to M. le Duc d'Orleans to relate this to him.

Peze and I arrived at M. le Duc d'Orleans' room just after Courson left it. Serenity had returned. Frejus was well belaboured. After a moment of cheerfulness, Cardinal Dubois advised M. le Duc d'Orleans to go and carry this good news to the King, and to say that a courier should at once be despatched to Basville, to make his preceptor return. M. le Duc d'Orleans acted upon the suggestion, saying he would return directly. I remained with Dubois awaiting him.

After having discussed a little this mysterious flight of Frejus, Dubois told me he had news of Villeroy. He said that the Marechal had not ceased to cry out against the outrage committed upon his person, the audacity of the Regent, the insolence of Dubois, or to hector Artagnan all the way for having lent himself to such criminal violence; then he invoked the Manes of the deceased King, bragged of his confidence in him, the importance of the place he held, and for which he had been preferred above all others; talked of the rising that so impudent an enterprise would cause in Paris, throughout the realm, and in foreign countries; deplored the fate of the young King and of all the kingdom; the officers selected by the late King for the most precious of charges, driven away, the Duc du Maine first, himself afterwards; then he burst out into exclamations and invectives; then into praises of his services, of his fidelity, of his firmness, of his inviolable attachment to his duty. In fact, he was so astonished, so troubled, so full of vexation and of rage, that he was thoroughly beside himself. The Duc de Villeroy, the Marechal de Tallard and Biron had permission to go and see him at Villeroy: scarcely anybody else asked for it.

M. le Duc d'Orleans having returned from the King, saying that the news he had carried had much appeased his Majesty, we agreed we must so arrange matters that Frejus should return the next morning, that M. le Duc d'Orleans should receive him well, as though nothing had happened, and give him to understand that it was simply to avoid embarrassing him, that he had not been made aware of the secret of the arrest (explaining this to him with all the more liberty, because Frejus hated the Marechal, his haughtiness, his jealousy, his capriciousness, and in his heart must be delighted at his removal, and at being able to have entire possession of the—King), then beg him to explain to the King the necessity of Villeroy's dismissal: then communicate to Frejus the selection of the Duc de Charost as governor of the King; promise him all the concert and the attention from this latter he could desire; ask him to counsel and guide Charost; finally, seize the moment of the King's joy at the return of Frejus to inform his Majesty of the new governor chosen, and to present Charost to him. All this was arranged and very well, executed next day.

When the Marechal heard of it at Villeroy, he flew into a strange passion against Charost (of whom he spoke with the utmost contempt for having accepted his place), but above all against Frejus, whom he called a traitor and a villain! His first moments of passion, of fury, and of transport, were all the more violent, because he saw by the tranquillity reigning everywhere that his pride had deceived him in inducing him to believe that the Parliament, the markets, all Paris would rise if the Regent dared to touch a person so important and so well beloved as he imagined himself to be. This truth, which he could no longer hide from himself, and which succeeded so rapidly to the chimeras that had been his food and his life, threw him into despair, and turned his head. He fell foul of the Regent, of his minister, of those employed to arrest him, of those who had failed to defend him, of all who had not risen in revolt to bring him back in triumph, of Charost, who had dared to succeed him, and especially of Frejus, who had deceived him in such an unworthy manner. Frejus was the person against whom he was the most irritated. Reproaches of ingratitude and of treachery rained unceasingly upon him; all that the Marechal had done for him with the deceased King was recollected; how he had protected, aided, lodged, and fed him; how without him (Villeroy) he (Frejus) would never have been preceptor of the King; and all this was exactly true.

The treachery to which he alluded he afterwards explained. He said that he and Frejus had agreed at the very commencement of the regency to act in union; and that if by troubles or events impossible to foresee, but which were only too common in regencies, one of them should be dismissed from office, the other not being able to hinder the dismissal, though not touched himself, should at once withdraw and never return to his post, until the first was reinstated in his. And after these explanations, new cries broke out against the perfidy of this miserable wretch—(for the most odious terms ran glibly from the end of his tongue)—who thought like a fool to cover his perfidy with a veil of gauze, in slipping off to Basville, so as to be instantly sought and brought back, in fear lest he should lose his place by the slightest resistance or the slightest delay, and who expected to acquit

himself thus of his word, and of the reciprocal engagement both had taken; and then he returned to fresh insults and fury against this serpent, as he said, whom he had warmed and nourished so many years in his bosom.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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