

PRINCESSES AND



COURT LADIES



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The Youth of La Grande Mademoiselle
1627-1652

Louis XIV. and La Grande Mademoiselle
1652-1693

Princesses and Court Ladies

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

New York

London



MARIE MANCINI
From the painting by Mignard

Princesses and Court Ladies

By

Arvède Barine

Author of "The Youth of La Grande Mademoiselle,"
"Louis XIV and La Grande Mademoiselle," etc.

Authorized English Version

Marie Mancini — Christina of Sweden
An Arab Princess — The Duchess of Maine
The Margravine of Bayreuth

G. P. Putnam's Sons
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PRINCESSES AND COURT LADIES

MARIE MANCINI

THERE was once upon a time a great king who governed the most beautiful country in the world. His court, like himself, was full of youth, joy, and magnificence; everything in his enchanted palace spoke of pleasure, gallantry, splendour, and especially of love. A hundred beauties sought to attract the young sovereign's attention, for besides being king, he was the handsomest man in the dominion.

At the court, there was a little, black-eyed, ill-favoured, gipsy-like maid, whom her uncle, the prime minister, had brought up from childhood. She was wild, passionate, but full of wit, and her mad pranks amused the king. He took such pleasure in her company that soon he could not do without it and vowed that he would marry her. The queen, his mother, opposed his passion and separated the two lovers, whereat there was much sorrow, and many tears were shed. But the queen was not to be gainsaid. The gipsy-like maid after this went through many adventures,

committed innumerable follies, in the course of which she blossomed into beauty. One fine day she disappeared and no one knew what had become of her.

This fairy tale is a true story, the events of which took place at the court of France during the seventeenth century. The handsome prince was Louis XIV. The wild gipsy was Marie Mancini, the niece of Cardinal Mazarin. We shall endeavour to relate this royal romance.¹

I

ON September the eleventh, 1647, just before the Fronde, the Court of France received from Italy three little girls and a little boy, before whom the courtiers bowed with indecorous servility. A lady, belonging to the Noailles family, went for them in great pomp as far as Rome; one of the Rochefoucaulds, who had been governess to the king, was appointed to care for their instruction; the queen mother brought them up with her own children, and they were treated like princes and princesses of the blood. These little foreigners bore obscure Italian names: three were Mancinis and one was a Martinozzi. Their mothers were the sisters of Cardinal Mazarin.

¹ In 1880 M. Chantelauze published an excellent book on Louis XIV and Marie Mancini. Earlier still Amédée Renée told the story of Mazarin's nieces. We have made great use of these two works.

In 1653, after the Fronde, there was a fresh arrival of nieces and nephews belonging to the all-powerful cardinal: three other Mancinis and one Martinozzi. A last little Mancini, with her brother, reached Paris in 1655. In all, there were seven nieces and three nephews, whom it was necessary to provide with dowries, husbands, wives, and sinecures.

Some far-seeing persons were struck, not so much with the grace and charm of these children, as with the thought of what they were likely to cost the nation; foreseeing, not without sorrow, the important part to be played by this handsome, strange, and dangerous family, superstitious, without religion, full of wit and of eccentricity, in all things passionate and unrestrained, living in the midst of pictures and artistic baubles, of singular pets, astrologers, and poets. There was much beauty among these young people, and they were wild over poetry, music, and love-making. Their faces and their ideas were equally original. The art of seduction was natural to them. Their tastes remained Italian, elegant, refined, and mysteriously alarming. No Frenchwoman at Court knew how to dress, ornament her home, or organise festivities as did the Mazarines. Not one had read so much, could discuss the topics of the day with so much spirit, or entertain with so much intelligence, grace, or, if need be, haughtiness. Not one, either, was so accustomed to notions which, outside of Italy, seemed very

startling. Marie Mancini, after she had become a Colonna, said and wrote, as though it were the simplest thing in the world, that she had left her honest husband, lest he should take it into his head to punish her "Italian vagaries" by poisoning her. It is never quite wholesome to look upon such expedients as natural. Little by little the Mazarines were regarded with distrust, and at the first opportunity that distrust grew into an evil rumour.

