

LOUIS SAINT-SIMON

MEMOIRS OF LOUIS XIV
AND HIS COURT AND OF
THE REGENCY. VOLUME
07

Louis de Rouvroy Saint-Simon
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Memoirs of Louis XIV and His Court and of the Regency – Volume 07:*

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CHAPTER XLVII

The death of D'Avaux, who had formerly been our ambassador in Holland, occurred in the early part of this year (1709). D'Avaux was one of the first to hear of the project of William of Orange upon England, when that project was still only in embryo, and kept profoundly secret. He apprised the King (Louis XIV.) of it, but was laughed at. Barillon, then our ambassador in England, was listened to in preference. He, deceived by Sunderland and the other perfidious ministers of James II.; assured our Court that D'Avaux's reports were mere chimeras. It was not until it was impossible any longer to doubt that credit was given to them. The steps that we then took, instead of disconcerting all the measures of the conspirators, as we could have done, did not interfere with the working out of any one of their plans. All liberty was left, in fact, to William to carry out his scheme. The anecdote which explains how this happened is

so curious, that it deserves to be mentioned here.

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

The next day the King saw Le Notre in the gallery. Although his trade was gardens rather than houses, the King did not fail to consult him upon the latter. He asked him if he had been to Trianon. Le Notre replied that he had not. The King ordered him to go. On the morrow he saw Le Notre again; same question, same answer. The King comprehended the reason of this, and a little annoyed, commanded him to be there that afternoon at a given time. Le Notre did not dare to disobey this time. The King arrived, and Louvois being present, they returned to the subject of the window, which Louvois obstinately said was as broad as the rest. The King wished Le Notre to measure it, for he knew that, upright and true, he would openly say what he found. Louvois, piqued, grew angry. The King, who was not less so, allowed him to say his say. Le Notre, meanwhile, did not

stir. At last, the King made him go, Louvois still grumbling, and maintaining his assertion with audacity and little measure. Le Notre measured the window, and said that the King was right by several inches. Louvois still wished to argue, but the King silenced him, and commanded him to see that the window was altered at once, contrary to custom abusing him most harshly.

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

Louvois, who was not accustomed to be thus treated, returned home in fury, and like a man in despair. His familiars were frightened, and in their disquietude angled to learn what had happened. At last he told them, said he was lost, and that for a few inches the King forgot all his services, which had led to so many conquests; he declared that henceforth he would leave the trowel to the King, bring about a war, and so arrange matters that the King should have good need of him!

He soon kept his word. He caused a war to grow out of the affair of the double election of Cologne, of the Prince of Bavaria, and of the Cardinal of Furstenberg; he confirmed it in carrying the flames into the Palatinate, and in leaving, as I have said, all liberty to the project upon England; he put the finishing touch

to his work by forcing the Duke of Savoy into the arms of his enemies, and making him become, by the position of his country, our enemy, the most difficult and the most ruinous. All that I have here related was clearly brought to light in due time.

Boisseuil died shortly after D'Avaux. He was a tall, big man, warm and violent, a great gambler, bad tempered,—who often treated M. le Grand and Madame d'Armagnac, great people as they were, so that the company were ashamed,—and who swore in the saloon of Marly as if he had been in a tap-room. He was feared; and he said to women whatever came uppermost when the fury of a cut-throat seized him. During a journey the King and Court made to Nancy, Boisseuil one evening sat down to play in the house of one of the courtiers. A player happened to be there who played very high. Boisseuil lost a good deal, and was very angry. He thought he perceived that this gentleman, who was only permitted on account of his play, was cheating, and made such good use of his eyes that he soon found this was the case, and all on a sudden stretched across the table and seized the gambler's hand, which he held upon the table, with the cards he was going to deal. The gentleman, very much astonished, wished to withdraw his hand, and was angry. Boisseuil, stronger than he, said that he was a rogue, and that the company should see it, and immediately shaking his hand with fury put in evidence his deceit. The player, confounded, rose and went away. The game went on, and lasted long into the night. When finished, Boisseuil went away. As he was leaving the door he found a man stuck

against the wall—it was the player—who called him to account for the insult he had received. Boisseuil replied that he should give him no satisfaction, and that he was a rogue.

