LOUIS SAINT-SIMON

MEMOIRS OF LOUIS XIV AND HIS COURT AND OF THE REGENCY. VOLUME 01

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Saint-Simon L. d.

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Содержание

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INTRODUCTION

No library of Court documents could pretend to be representative which ignored the famous "Memoirs" of the Duc de Saint-Simon. They stand, by universal consent, at the head of French historical papers, and are the one great source from which all historians derive their insight into the closing years of the reign of the "Grand Monarch," Louis XIV: whom the author shows to be anything but grand—and of the Regency. The opinion of the French critic, Sainte-Beuve, is fairly typical. "With the Memoirs of De Retz, it seemed that perfection had been attained, in interest, in movement, in moral analysis, in pictorial vivacity, and that there was no reason for expecting they could be surpassed. But the 'Memoirs' of Saint-Simon came; and they offer merits . . . which make them the most precious body of Memoirs that as yet exist."

Villemain declared their author to be "the most original of geniuses in French literature, the foremost of prose satirists; inexhaustible in details of manners and customs, a word-painter like Tacitus; the author of a language of his own, lacking in accuracy, system, and art, yet an admirable writer." Leon Vallee reinforces this by saying: "Saint-Simon can not be compared to any of his contemporaries. He has an individuality, a style, and a language solely his own…. Language he treated like an abject slave. When he had gone to its farthest limit, when it failed to express his ideas or feelings, he forced it—the result was a new term, or a change in the ordinary meaning of words sprang forth from has pen. With this was joined a vigour and breadth of style, very pronounced, which makes up the originality of the works of Saint-Simon and contributes toward placing their author in the foremost rank of French writers."

Louis de Rouvroy, who later became the Duc de Saint-Simon, was born in Paris, January 16, 1675. He claimed descent from Charlemagne, but the story goes that his father, as a young page of Louis XIII., gained favour with his royal master by his skill in holding the stirrup, and was finally made a duke and peer of France. The boy Louis had no lesser persons than the King and Queen Marie Therese as godparents, and made his first formal appearance at Court when seventeen. He tells us that he was not a studious boy, but was fond of reading history; and that if he had been given rein to read all he desired of it, he might have made "some figure in the world." At nineteen, like D'Artagnan, he entered the King's Musketeers. At twenty he was made a captain in the cavalry; and the same year he married the beautiful daughter of the Marechal de Larges. This marriage, which was purely political in its inception, finally turned into a genuine love match—a pleasant exception to the majority of such affairs. He became devoted to his wife, saying: "she exceeded all that was promised of her, and all that I myself had hoped." Partly because of this marriage, and also because he felt himself slighted in certain army appointments, he resigned his commissim after five years' service, and retired for a time to private life.

Upon his return to Court, taking up apartments which the royal favour had reserved for him at Versailles, Saint-Simon secretly entered upon the self-appointed task for which he is now known to fame—a task which the proud King of a vainglorious Court would have lost no time in terminating had it been discovered—the task of judge, spy, critic, portraitist, and historian, rolled into one. Day by day, henceforth for many years, he was to set down upon his private "Memoirs" the results of his personal observations, supplemented by the gossip brought to him by his unsuspecting friends; for neither courtier, statesman, minister, nor friend ever looked upon those notes which this "little Duke

with his cruel, piercing, unsatisfied eyes" was so busily penning. Says Vallee: "He filled a unique position at Court, being accepted by all, even by the King himself, as a cynic, personally liked for his disposition, enjoying consideration on account of the prestige of his social connections, inspiring fear in the more timid by the severity and fearlessness of his criticism." Yet Louis XIV. never seems to have liked him, and Saint- Simon owed his influence chiefly to his friendly relations with the Dauphin's family. During the Regency, he tried to restrain the profligate Duke of Orleans, and in return was offered the position of governor of the boy, Louis XV., which he refused. Soon after, he retired to private life, and devoted his remaining years largely to revising his beloved "Memoirs." The autograph manuscript, still in existence, reveals the immense labour which he put into it. The writing is remarkable for its legibility and freedom from erasure. It comprises no less than 2,300 pages in folio.