Bold and fearless, their passion for romantic adventures savoured of exoticism as did their persons. Unlike the great ladies of the Fronde, they were adventuresses rather than heroines; so long as the excitement of their frolics amused their fancy, they had no fear of compromising themselves. Pride helped them through many a critical pass, and, when even that failed, they in no way lost their spirits. An adventure that turned against them, in a way that would have covered any other women with shame, seemed to them a venture that had miscarried and must be recommenced — nothing more.

They did not believe in half measures. Two among them, Laure Mancini, Duchess of Mercœur, and Anne-Marie Martinozzi, Princess of Conti, were of a gentler mould. They turned to piety and attained saintliness. With the exception of these two, and perhaps also of Laure Martinozzi, Duchess of Modena, it is hard to decide which carried off the palm of profligacy. These Maza-

rines looked on life as a game at which only the fools do not cheat, a game with pleasure for the stake, especially, forbidden pleasure, so much more savoury than any other. Almost the whole family was lacking in any sense of morality. This is a distinctive trait of the race. Mazarin never had any. His nieces did not even know the meaning of the word. Like their uncle they seemed utterly without conscience.

The cardinal was inordinately grasping.¹ One is amazed at the enormous fortune he acquired in less than twenty years, at a time when foreign and civil wars were ruining the country. On every occasion, his great thought, his principal preoccupation, was to scrape money together. In the days of his obscure youth, he lived, and lived far too well, by gaming. His enemies often reproached him with his surprisingly persistent good luck at cards. As prime minister, he robbed France by all and every means. Like Panurge, he had sixty-three ways of turning money into his coffers, the most honest of which was hardly to be distinguished from stealing. Mazarin's most avowable means of getting rich was by plunging his hands into the king's treasury. This was better than selling offices, better than becoming "purveyor and bread vendor to the army," as

¹ The rehabilitation of Mazarin has been attempted more than once in our day. (See the interesting works of M. Cheruel.) In this study, we have left aside the political man, to show only the private individual, as he appeared in the eyes of his contemporaries.

Madame de Motteville accuses him of having been during the siege of Dunkerque (1658): "It is said that he caused wine, meat, bread, and water to be sold, and that he made a profit on all these commodities. He named himself grand master of the artillery and, in great as in small things, gained thereupon. For that reason, the suffering was terrible during the siege."¹ He sold even water to the soldiers: nothing more need be added. Thanks to this frightful pillage, he left a fortune that Fouquet estimated at a hundred millions of francs. In order to understand what such a sum represented at that time, it will suffice to say that the budget of the nation was then fifty millions.

He was not evil by nature, but he had base instincts. It is with such baseness as with certain colouring matters, a small quantity of which, thrown in a vat, suffices to defile all the water. His very accomplishments were polluted with this fatal trait. Nature had been prodigal to him, and he possessed many of the qualities which go to make a statesman, but, to use the vigorous words of Retz, "the ugly heart was seen through all." His intelligence was keen, his mind full of vivacity, fertile in resources, alive with sprightliness and grace; he was capable of conceiving great plans and of putting them into execution; he was not vindictive; he forgot injuries as easily as services; he was handsome, amiable, caressing; "he had so great a charm that those he liked could not help

¹ Memoirs of Madame de Motteville.

but love him;"¹ yet he was despicable, and there were those who despised him, but he only laughed.

Nothing is known of the origin and first years of Mazarin. It seems clear that he sprang from the dregs of the people; that his father had made a certain little fortune by serving a Colonna; and that he himself had known many ups and downs before he became a violet-stockinged *monseigneur*, one of the four handsomest prelates of Rome, says a panegyrist.² All else is vapour, fanciful tales, stories, dark or sunny, used by friend or foe. At last came the day when circumstances, intrigue, or personal merit, made of him, still a very young man, one of the negotiators from the papal court, then legate to France. The rest is well known. From the mud and obscurity of his beginnings sprang a power, a magnificence, a splendour of light which caused the proudest lords to bow before him and reigning princes to seek his alliance. His nieces, journeying from Rome to Paris, could measure the chasm between yesterday and to-day, between what they had abandoned and what they found. The Mancinis left behind them a sire who dabbled in astrology; the Martinozzis, a father sunk in profound obscurity: all sprang from very humble centres. In Paris they found an uncle, master of France, whose military household equalled that of the king and was commanded by the highest nobles of the land. They found

¹ Memoirs of de Bussy.