"That may be," said the player, "but I don't like to be told so."

They went away directly and fought. Boisseuil received two wounds, from one of which he was like to die. The other escaped without injury.

I have said, that after the affair of M. de Cambrai, Madame de Maintenon had taken a rooted dislike to M. de Beauvilliers. She had become reconciled to him in appearance during the time that Monseigneur de Bourgogne was a victim to the calumnies of M. de Vendome, because she had need of him. Now that Monseigneur de Bourgogne was brought back to favour, and M. de Vendome was disgraced, her antipathy for M. de Beauvilliers burst out anew, and she set her wits to work to get rid of him from the Council of State, of which he was a member. The witch wished to introduce her favourite Harcourt there in his place, and worked so well to bring about this result that the King promised he should be received.

His word given, or rather snatched from him, the King was embarrassed as to how, to keep it, for he did not wish openly to proclaim Harcourt minister. It was agreed, therefore, that at the next Council Harcourt should be present, as though by accident, in the King's ante-chamber; that, Spanish matters being brought up, the King should propose to consult Harcourt, and immediately after should direct search to be made for him, to

see if, by chance, he was close at hand; that upon finding him, he should be conducted to the Council, made to enter and seat himself, and ever afterwards be regarded as a Minister of State.

This arrangement was kept extremely secret, according to the express commands of the King: I knew it, however, just before it was to be executed, and I saw at once that the day of Harcourt's entry into the Council would be the day of M. de Beauvilliers' disgrace. I sent, therefore, at once for M. de Beauvilliers, begging him to come to my house immediately, and that I would then tell him why I could not come to him. Without great precaution everything becomes known at Court.

In less than half an hour M. de Beauvilliers arrived, tolerably disturbed at my message. I asked him if he knew anything, and I turned him about, less to pump him than to make him ashamed of his ignorance, and to persuade him the better afterwards to do what I wished. When I had well trotted out his ignorance, I apprised him of what I had just learnt. He was astounded; he so little expected it! I had not much trouble to persuade him that, although his expulsion might not yet be determined on, the intrusion of Harcourt must pave the way for it. He admitted to me that for some days he had found, the King cold and embarrassed with him, but that he had paid little attention to the circumstance, the reason of which was now clear. There was no time to lose. In twenty-four hours all would be over. I therefore took the liberty in the first instance of scolding him for his profound ignorance of what passed at the Court, and was bold enough to say to him that

he had only to thank himself for the situation he found himself in. He let me say to the end without growing angry, then smiled, and said, "Well! what do you think I ought to do?"

That was just what I wanted. I replied that there was only one course open to him, and that was to have an interview with the King early the next morning; to say to him, that he had been informed Harcourt was about to enter the Council; that he thought the affairs of State would suffer rather than otherwise if Harcourt did so; and finally, to allude to the change that had taken place in the King's manner towards him lately, and to say, with all respect, affection, and submission, that he was equally ready to continue serving the King or to give up his appointments, as his Majesty might desire.

M. de Beauvilliers took pleasure in listening to me. He embraced me closely, and promised to follow the course I had marked out.

The next morning I went straight to him, and learned that he had perfectly succeeded. He had spoken exactly as I had suggested. The King appeared astonished and piqued that the secret of Harcourt's entry into the Council was discovered. He would not hear a word as to resignation of office on the part of M. de Beauvilliers, and appeared more satisfied with him than ever. Whether, without this interview, he would have been lost, I know not, but by the coldness and embarrassment of the King before that interview, and during the first part of it, I am nearly persuaded that he would. M. de Beauvilliers embraced me again

very tenderly—more than once.