After the author's death, in 1755, the secret of his lifelong labour was revealed; and the Duc de Choiseul, fearing the result of these frank revelations, confiscated them and placed them among the state archives. For sixty years they remained under lock and key, being seen by only a few privileged persons, among them Marmontel, Duclos, and Voltaire. A garbled version of extracts appeared in 1789, possibly being used as a Revolutionary text. Finally, in 1819, a descendant of the analyst, bearing the same name, obtained permission from Louis XVIII. to set this "prisoner of the Bastille" at liberty; and in 1829 an authoritative edition, revised and arranged by chapters, appeared. It created a tremendous stir. Saint-Simon had been merciless, from King down to lady's maid, in depicting the daily life of a famous Court. He had stripped it of all its tinsel and pretension, and laid the ragged framework bare. "He wrote like the Devil for posterity!" exclaimed Chateaubriand. But the work at once became universally read and quoted, both in France and England. Macaulay made frequent use of it in his historical essays. It was, in a word, recognised as the chief authority upon an important period of thirty years (1694-1723).

Since then it has passed through many editions, finally receiving an adequate English translation at the hands of Bayle St. John, who has been careful to adhere to the peculiarities of Saint-Simon's style. It is this version which is now presented in full, giving us not only many vivid pictures of the author's time, but of the author himself. "I do not pride myself upon my freedom from prejudice—impartiality," he confesses—"it would be useless to attempt it. But I have tried at all times to tell the truth."

VOLUME 1

CHAPTER I

I was born on the night of the 15th of January, 1675, of Claude Duc de Saint-Simon, Peer of France, and of his second wife Charlotte de l'Aubepine. I was the only child of that marriage. By his first wife, Diana de Budos, my father had had only a daughter. He married her to the Duc de Brissac, Peer of France, only brother of the Duchesse de Villeroy. She died in 1684, without children,—having been long before separated from a husband who was unworthy of her—leaving me heir of all her property.

I bore the name of the Vidame de Chartres; and was educated with great care and attention. My mother, who was remarkable for virtue, perseverance, and sense, busied herself continually in forming my mind and body. She feared for me the usual fate of young men, who believe their fortunes made, and who find themselves their own masters early in life. It was not likely that my father, born in 1606, would live long enough to ward off from me this danger; and my mother repeatedly impressed on, me how necessary it was for a young man, the son of the favourite of a King long dead,—with no new friends at Court,—to acquire some personal value of his own. She succeeded in stimulating my courage; and in exciting in me the desire to make the acquisitions she laid stress on; but my aptitude for study and the sciences did not come up to my desire to succeed in them. However, I had an innate inclination for reading, especially works of history; and thus was inspired with ambition to emulate the examples presented to my imagination,—to do something and become somebody, which partly made amends for my coldness for letters. In fact, I have always thought that if I had been allowed to read history more constantly, instead of losing my time in studies for which I had no aptness, I might have made some figure in the world.

What I read of my own accord, of history, and, above all, of the personal memoirs of the times since Francis I., bred in me the desire to write down what I might myself see. The hope of advancement, and of becoming familiar with the affairs of my time, stirred me. The annoyances I might thus bring upon myself did not fail to present themselves to my mind; but the firm resolution I made to keep my writings secret from everybody, appeared to me to remedy all evils. I commenced my memoirs then in July, 1694, being at that time colonel of a cavalry regiment bearing my name, in the camp of Guinsheim, upon the old Rhine, in the army commanded by the Marechal Duc de Lorges.

In 1691 I was studying my philosophy and beginning to learn to ride at an academy at Rochefort, getting mightily tired of masters and books, and anxious to join the army. The siege of Mons, formed by the King in person, at the commencement of the spring, had drawn away all the young men of my age to commence their first campaign; and, what piqued me most, the Duc de Chartres was there, too. I had been, as it were, educated with him. I was younger than he by eight months; and if the expression be allowed in speaking of young people, so unequal in position, friendship had united us. I made up my mind, therefore, to escape from my leading-strings; but pass lightly over the artifices I used in order to attain success. I addressed myself to my mother. I soon saw that she trifled with me. I had recourse to my father, whom I made believe that the King, having led a great siege this year, would rest the next. I said nothing of this to my mother, who did not discover my plot until it was just upon the point, of execution.

The King had determined rigidly to adhere to a rule he had laid down— namely, that none who entered the service, except his illegitimate children, and the Princes of the blood royal, should be exempt from serving for a year in one of his two companies of musketeers; and passing afterwards through the ordeal of being private or subaltern in one of the regiments of cavalry or infantry, before receiving permission to purchase a regiment. My father took me, therefore, to Versailles, where he

had not been for many years, and begged of the King admission for me into the Musketeers. It was on the day of St. Simon and St. Jude, at half-past twelve, and just as his Majesty came out of the council.