² The Benedictine monk, Th. Bonnet.

palaces, millions, royal luxury. They took possession of their new fortune with the ease of young girls whom nothing could astonish, and they became so important in their new station that soon the gaze of Europe was fixed on them. The splendour of the Mazarines can only be likened to the glare of a Bengal light, of which it had the suddenness, the dazzling brilliancy, and the short duration. It is too little to say that these blinding flames illumined France; their light reached far beyond the frontiers, over the whole of the Occident, and brought to the feet of these Italian sirens princes from the south and the north, from the east and the west. Then, suddenly, the fire died out. Far-sounding scandals, ruins, exile, death, crushed and annihilated the ambitious band, not, however, before they had mingled their blood with that of the proudest nobles of Europe.

Among the seven cousins, Marie Mancini has been chosen for this study, because she very nearly became Queen of France. Even apart from that circumstance she deserves to be chosen as the typical figure of her race, for she represents the average Mazarine morality, equally removed from the saints and from the she-devils, from the Princess of Conti, and Olympe Mancini, Countess of Soissons. Setting aside the saints, Saint-Simon said of Marie, comparing her with the others: "She is but a crazy thing, and yet the best of the Mazarines." Saint-Simon's judgment may be accepted.

II

IN the second convoy of nephews and nieces that Mazarin had sent for, that of 1653, was a little creature of thirteen or fourteen, a very prodigy of ugliness in the opinion of the court. She was dark-skinned and yellow, with a long neck and never-ending arms. Her mouth was large and flat, her black eyes were hard, and there was neither charm nor hope of charm in all her person. Her mind was made on the same model. "She was bold," wrote Madame de La Fayette,¹ "imperious, violent, indelicate, and ignorant of all the amenities of life." In the midst of her sisters and cousins she seemed some half-starved, rough-haired, wild animal, ready to bite; this displeasing little person was Marie Mancini.

Her mother could make nothing of her. Madame Mancini died in Paris during the year 1656. Before breathing her last, she recommended her children to her brother, the cardinal, "and she urged especially that her third daughter, whose name was Marie, should be made to pronounce her vows, because of her untamable and evil nature; and because her husband, the great astrologer, had predicted that she would be the cause of much woe."² Madame Mancini was hard on her gipsy-like daughter, and the worthy M. Mancini would have been more wisely inspired if he had

¹ Histoire de Madame Henrietta d'Angleterre.

² Memoirs of Madame de Motteville.

read in the stars that it would be a good thing to place Olympe behind convent walls. Mazarin, though he believed in horoscopes, turned a deaf ear to his brother-in-law's predictions and kept Marie at court. Before long he greatly repented thereof.

This little girl, so crudely described, was a veritable product of the south, full of fire, passion, and violence. Heat seemed to radiate from her. Her black eyes were full of flames, and the flames softened them. Her face grew less dark. Her voice acquired accents of such depth and warmth that it moved all who listened; every gesture revealed the wild ardour of her being. At the same time her mind, by contact with the polished French world, grew in refinement. When she left Rome, she knew by heart the Italian poets, including Ariosto. Soon she was familiar with those of France. She was carried away with her enthusiasm for Corneille, Gomberville, La Calprenade, and Scudéry intoxicated her. She was equally fond of heroic and amorous literature: the one went straight to her head, the other to her heart. She was passionately fond of all the arts. She was fascinated by astrology, which she had studied and to which she turned for advice in critical moments. There was about her something ravenous and eternally consumed by internal fires, and this inspired a sort of terror. During the illness which well-nigh carried off Louis XIV, in 1658, she amazed the court with her screams,

her sobs, her torrents of tears. All etiquette and even good manners were forgotten. In the face of heaven and earth she gave way to furious despair and "killed herself with weeping."¹

This was the more remarkable for the reason that, in her family, the event was regarded from a very different point of view, a much more "Mazarine" point of view. The cardinal hid his treasures, moved his furniture, and began paying court to the friends of Monsieur, brother and heir to the king. Olympe, whose tender passion for Louis XIV was no secret, quietly went on with her card parties: a dying prince was a useless commodity and no longer interested her. When, against all expectations, the king recovered, "everybody," says Madame de La Fayette, "spoke to him of Mademoiselle Mancini's sorrow." Madame de La Fayette shrewdly adds: "Perhaps, later on, she may have told him of it herself."