As for Harcourt, sure of his good fortune, and scarcely able to contain his joy, he arrived at the meeting place. Time ran on. During the Council there are only the most subaltern people in the antechambers and a few courtiers who pass that way to go from one wing to another. Each of these subalterns eagerly asked M. d'Harcourt what he wanted, if he wished for anything, and importuned him strongly. He was obliged to remain there, although he had no pretext. He went and came, limping with his stick, not knowing what to reply to the passers-by, or the attendants by whom he was remarked. At last, after waiting long, he returned as he came, much disturbed at not having been called. He sent word so to Madame de Maintenon, who, in her turn, was as much disturbed, the King not having said a word to her, and she not having dared to say a word to him. She consoled Harcourt, hoping that at the next Council he would be called. At her wish he waited again, as before, during another Council, but with as little success. He was very much annoyed, comprehending that the affair had fallen through.

Madame de Maintenon did not, however, like to be defeated in this way. After waiting some time she spoke to the King, reminding him what he had promised to do. The King replied in confusion that he had thought better of it; that Harcourt was on bad terms with all the Ministers, and might, if admitted to the Council, cause them much embarrassment; he preferred, therefore, things to remain as they were. This was said in a

manner that admitted of no reply.

Madame de Maintenon felt herself beaten; Harcourt was in despair. M. de Beauvilliers was quite reestablished in the favour of the King. I pretended to have known nothing of this affair, and innocent asked many questions about it when all was over. I was happy to the last degree that everything had turned out so well.

M. le Prince, who for more than two years had not appeared at the Court, died at Paris a little after midnight on the night between Easter Sunday and Monday, the last of March and first of April, and in his seventy- sixth year. No man had ever more ability of all kinds, extending even to the arts and mechanics more valour, and, when it pleased him, more discernment, grace, politeness, and nobility. But then no man had ever before so many useless talents, so much genius of no avail, or an imagination so calculated to be a bugbear to itself and a plague to others. Abjectly and vilely servile even to lackeys, he scrupled not to use the lowest and paltriest means to gain his ends. Unnatural son, cruel father, terrible husband, detestable master, pernicious neighbour; without friendship, without friends—incapable of having any jealous, suspicious, ever restless, full of slyness and artifices to discover and to scrutinise all, (in which he was unceasingly occupied, aided by an extreme vivacity and a surprising penetration,) choleric and headstrong to excess even for trifles, difficult of access, never in accord with himself, and keeping all around him in a tremble; to conclude, impetuosity and avarice were his masters, which monopolised him always.

With all this he was a man difficult to be proof against when he put in play the pleasing qualities he possessed.

Madame la Princesse, his wife, was his continual victim. She was disgustingly ugly, virtuous, and foolish, a little humpbacked, and stunk like a skunk, even from a distance. All these things did not hinder M. le Prince from being jealous of her even to fury up to the very last. The piety, the indefatigable attention of Madame la Princesse, her sweetness, her novice-like submission, could not guarantee her from frequent injuries, or from kicks, and blows with the fist, which were not rare. She was not mistress even of the most trifling things; she did not dare to propose or ask anything. He made her set out from one place to another the moment the fancy took him. Often when seated in their coach he made her descend, or return from the end of the street, then recommence the journey after dinner, or the next day. This see-sawing lasted once fifteen days running, before a trip to Fontainebleau. At other times he sent for her from church, made her quit high mass, and sometimes sent for her the moment she was going to receive the sacrament; she was obliged to return at once and put off her communion to another occasion. It was not that he wanted her, but it was merely to gratify his whim that he thus troubled her.

He was always of, uncertain habits, and had four dinners ready for him every day; one at Paris, one at Ecouen, one at Chantilly, and one where the Court was. But the expense of this arrangement was not great; he dined on soup, and the half of a

fowl roasted upon a crust of bread; the other half serving for the next day. He rarely invited anybody to dinner, but when he did, no man could be more polite or attentive to his guests.

Formerly he had been in love with several ladies of the Court; then, nothing cost too much. He was grace, magnificence, gallantry in person—a Jupiter transformed into a shower of gold. Now he disguised himself as a lackey, another time as a female broker in articles for the toilette; and now in another fashion. He was the most ingenious man in the world. He once gave a grand fete solely for the purpose of retarding the journey into Italy of a lady with whom he was enamoured, with whom he was on good terms, and whose husband he amused by making verses. He hired all the houses on one side of a street near Saint Sulpice, furnished them, and pierced the connecting walls, in order to be able thus to reach the place of rendezvous without being suspected.