The King did my father the honour of embracing him three times, and then turned towards me. Finding that I was little and of delicate appearance, he said I was still very young; to which my father replied, that I should be able in consequence to serve longer. Thereupon the King demanded in which of the two companies he wished to put me; and my father named that commanded by Maupertuis, who was one of his friends. The King relied much upon the information given him by the captains of the two companies of Musketeers, as to the young men who served in them. I have reason for believing, that I owe to Maupertuis the first good opinion that his Majesty had of me.

Three months after entering the Musketeers, that is to say, in the March of the following year, the King held a review of his guards, and of the gendarmerie, at Compiegne, and I mounted guard once at the palace. During this little journey there was talk of a much more important one. My joy was extreme; but my father, who had not counted upon this, repented of having believed me, when I told him that the King would no doubt rest at Paris this year. My mother, after a little vexation and pouting at finding me enrolled by my father against her will, did not fail to bring him to reason, and to make him provide me with an equipment of thirty-five horses or mules, and means to live honourably.

A grievous annoyance happened in our house about three weeks before my departure. A steward of my father named Tesse, who had been with him many years, disappeared all at once with fifty thousand francs due to various tradesfolk. He had written out false receipts from these people, and put them in his accounts. He was a little man, gentle, affable, and clever; who had shown some probity, and who had many friends.

The King set out on the 10th of May, 1692, with the ladies; and I performed the journey on horseback with the soldiers and all the attendants, like the other Musketeers, and continued to do so through the whole campaign. I was accompanied by two gentlemen; the one had been my tutor, the other was my mother's squire. The King's army was formed at the camp of Gevries; that of M. de Luxembourg almost joined it: The ladies were at Mons, two leagues distant. The King made them come into his camp, where he entertained them; and then showed them, perhaps; the most superb review which had ever been seen. The two armies were ranged in two lines, the right of M. de Luxembourg's touching the left of the King's,—the whole extending over three leagues of ground.

After stopping ten days at Gevries, the two armies separated and marched. Two days afterwards the seige of Namur was declared. The King arrived there in five days. Monseigneur (son of the King); Monsieur (Duc d'Orleans, brother of the King); M. le Prince (de Conde) and Marechal d'Humieres; all four, the one under the other, commanded in the King's army under the King himself. The Duc de Luxembourg, sole general of his own army, covered the siege operations, and observed the enemy. The ladies went away to Dinant. On the third day of the march M. le Prince went forward to invest the place.

The celebrated Vauban, the life and soul of all the sieges the King made, was of opinion that the town should be attacked separately from the castle; and his advice was acted upon. The Baron de Bresse, however, who had fortified the place, was for attacking town and castle together. He was a humble down-looking man, whose physiognomy promised nothing, but who soon acquired the confidence of the King, and the esteem of the army.

The Prince de Conde, Marechal d'Humieres, and the Marquis de Boufflers each led an attack. There was nothing worthy of note during the ten days the siege lasted. On the eleventh day, after the trenches had been opened, a parley was beaten and a capitulation made almost as the besieged desired it. They withdrew to the castle; and it was agreed that it should not be attacked from the town-side, and that the town was not to be battered by it. During the siege the King was almost always in his tent; and the weather remained constantly warm and serene. We lost scarcely anybody of consequence. The Comte de Toulouse received a slight wound in the arm while quite close to the King, who from

a prominent place was witnessing the attack of a half-moon, which was carried in broad daylight by a detachment of the oldest of the two companies of Musketeers.