The king was twenty years of age. He had had intrigues with Madame de Beauvais, surnamed "Cateau la Borgnesse," his mother's lady in waiting; with a gardener's daughter; with a duchess of great and long experience, Madame de Chatillon. He had been in love. He had never been loved, perhaps because he was still timid with women; he was, after all, but a youth who grew red or pale when a pretty girl took him by the hand. He wept easily, wept tears of nervousness that old age was destined to give back to him. "Tears

¹ Memoirs of Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

come to him which he cannot control," wrote Madame de Maintenon, in 1705, to one of her confidants.

The thought that he had at last excited a great passion, one of those extreme loves which, more than any other, he thought himself worthy to excite, could not leave him indifferent. He examined Marie Mancini and found that she had improved in looks. He talked to her "with persistence"¹ and was carried away like straw in a hurricane.

He loved Marie at first because she was determined that he should do so; then, of his own accord, and from a nobler motive, he loved her because he felt in her a superior mind, through association with which his own mind broadened to horizons hitherto unknown. In order to understand this evolution we must, for a moment, forget the Louis XIV we are accustomed to consider, the *roi-soleil*, majestic in his part of demi-god, and remember what nature and education had made him at the age of twenty.

That he was good-looking was admitted by all. His fine presence was enhanced by a natural and majestic grace which in the midst of his courtiers made of him "the king of the hive." He was clever at all sports and had been carefully trained as a horseman; he danced admirably. As far as intellectual culture went, Mazarin had quite neglected that part of his education. Accord-

¹ Memoirs of Saint-Simon.

ing to his own confession, Louis XIV was profoundly ignorant, and he was not one of those privileged few who know by instinct what they have not been taught. The little he knew had been imparted by his teachers. The cardinal deemed it sufficient that he should play with his nieces. The young king's ideas needed to be stimulated, and no one saw fit to stimulate them; at twenty they still lay dormant. Deep down in his nature there existed, in germ, great qualities which later, out of a rather mediocre personality, made of him a great monarch; but these germs lacked air and light. Marie Mancini became his friend, and it was as though a glory of sunlight had burst into an obscure and closed recess. He learned and understood more things within six months than he had done in all his life before.

She opened to him the world of heroes; heroes of love, of constancy and abnegation, of glory. She revealed to him sentiments grand or subtle, passionate or noble, that give value to life. She scolded him for his ignorance and became his professor, teaching him Italian, putting volumes of poetry in his hands, as well as romances and tragedies; reading verses and prose to him, with her rich voice vibrating with love, the intonations of which intoxicated or soothed him. She accustomed him to long, serious conversations with men of ripe years and great experience, excited him to emulate them, to find words full of

dignity and precision. To her, also, he owed the little he ever cared for art.

He owed her yet more. Thanks to her, he grew ashamed of having no high ambitions, no dreams good or bad, no desires beyond the choice of a costume or the step of a ballet. She bade him remember that he was a king, and prompted him to become a great king. This lesson he never forgot.

His love grew out of his admiration for his Algeria. In the beginning, before Marie became his teacher, his feeling for her was like that of most very young men. She tells the story of this dawning attachment most gracefully in a writing entitled *Apologie*.¹ The familiar way in which I saw the king and his brother was something so pleasant and sweet, that I could say, without the least constraint, all that I wished to say, and it happened that sometimes, in doing so, I gave them pleasure. Once, having gone with the court to Fontainebleau,² for we always followed in the king's train, I heard on my return that the king by no means hated me. I possessed enough penetration to understand that sort of eloquence which, silent, yet speaks louder than the most elaborate words. It is possible that my own feelings for the king, in whom I had discovered nobler qualities and

¹ The complete title is "Apologie où véritables Memoires de Madame Marie Mancini, connétable de Colonna, écrits par elle-même" (Leyde, 1678).