Jealous and cruel to his mistresses, he had, amongst others, the Marquise de Richelieu; whom I name, because she is not worth the trouble of being silent upon. He was hopelessly smitten and spent millions upon her and to learn her movements. He knew that the Comte de Roucy shared her favours (it was for her that sagacious Count proposed to put straw before the house in order to guarantee her against the sound of the church bells, of which she complained). M. le Prince reproached her for favouring the Count. She defended herself; but he watched her so closely, that he brought home the offence to her without her being able to deny it. The fear of losing a lover so rich as was M. le Prince furnished

her on the spot with an excellent suggestion for putting him at ease. She proposed to make an appointment at her own house with the Comte de Roucy, M. le Prince's people to lie in wait, and when the Count appeared, to make away with him. Instead of the success she expected from a proposition so humane and ingenious, M. le Prince was so horror-struck, that he warned the Comte de Roucy, and never saw the Marquise de Richelieu again all his life.

The most surprising thing was, that with so much ability, penetration, activity, and valour, as had M. le Prince, with the desire to be as great a warrior as the Great Conde, his father, he could never succeed in understanding even the first elements of the military art. Instructed as he was by his father, he never acquired the least aptitude in war. It was a profession was not born for, and for which he could not qualify himself by study. During the last fifteen or twenty years of his life, he was accused of something more than fierceness and ferocity. Wanderings were noticed in his conduct, which were not exhibited in his own house alone. Entering one morning into the apartment of the Marechale de Noailles (she herself has related this to me) as her bed was being made, and there being only the counterpane to put on, he stopped short at the door, crying with transport, "Oh, the nice bed, the nice bed!" took a spring, leaped upon the bed, rolled himself upon it seven or eight times, then descended and made his excuses to the Marechale, saying that her bed was so clean and so well-made, that he could not hinder himself from jumping

upon it; and this, although there had never been anything between them; and when the Marechale, who all her life had been above suspicion, was at an age at which she could not give birth to any. Her servants remained stupefied, and she as much as they. She got out of the difficulty by laughing and treating it as a joke. It was whispered that there were times when M. le Prince believed himself a dog, or some other beast, whose manners he imitated; and I have known people very worthy of faith who have assured me they have seen him at the going to bed of the King suddenly throw his head into the air several times running, and open his mouth quite wide, like a dog while barking, yet without making a noise. It is certain, that for a long time nobody saw him except a single valet, who had control over him, and who did not annoy him.

In the latter part of his life he attended in a ridiculously minute manner to his diet and its results, and entered into discussions which drove his doctors to despair. Fever and gout at last attacked him, and he augmented them by the course he pursued. Finot, our physician and his, at times knew not what to do with him. What embarrassed Finot most, as he related to us more than once, was that M. le Prince would eat nothing, for the simple reason, as he alleged, that he was dead, and that dead men did not eat! It was necessary, however, that he should take something, or he would have really died. Finot, and another doctor who attended him, determined to agree with him that he was dead, but to maintain that dead men sometimes eat. They offered to produce dead men

of this kind; and, in point of fact, led to M. le Prince some persons unknown to him, who pretended to be dead, but who ate nevertheless. This trick succeeded, but he would never eat except with these men and Finot. On that condition he ate well, and this jealousy lasted a long time, and drove Finot to despair by its duration; who, nevertheless, sometimes nearly died of laughter in relating to us what passed at these repasts, and the conversation from the other world heard there.

M. le Prince's malady augmenting, Madame la Princesse grew bold enough to ask him if he did not wish to think of his conscience, and to see a confessor. He amused himself tolerably long in refusing to do so. Some months before he had seen in secret Pere de la Tour. He had sent to the reverend father asking him to, come by night and disguised. Pere de la Tour, surprised to the last degree at so wild a proposition, replied that the respect he owed to the cloth would prevent him visiting M. le Prince in disguise; but that he would come in his ordinary attire. M. le Prince agreed to this last imposed condition. He made the Pere de la Tour enter at night by a little back door, at which an attendant was in waiting to receive him. He was led by this attendant, who had a lantern in one hand and a key in the other, through many long and obscure passages; and through many doors, which were opened and closed upon him as he passed. Having arrived at last at the sick-chamber, he confessed M. le Prince, and was conducted out of the house in the same manner and by the same way as before. These visits were repeated during

several months.