The siege of the castle next commenced. The position of the camp was changed. The King's tents and those of all the Court were pitched in a beautiful meadow about five hundred paces from the monastery of Marlaigne. The fine weather changed to rain, which fell with an abundance and perseverance never before known by any one in the army. This circumstance increased the reputation of Saint Medard, whose fete falls on the 8th of June. It rained in torrents that day, and it is said that when such is the case it will rain for forty days afterwards. By chance it happened so this year. The soldiers in despair at this deluge uttered many imprecations against the Saint; and looked for images of him, burning and breaking as many as they could find. The rains sadly interfered with the progress of the siege. The tents of the King could only be communicated with by paths laid with fascines which required to be renewed every day, as they sank down into the soil. The camps and quarters were no longer accessible; the trenches were full of mud and water, and it took often three days to remove cannon from one battery to another. The waggons became useless, too, so that the transport of bombs, shot, and so forth, could not be performed except upon the backs of mules and of horses taken from the equipages of the Court and the army. The state of the roads deprived the Duc de Luxembourg of the use of waggons and other vehicles. His army was perishing for want of grain. To remedy this inconvenience the King ordered all his household troops to mount every day on horseback by detachments, and to take sacks of grain upon their cruppers to a village where they were to be received and counted by the officers of the Duc de Luxembourg. Although the household of the King had scarcely any repose during this siege, what with carrying fascines, furnishing guards, and other daily services, this increase of duty was given to it because the cavalry served continually also, and was reduced almost entirely to leaves of trees for provender.

The household of the King, accustomed to all sorts of distinctions, complained bitterly of this task. But the King turned a deaf ear to them, and would be obeyed. On the first day some of the Gendarmes and of the light horse of the guard arrived early in the morning at the depot of the sacks, and commenced murmuring and exciting each other by their discourses. They threw down the sacks at last and flatly refused to carry them. I had been asked very politely if I would be of the detachment for the sacks or of some other. I decided for the sacks, because I felt that I might thereby advance myself, the subject having already made much noise. I arrived with the detachment of the Musketeers at the moment of the refusal of the others; and I loaded my sack before their eyes. Marin, a brigadier of cavalry and lieutenant of the body guards, who was there to superintend the operation, noticed me, and full of anger at the refusal he had just met with, exclaimed that as I did not think such work beneath me, the rest would do well to imitate my example. Without a word being spoken each took up his sack; and from that time forward no further difficulty occurred in the matter. As soon as the detachment had gone, Marin went straight to the King and told him what had occurred. This was a service which procured for me several obliging discourses from his Majesty, who during the rest of the siege always sought to say something agreeable every time he met me.

The twenty-seventh day after opening the trenches, that is, the first of July, 1692, a parley was sounded by the Prince de Barbanqon, governor of the place,—a fortunate circumstance for the besiegers, who were worn out with fatigue; and destitute of means, on account of the wretched weather which still continued, and which had turned the whole country round into a quagmire. Even the horses of the King lived upon leaves, and not a horse of all our numerous cavalry ever thoroughly recovered from the effects of such sorry fare. It is certain that without the presence of the King the siege might never have been successful; but he being there, everybody was stimulated. Yet had the place held out ten days longer, there is no saying what might have happened. Before the end of the siege the King was so much fatigued with his exertions, that a new attack of gout came on, with more pain than ever, and compelled him to keep his bed, where, however, he thought of everything, and laid out his plans as though he had been at Versailles.

During the entire siege, the Prince of Orange (William III. of England) had unavailingly used all his science to dislodge the Duc de Luxembourg; but he had to do with a man who in matters of war was his superior, and who continued so all his life. Namur, which, by the surrender of the castle, was now entirely in our power, was one of the strongest places in the Low Countries, and had hitherto boasted of having never changed masters. The inhabitants could not restrain their tears of sorrow. Even the monks of Marlaigne were profoundly moved, so much so, that they could not disguise their grief. The King, feeling for the loss of their corn that they had sent for safety into Namur, gave them double the quantity, and abundant alms. He incommoded them as little as possible, and would not permit the passage of cannon across their park, until it was found impossible to transport it by any other road. Notwithstanding these acts of goodness, they could scarcely look upon a Frenchman after the taking of the place; and one actually refused to give a bottle of beer to an usher of the King's antechamber, although offered a bottle of champagne in exchange for it!

A circumstance happened just after the taking of Namur, which might have led to the saddest results, under any other prince than the King. Before he entered the town, a strict examination of every place was made, although by the capitulation all the mines, magazines, &c., had to be shown. At a visit paid to the Jesuits, they pretended to show everything, expressing, however, surprise and something more, that their bare word was not enough. But on examining here and there, where they did not expect search would be made, their cellars were found to be stored with gunpowder, of which they had taken good care to say no word. What they meant to do with it is uncertain. It was carried away, and as they were Jesuits nothing was done.