² August-September, 1658. Louis XIV had fallen ill at the end of June.

greater merit than in any other man in France, had made me wiser in this respect than in any other. The evidence of my own eyes would scarcely have persuaded me that I had made so prodigious a conquest. The courtiers, natural spies of their master's actions, had, long before myself, discovered his Majesty's passion; they revealed it to me by their extraordinary submission and flatteries. On the other hand, the attentions of the monarch, the magnificent presents he showered upon me, and, yet more, his languor, his sighs, his compliance with my slightest wish, soon left no doubt on the subject."

Languor, sighs, presents: such was in those days the usual language of love; so far, nothing distinguishes this passion from any other. A few weeks later the young prince was possessed by an ardent and many-sided feeling, in which tenderness, gratitude, admiration, submission, the adoration of a pupil for his professor, and the peculiar attraction exercised on men of the north by southern women, were all mingled. Marie Mancini fed the fire by every means suggested by her nature. She followed the king step by step, scarcely left him, became the obsession of his life, knew how to render that obsession sweet to him, then necessary. In his palace she seemed to be his shadow, and he had eyes but for her. If the court travelled, Mademoiselle Mancini left the ladies in their coaches, mounted her horse, and rode over hill and dale with her knight. For

these two, winter or summer, wind, rain, or cold, did not exist: they were together, that sufficed; nothing else mattered. She taught him to confide in her absolutely: she knew his thoughts, his affairs, his plans, all he had heard or learned. From confidante to adviser there is but a step, and that step was soon taken. Mistress of the king's heart and mind, and absolute mistress, Marie Mancini bethought her of making good use of her power. She lifted her eyes to the throne of France and deemed it within her reach. She insinuated as much, and her audacity was not rebuked. With the king, two other persons only had a voice in the matter: one was the queen, the other was Cardinal Mazarin. In order to understand what Marie had to expect either for or against her, it will be necessary to examine the personal relations of these two, and the progress of the Mazarin family since its invasion of France.

III

WHEN, on the fourteenth of May, 1643, Louis XIV came to the throne, Mazarin's position at the court of France was most insecure. The late king had made him enter the council of regency, but the queen-regent hated him because of Richelieu's protection. He made some pretence of leaving the game and announced his departure for Rome; yet he bethought him that

his Italian graces might serve his course. Circumstances shaped his course. Anne of Austria held the power; it was necessary for him to win the heart of Anne, so that the queen should be subservient to the woman. Mazarin began the siege on which so much depended.

The queen mother had just passed her fortieth birthday. She was coquettish, but affected a romantic and languishing sort of coquetry, which prized above all things tender conversations, love-stricken looks, and delicate attentions. Madame de Chevreuse, confidante of Anne's earlier years, affirmed that the aversion with which Anne turned from Cardinal Richelieu came from the fact that "in love he was pedantic," an insupportable fault in very deed, and which few women can forgive. Mazarin's letters, on the contrary, show that small attentions were always grateful to the queen. When they were both old, he very gouty, and much preoccupied by the treaty of the Pyrenees, he yet made her small presents, as to a bread-and-butter miss. From Saint-Jean-de-Luz, he writes: "Here is a box with eighteen fans, which has been sent to me from Rome. . . . You will also receive four pairs of gloves which my sister has forwarded to me."

Mazarin took a hint from Richelieu's failure. He was by no means pedantic. He seemed to be madly in love and yet crushed by the conviction of his unworthiness. He melted into

tenderness and remained so humble that he was as dust under the feet of his goddess. He showed himself more persuasive than pressing, more submissive than persuasive, more amiable than submissive. And he succeeded.