The Prince's malady rapidly increased and became extreme. The doctors found him so ill on the night of Easter Sunday that they proposed to him the sacrament for the next day. He disputed with them, and said that if he was so very bad it would be better to take the sacraments at once, and have done with them. They in their turn opposed this, saying there was no need of so much hurry. At last, for fear of incensing him, they consented, and he received all hurriedly the last sacraments. A little while after he called M. le Duc to him, and spoke of the honours he wished at his funeral, mentioning those which had been omitted at the funeral of his father, but which he did not wish to be omitted from his. He talked of nothing but this and of the sums he had spent at Chantilly, until his reason began to wander.

Not a soul regretted him; neither servants, nor friends, neither child nor wife. Indeed the Princess was so ashamed of her tears that she made excuses for them. This was scarcely to be wondered at.

CHAPTER XLVIII

It is time now that I should speak of our military operations this year and of the progress of the war. Let me commence by stating the disposition of our armies at the beginning of the campaign.

Marechal Boufflers, having become dangerously ill, was unable to take command in Flanders. Marechal de Villars was accordingly appointed in his stead under Monseigneur, and with him served the King of England, under his incognito of the previous year, and M. le Duc de Berry, as volunteers. The Marechal d'Harcourt was appointed to command upon the Rhine under Monseigneur le Duc de Bourgogne. M. d'Orleans commanded in Spain; Marechal Berwick in Dauphiny; and the Duc de Noailles in Roussillon, as usual. The generals went to their destinations, but the Princes remained at the Court.

Before I relate what we did in war, let me here state the strange opposition of our ministers in their attempts to bring about peace. Since Villars had introduced Chamillart to Court, he had heard it said that M. de Louvois did everybody's business as much as he could; and took it into his head that having succeeded to M. de Louvois he ought to act exactly like him. For some time past, accordingly, Chamillart, with the knowledge of the King, had sent people to Holland and elsewhere to negotiate for peace, although he had no right to do so, Torcy being the

minister to whose department this business belonged. Torcy likewise sent people to Holland and elsewhere with a similar object, and these ambassadors of the two ministers, instead of working in common, did all in their power thwart each other. They succeeded so well that it was said they seemed in foreign countries ministers of different powers, whose interests were quite opposed. This manner of conducting business gave a most injurious idea of our government, and tended very much to bring it into ridicule. Those who sincerely wished to treat with us, found themselves so embarrassed between the rival factions, that they did not know what to do; and others made our disagreements a plausible pretext for not listening to our propositions.

At last Torcy was so annoyed with the interference of Chamillart, that he called the latter to account for it, and made him sign an agreement by which he bound himself to enter into no negotiations for peace and to mix himself in no foreign affairs; and so this absurdity came to an end.

In Italy, early this year, we received a check of no small importance. I have mentioned that we were invited to join in an Italian league, having for its object to oppose the Emperor. We joined this league, but not before its existence had been noised abroad, and put the allies on their guard as to the danger they ran of losing Italy. Therefore the Imperialists entered the Papal States, laid them under contribution, ravaged them, lived there in true Tartar style, and snapped their fingers at the Pope, who cried aloud as he could obtain no redress and no

assistance. Pushed at last to extremity by the military occupation which desolated his States, he yielded to all the rushes of the Emperor, and recognised the Archduke as King of Spain. Philip V. immediately ceased all intercourse with Rome, and dismissed the nuncio from Madrid. The Imperialists, even after the Pope had ceded to their wishes, treated him with the utmost disdain, and continued to ravage, his territories. The Imperialist minister at Rome actually gave a comedy and a ball in his palace there, contrary to the express orders of the Pope, who had forbidden all kinds of amusement in this period of calamity. When remonstrated with by the Pope, this minister said that he had promised a fete to the ladies, and could not break his word, The strangest thing is, that after this public instance of contempt the nephews of the Pope went to the fete, and the Pope had the weakness to suffer it.