During the course of this siege, the King suffered a cruel disappointment. James II. of England, then a refugee in France, had advised the King to give battle to the English fleet. Joined to that of Holland it was very superior to the sea forces of France. Tourville, our admiral, so famous for his valour and skill, pointed this circumstance out to the King. But it was all to no effect. He was ordered to attack the enemy. He did so. Many of his ships were burnt, and the victory was won by the English. A courier entrusted with this sad intelligence was despatched to the King. On his way he was joined by another courier, who pressed him for his news. The first courier knew that if he gave up his news, the other, who was better mounted, would outstrip him, and be the first to carry it to the King. He told his companion, therefore, an idle tale, very different indeed from the truth, for he changed the defeat into a great victory. Having gained this wonderful intelligence, the second courier put spurs to his horse, and hurried away to the King's camp, eager to be the bearer of good tidings. He reached the camp first, and was received with delight. While his Majesty was still in great joy at his happy victory, the other courier arrived with the real details. The Court appeared prostrated. The King was much afflicted. Nevertheless he found means to appear to retain his self-possession, and I saw, for the first time, that Courts are not long in affliction or occupied with sadness. I must mention that the (exiled) King of England looked on at this naval battle from the shore; and was accused of allowing expressions of partiality to escape him in favour of his countrymen, although none had kept their promises to him.

Two days after the defeated garrison had marched out, the King went to Dinant, to join the ladies, with whom he returned to Versailles. I had hoped that Monseigneur would finish the campaign, and that I should be with him, and it was not without regret that I returned towards Paris. On the way a little circumstance happened. One of our halting-places was Marienburgh, where we camped for the night. I had become united in friendship with Comte de Coetquen, who was in the same company with myself. He was well instructed and full of wit; was exceedingly rich, and even more idle than rich. That evening he had invited several of us to supper in his tent. I went there early, and found him stretched out upon his bed, from which I dislodged him playfully and laid myself down in his place, several of our officers standing by. Coetquen, sporting with me in return, took his gun, which he thought to be unloaded, and pointed it at me. But to our great surprise the weapon went off. Fortunately for me, I was at that moment lying flat upon the bed. Three balls passed just above my

head, and then just above the heads of our two tutors, who were walking outside the tent. Coetquen fainted at thought of the mischief he might have done, and we had all the pains in the world to bring him to himself again. Indeed, he did not thoroughly recover for several days. I relate this as a lesson which ought to teach us never to play with fire-arms.

The poor lad,—to finish at once all that concerns him,—did not long survive this incident. He entered the King's regiment, and when just upon the point of joining it in the following spring, came to me and said he had had his fortune told by a woman named Du Perehoir, who practised her trade secretly at Paris, and that she had predicted he would be soon drowned. I rated him soundly for indulging a curiosity so dangerous and so foolish. A few days after he set out for Amiens. He found another fortune-teller there, a man, who made the same prediction. In marching afterwards with the regiment of the King to join the army, he wished to water his horse in the Escaut, and was drowned there, in the presence of the whole regiment, without it being possible to give him any aid. I felt extreme regret for his loss, which for his friends and his family was irreparable.

But I must go back a little, and speak of two marriages that took place at the commencement of this year the first (most extraordinary) on the 18th February the other a month after.

CHAPTER II

The King was very anxious to establish his illegitimate children, whom he advanced day by day; and had married two of them, daughters, to Princes of the blood. One of these, the Princesse de Conti, only daughter of the King and Madame de la Valliere, was a widow without children; the other, eldest daughter of the King and Madame de Montespan, had married Monsieur le Duc (Louis de Bourbon, eldest son of the Prince de Conde). For some time past Madame de Maintenon, even more than the King, had thought of nothing else than how to raise the remaining illegitimate children, and wished to marry Mademoiselle de Blois (second daughter of the King and of Madame de Montespan) to Monsieur the Duc de Chartres. The Duc de Chartres was the sole nephew of the King, and was much above the Princes of the blood by his rank of Grandson of France, and by the Court that Monsieur his father kept up.

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

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

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

It was, then, Dubois that the Chevalier de Lorraine made use of to gain the consent of the young Duc de Chartres to the marriage proposed by the King. Dubois had, in fact, gained the Duke's confidence, which it was easy to do at that age; had made him afraid of his father and of the King; and, on the other hand, had filled him with fine hopes and expectations. All that Dubois could do, however, when he broke the matter of the marriage to the young Duke, was to ward off a direct refusal; but that was sufficient for the success of the enterprise. Monsieur was already gained, and as soon as the King had a reply from Dubois he hastened to broach the affair. A day or two before this, however, Madame (mother of the Duc de Chartres) had scent of what was going on. She spoke to her son of the indignity of this marriage with that force in which she was never wanting, and

drew from him a promise that he would not consent to it. Thus, he was feeble towards his teacher, feeble towards his mother, and there was aversion on the one hand and fear on the other, and great embarrassment on all sides.