What he became, once master of the situation, his "correspondence" with Anne of Austria reveals clearly enough. During one of his exiles at the time of the Fronde, the queen ends a letter with this passionate cry: "Yours, till my last breath; farewell, all my strength has left me." The memories he left were indelible. At fifty-eight years of age, she writes: "Your letter filled me with joy; I scarcely know whether I shall be fortunate enough to persuade you of this truth. If I thought that a letter from me could give you as much pleasure, how willingly I should have written! I remember the time when you received such epistles with transports of gratitude, a time ever present to my mind, whatever else you may think. If you could read in my heart as easily as you read this letter, I am sure that you would be content, or else you would indeed be the most ungrateful man in the world — and that I will not believe."¹ Mazarin's letters were written after the same style: "How happy should I be, how satisfied you would be, could you see my heart, or if I could express all I feel, even but half of what I feel! Then, indeed, you would acknowledge that never was affection

¹ Letter of July 30, 1660.



CARDINAL MAZARIN
From the portrait by R. Gaywood

equal to that which I experience for you. I confess that I could scarcely, beforehand, have imagined that it could thus take away all taste and liking for everything that is not you.”¹ He knew his power and liked to exert it: “Were you near the sea, I think you would be happier; I trust you may be, before long.” In their secret language, the sea was himself. What an immeasurable triumph, what a tickling of vanity, what a delicious feeling of mastership, was experienced by this *parvenu*, when he held at his mercy one of the proudest princesses that ever lived!

Many of their contemporaries believed in a private marriage. To this there was no absolute obstacle, as Mazarin was cardinal without having taken orders. But, as authentic proofs are lacking, historians vary, and will never come to an understanding. Some claim that the queen’s piety would never have allowed her to take a paramour. Others allege her pride, which could ill brook a hosier as father-in-law, would have prevented such a step. Both sides quote the documents of the day, and these would be pretty equally balanced, had not the partisans in favour of the marriage found an almost unanswerable argument. After a time Mazarin became singularly free and unceremonious with the queen. The attentions and caresses were mingled with a certain roughness and neglect which smacked of

¹ Letter written in exile, May 11, 1651.

the husband. He showed himself for what he really was: a disagreeable grumbler. "No one," says his niece Hortense, "ever had better manners in public or worse at home."¹ Anne of Austria was destined to know both the good and the bad manners. It must be confessed that such things set one thinking.

However that may be, the love of the queen for Mazarin was so deep that in it she found the strength to defend him against all things and all men, in spite of her natural indolence. When he left her she was beside herself. "She seems distraught," said a libel of the time,² and the expression was a true one. It is not our mission to recall the struggles of the Fronde; during those troublous times, but for her devotion and fidelity, Mazarin would inevitably have fallen a victim to the hatred and contempt of the people. He was saved by prodigies of love, and he knew it. Henceforth Mazarin walked on clouds. Down with humility! Give way to the veritable sovereign of France! He made up for having crept into favour, and soon, like his niece Marie, thought no position too exalted for him and his: the throne itself seemed within their grasp. He had, moreover, been clever enough to give Louis XIV brothers-in-law of whom he need not be ashamed.

The eldest of the Mancinis, Laure, in 1651, had married the Duke of Mercœur, grandson of

¹ Memoirs of the duchess of Mazarin.

² L'Exorciste de la reine.

Henri V and the beautiful Gabrielle. The following year, Anne-Marie Martinozzi was wedded to the Prince of Conti, brother to the great Condé and of royal blood. Then came the turn of the second Martinozzi, who, in 1655, became Duchess of Modena. In 1657 Olympe Mancini married Prince Eugene of Carignan, Count of Soissons, belonging to the house of Savoie. She too had dreamt of the French crown and had touched it with the tips of her fingers. Seeing that the king did not seem inclined to give it to her, she, being of a practical turn of mind, turned her attention elsewhere. Her uncle had done his best to help her to climb the steps of the throne, but "all the astrologers had been so unanimous in assuring her that she could not succeed that she had given up all thought of it."¹ The beautiful Hortense was still unmarried, but was surrounded by a court of princely admirers.

With his nephews, the cardinal was less lucky. Of the three, two, remarkably gifted, died young. The third, whom his uncle created Duke of Nevers, was a brilliant scatter-brain and good-for-nothing.

He could do without the boys. Thanks to the girls, the family appeared able to withstand the wildest tempests. The giddy heights of prosperity already attained made the ambitious dream of Marie Mancini seem not impossible. The Court was ready to accept it, since the king's marriage with Olympe had been seriously

¹ Histoire de Madame Henriette by Madame de La Fayette.

considered. Marie thought that, in this, as in all things, the queen would be guided by the cardinal. As to her uncle, how could she imagine that he would not rejoice at having such a nephew?