In Spain, everything went wrong, and people began to think it would be best to give up that country to the house of Austria, under the hope that by this means the war would be terminated. It was therefore seriously resolved to recall all our troops from Spain, and to give orders to Madame des Ursins to quit the country. Instructions were accordingly sent to this effect. The King and Queen of Spain, in the greatest alarm at such a violent determination, cried aloud against it, and begged that the execution of it might at least be suspended for a while.

At this, our King paused and called a Council to discuss the subject. It was ultimately agreed to leave sixty-six battalions of

our troops to the King of Spain, but to withdraw all the rest. This compromise satisfied nobody. Those who wished to support Spain said this assistance was not enough. The other party said it was too much.

This determination being arrived at, it seemed as though the only thing to be done was to send M. d'Orleans to Spain to take command there. But now will be seen the effect of that mischievous pleasantry of his upon Madame de Maintenon and Madame des Ursins, the "she-captain," and the "she-lieutenant"—as he called them, in the gross language to which I have before alluded. Those two ladies had not forgiven him his witticism, and had determined to accomplish his disgrace. His own thoughtless conduct assisted them in bringing about this result.

The King one day asked him if he had much desire to return into Spain. He replied in a manner evidencing his willingness to serve, marking no eagerness. He did not notice that there might be a secret meaning, hidden under this question. When he related to me what had passed between him and the King, I blamed the feebleness of his reply, and represented to him the ill effect it would create if at such a time he evinced any desire to keep out of the campaign. He appeared convinced by my arguments, and to wish with more eagerness than before to return to Spain.

A few days after, the King asked him, on what terms he believed himself with the Princesse des Ursins; and when M. d'Orleans replied that he believed himself to be on good terms

with her, as he had done all in his power to be so, the King said that he feared it was not thus, since she had asked that he should not be again sent to Spain, saying that he had leagued himself with all her enemies there, and that a secretary of his, named Renaut, whom he had left behind him, kept up such strict and secret intercourse with those enemies, that she was obliged to demand his recall lest he might do wrong to the name of his master.

Upon this, M. d'Orleans replied that he was infinitely surprised at these complaints of Madame des Ursins, since he had done nothing to deserve them. The King, after reflecting for a moment, said he thought, all things considered, that M. d'Orleans had better not return to Spain. In a few days it was publicly known that he would not go. The withdrawal of so many of our troops from Spain was the reason alleged. At the same time the King gave orders to M. d'Orleans to send for his equipages from Spain, and added in his ear, that he had better send some one of sense for them, who might be the bearer of a protest, if Philip V. quitted his throne. At least this is what M. d'Orleans told me, although few people believed him in the end.

M. d'Orleans chose for this errand a man named Flotte, very skilful in intrigue, in which he had, so to speak, been always brought up. He went straight to Madrid, and one of his first employments when he arrived there was to look for Renaut, the secretary just alluded to. But Renaut was nowhere to be found, nor could any news be heard of him. Flotte stayed some time in

Madrid, and then went to the army, which was still in quarters. He remained there three weeks, idling from quarter to quarter, saluting the Marechal in command, who was much surprised at his long stay, and who pressed him to return into France. At last Flotte took leave of the Marechal, asking him for an escort for himself and a commissary, with whom he meant to go in company across the Pyrenees. Twenty dragoons were given him as escort, and he and the commissary set out in a chaise.

They had not proceeded far before Flotte perceived that they were followed by other troops besides those guarding them. Flotte fearing that something was meant by this, slipped a pocket-book into the hands of the commissary, requesting him to take care of it. Shortly afterwards the chaise was surrounded by troops, and stopped; the two travellers were made to alight. The commissary was ordered to give up the pocket-book, an order that he complied with very rapidly, and Flotte was made prisoner, and escorted back to the spot he had just left.

The news of this occurrence reached the King on the 12th of July, by the ordinary courier from Madrid.