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

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

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

This evening, directly after the music had finished, the King sent for Monseigneur and Monsieur, who were already playing at 'lansquenet'; Madame, who scarcely looked at a, party of 'hombre' at which she had seated herself; the Duc de Chartres, who, with a rueful visage, was playing at chess; and Mademoiselle de Blois, who had scarcely begun to appear in society, but who this evening was extraordinarily decked out, and who, as yet, knew nothing and suspected nothing; and therefore, being naturally very timid, and horribly afraid of the King, believed herself sent for in order to be reprimanded, and trembled so that Madame de Maintenon took her upon her knees, where she held her, but was scarcely able to reassure her. The fact of these royal persons being sent for by the King at once made people think that a marriage was in contemplation. In a few minutes they returned, and then the announcement was made public. I arrived at that moment. I found everybody m clusters, and great astonishment expressed upon every face. Madame was walking in the gallery with Chateauthiers—her favourite, and worthy of being so. She took long strides, her handkerchief in her hand, weeping without constraint, speaking pretty loudly, gesticulating; and looking like Ceres after the rape of her daughter Proserpine, seeking her in fury, and demanding her back from Jupiter. Every one respectfully made way to let her pass. Monsieur, who had returned to 'lansquenet', seemed

overwhelmed with shame, and his son appeared in despair; and the bride-elect was marvellously embarrassed and sad. Though very young, and likely to be dazzled by such a marriage, she understood what was passing, and feared the consequences. Most people appeared full of consternation.

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

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

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

M. de Villars was gentleman usher; he was grandson of a recorder of Coindrieu, and one of the best made men in France. There was a great deal of fighting in his young days, and he had acquired a reputation for courage and skill. To these qualities he owed his fortune. M. de Nemours was his first patron, and, in a duel which he had with M. de Beaufort, took Villars for second. M. de Nemours was killed; but Villars was victorious against his adversary, and passed into the service of the Prince de Conti as one of his gentlemen. He succeeded in gaining confidence in his new employment; so much so, that the marriage which afterwards took place between the Prince de Conti and the niece of Cardinal Mazarin was brought about in part by his assistance. He became the confidant of the married pair, and their bond: of union with the Cardinal. His position gave him an opportunity of mixing in society much above him; but on this he never presumed. His face was his, passport with the ladies: he was gallant, even discreet; and this means was not unuseful to him. He pleased Madame Scarron, who upon the throne never forgot the friendships of this kind, so freely intimate, which she had formed as a private person. Villars was employed in diplomacy; and from honour to honour, at last reached the order of the Saint Esprit, in 1698. His wife was full of wit, and scandalously inclined. Both were very poor—and always dangled about the Court, where they had many powerful friends.

The Marechale de Rochefort was lady of honour. She was of the house of Montmorency—a widow—handsome—sprightly; formed by nature to live at Court—apt for gallantry and intrigues; full of worldly cleverness, from living much in the world, with little cleverness of any other kind, nearly enough for any post and any business. M. de Louvois found her suited to his taste, and she

accommodated herself very well to his purse, and to the display she made by this intimacy. She always became the friend of every new mistress of the King; and when he favoured Madame de Soubise, it was at the Marechale's house that she waited, with closed doors, for Bontems, the King's valet, who led her by private ways to his Majesty. The Marechale herself has related to me how one day she was embarrassed to get rid of the people that Madame de Soubise (who had not had time to announce her arrival) found at her house; and how she most died of fright lest Bontems should return and the interview be broken off if he arrived before the company had departed. The Marechale de Rochefort was in this way the friend of Mesdames de la Valliere, de Montespan, and de Soubise; and she became the friend of Madame de Maintenon, to whom she attached herself in proportion as she saw her favour increase. She had, at the marriage of Monseigneur, been made Dame d'Atours to the new Dauphiness; and, if people were astonished at that, they were also astonished to see her lady of honour to an "illegitimate grand-daughter of France."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.