IV

IN point of fact, her uncle was willing enough. Had Mazarin been a saint he might have put aside so great a temptation; but he was no saint. On the other hand, he was no fool, and would never, for the sake of vainglory, have given up the solid advantages which he already possessed. He loved power and money; he meant to keep them; the grandeur of his niece, seated on the throne of France, would in no way have consoled him for their loss. One must never lose sight of this point of view in following the intricate and difficult game played by the cardinal during this crisis. Monsieur de Brienne¹ put his finger on the situation when he said in his "Memoirs": "In spite of all that his Eminence may have said on the subject, if the marriage of his Majesty with his niece had been possible, and if his Eminence had therein found his own security, it is certain that he would not have opposed it. *His own security*: that was the point. Ambitious, unscrupulous, but full of sagacity, such was the uncle. The niece's best tactics would have been

¹ Memoirs of Madame de Motteville.

to give him no cause for alarm. Unfortunately for her dream of happiness, Marie Mancini was incapable of prudence. She was too violent, too much carried away by her own fancies to be cunning."

We have seen that the king's passion for Mademoiselle Mancini burst into life during a sojourn of the Court at Fontainebleau. The queen mother saw it with great displeasure, and the "venerated quality of the niece"¹ did not keep her from letting the uncle understand her feelings on the subject quite plainly. Whenever the king was in question, the cardinal felt his hold upon her loosen. The indelible memories were obliterated, and Mazarin saw before him a great princess, as haughty, as proud of her blood, as though he had never been more than a worm at her feet. In stormy interviews, she spoke with great violence, but in vain, for "the king's passion was at first fostered by the minister."¹ Marie was left free to do as she chose, and she fought for her love as a she-wolf for her young. She was ever at the king's side, ready to bite, her dark face illumined by the intensity of her passion. Those who saw her said that she was transfigured by the expression, touching, as well as terrible, of her countenance, of her whole being.

Meanwhile, negotiations were going on to bring about a marriage between Louis XIV and a princess of Savoie. This alliance was not distasteful

¹ Memoirs of Madame de Motteville.

to the cardinal, for the King of France would then have been cousin to his niece Olympe. However, in order to quiet Marie, he allowed her to accompany him to Lyons, where the interview was to take place. The Court started October the 26th, 1658. Marie, in her *Apologie*, thus describes her emotions before the struggle: "A great storm blew up which disturbed the peace of those days, but it soon passed away. There was a project of union between the king and Princess Marguerite of Savoie; . . . and that forced the Court to journey as far as Lyons. Such a measure was cruel to a heart full of tenderness. I leave this point to the imagination of those who have loved and who know what it is to fear the loss of the beloved one, especially if that one is high above all other men; when pride sanctions the beatings of the heart, and when reason herself inclines it to beat yet more. . . ." She fought valiantly. She went from Paris to Lyons, almost all the way on horseback, side by side with the king, who conversed with her "in all gallantry."¹ At the halt, every evening, there was another *tête-à-tête*. They would talk thus, four or five hours at a time, with the untiring facility of lovers. They played together, danced together, ate together, thought together. It was more than an obsession; it was possession, one of the most curious examples offered by history of the melting of one personality in another,

¹ Memoirs of Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

and that without the help of any of the means modern science sometimes employs. There seemed no possible chance left for the king to take a resolution of his own free will; his very thoughts were suggested to him, his emotions imposed on him.

It was in these dispositions that Lyons was reached. The queen mother was sad. The Savoie marriage was not to her taste — she wished for the Infanta of Spain — and she feared the wiles of “that girl,” should the affair not succeed. Mazarin was serene, for he possessed the means of breaking off the union with Savoie, should he see fit to do so. At Mâcon he had met Pimentel, the emissary from Spain, who had come to offer the Infanta to Louis XIV, and he had hidden the Spaniard, sure of being able to produce him if the proper moment should come. The comedy was so well combined and so admirably played that the contemporaries were deceived and believed in the providential appearance of Pimentel at Lyons, during the interview with the Princess of Savoie. Monsieur Chantelauze discovered that, on this occasion, Providence wore a red robe and spoke with a strong Italian accent. The proofs thereof are at the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is not over-bold to state that Mazarin kept his eyes wide open and, during the journey, followed the progress of Marie’s intimacy with the king, and that this was not without some influence on the amazing appearance of

the Spanish envoy on the stage. As to his Eminence's meditations between Mâcon and Lyons, it would be impossible to unravel so tangled a skein.