The King informed M. d'Orleans of it, who, having learnt it by a private courier six days before, affected nevertheless surprise, and said it was strange that one of his people should have been thus arrested, and that as his Majesty was concerned, it was for him to demand the reason. The King replied, that in fact the injury regarded him more than M. d'Orleans, and that he would give orders to Torcy to write as was necessary to Spain.

It is not difficult to believe that such an explosion made a great noise, both in France and Spain; but the noise it made at first was nothing to that which followed. A cabal was formed against Monsieur le Duc d'Orleans. It was said that he had plotted to place himself upon the Spanish throne, by driving out Philip V., under pretext of his incapacity, of the domination of Madame des Ursins, and of the abandonment of the country by France; that he had treated with Stanhope, commander of the English troops in Spain, and with whom he was known to be on friendly terms, in order to be protected by the Archduke. This was the report most widely spread. Others went further. In these M. d'Orleans was accused of nothing less than of intending to divorce himself from Madame la Duchesse d'Orleans, as having been married to her by force; of intending to marry the sister of the Empress (widow of Charles II.), and of mounting with her upon the Spanish throne; to marry Madame d'Argenton, as the Queen Dowager was sure to have no children, and finally, to poison Madame d'Orleans.

Meanwhile the reply from Spain came not. The King and Monseigneur treated M. d'Orleans with a coldness which made him sorely ill at ease; the majority of the courtiers, following this example, withdrew from him. He was left almost alone.

I learnt at last from M. d'Orleans how far he was deserving of public censure, and what had given colouring to the reports spread against him. He admitted to me, that several of the Spanish grandees had persuaded him that it was not possible the

King of Spain could stand, and had proposed to him to hasten his fall, and take his place; that he had rejected this proposition with indignation, but had been induced to promise, that if Philip V. fell of himself, without hope of rising, he would not object to mounting the vacant throne, believing that by so doing he would be doing good to our King, by preserving Spain to his house.

As soon as I heard this, I advised him to make a clean breast of it to the King, and to ask his pardon for having acted in this matter without his orders and without his knowledge. He thought my advice good, and acted upon it. But the King was too much under the influence of the enemies of M. d'Orleans, to listen favourably to what was said to him. The facts of the case, too, were much against M. d'Orleans. Both Renaut and Flotte had been entrusted with his secret. The former had openly leagued himself with the enemies of Madame des Ursins, and acted with the utmost imprudence. He had been privately arrested just before the arrival of Flotte. When this latter was arrested, papers were found upon him which brought everything to light. The views of M. d'Orleans and of those who supported him were clearly shown. The King would not listen to anything in favour of his nephew.

The whole Court cried out against M. d'Orleans; never was such an uproar heard. He was accused of plotting to overthrow the King of Spain, he, a Prince of the blood, and so closely allied to the two crowns! Monseigneur, usually so plunged in apathy, roused himself to fury against M. d'Orleans, and insisted

upon nothing less than a criminal prosecution. He insisted so strongly upon this, that the King at last consented that it should take place, and gave orders to the chancellor to examine the forms requisite in such a case. While the chancellor was about this work, I went to see him one day, and represented to him so strongly, that M. d'Orleans' misdemeanour did not concern us at all, and could only be judged before a Spanish tribunal, that the idea of a criminal trial was altogether abandoned almost immediately after. M. d'Orleans was allowed to remain in peace.

Madame des Ursins and Madame de Maintenon had so far triumphed, however, that M. d'Orleans found himself plunged in the deepest disgrace. He was universally shunned. Whenever he appeared, people flew away, so that they might not be seen in communication with him. His solitude was so great, that for a whole month only one friend entered his house. In the midst of this desertion, he had no resource but debauchery, and the society of his mistress, Madame d'Argenton. The disorder and scandal of his life had for a long time offended the King, the Court, and the public. They now unhappily confirmed everybody in the bad opinion they had formed of him. That the long disgrace he suffered continued to confirm him in his bad habits, and that it explains to some extent his after-conduct, there can be no doubt. But I must leave him now, and return to other matters.

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