All we know is that he kept his secret, and that his was the first coach that went to meet the court of Savoie. The queen followed with her son. Marie Mancini remained behind, eating her heart, never guessing what was happening on the road to Italy. The two courts had met, and Princess Marguerite had appeared so irremediably plain, so lacking in charm and grace, that all French eyes were offended by the sight — all except those of the king. He was ready to fall in love on the spot. As soon as he was out of the imperious presence of Mademoiselle Mancini, he was free once more. Explain it as one can, the fascination vanished with the charmer. Of a sudden the love-lorn swain disappeared. There remained a youth to whom a bride is offered, a youth not hard to please and who greatly wished to be married. The king stepped into the same coach with the princess and spoke to her, in a tone of great confidence, of his musketeers and his men at arms. She answered after the same fashion. They might have known each other all their lives. Marie seemed forgotten. The Duchess of Savoie looked on this touching spectacle with tender delight, the Court of France with amazement, the queen mother with consternation.

The evening of this strange day was agitated.

The queen, haunted by the ugly face of the princess, pleaded with her son, reasoned with him, wept, and his answer was: "I will have her,"¹—and that "after all, he was the master." She applied to the cardinal, who very coldly answered that "it was none of his business and that he would not meddle with it." She entreated Heaven to have pity on her and ordered prayers to be offered up in the convents for the rupture of this marriage. In her distress, she forgot that, close at hand, was help, far more powerful than that which she could obtain from all the monks and nuns of the kingdom; that she had only to let Marie Mancini take the field and that poor little Princess Marguerite would at once sink into nothingness. If the queen did not think of this, Marie did. The execution was a short one.

She had watched the return of the carriages and had seized the Grande Mademoiselle to learn from her what had happened. If resigned and plaintive, she was lost. She was bold enough to show her jealousy,² and that evening the king had to submit to a scene of great violence: "Are you not ashamed," she said, "to accept an ugly wife?"³ Then came a storm of reproaches, of sarcasms, addressed to the "hunchback," and a thousand words, eloquent, harsh, impudent, and burning. The king was completely stunned. The

¹ Memoirs of Madame de Motteville.

² Memoirs of Madame de Motteville.

³ Memoirs of Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

next day, he seemed to have forgotten the presence of Marguerite. Marie Mancini resumed her post by his side, and together they regaled the court of Savoie with the spectacle of their passionate devotion. Mazarin put a stop to these indecorous scenes by producing the Spanish envoy and breaking with Savoie. This is how Marie tells the story of her victory: "As my sorrow was violent, it had the destiny of all violent emotions: it did not last long, and the king's marriage was broken as rapidly as it had been prepared. . . . Their Highnesses returned to Savoie, and my heart recovered its pristine peace."¹

The following months bring to mind the love duet of Rodrigue and Chimène. Certain that she was loved, Marie grew gentler. It was the flowering season of a youthful and poetical passion. The days were not long enough for the oft-repeated "I love you!" On moon-lit evenings, the same sweet words were said again. When, at last, Marie returned home, the king took the place of her coachman so as to breathe the same air as she. To please her, he imagined all kinds of romantic follies. He made of her life a perpetual festival, and ordered his courtiers to invent, for each day, some new pleasure for his divinity. Needless to say that the courtiers vied with each other. To the revels, none were invited except young and amorous couples,

¹ "Apologie."

and the brain whirled in this atmosphere of perpetual excitement: "I should need a whole volume," writes Marie, "if I wanted to describe all the adventures of these gallant festivities. I shall content myself with one, chosen out of many others, which will show how devoted was the king and how eagerly he took advantage of every occasion to proclaim this devotion. It was, if I remember right, at Bois-le-Vicomte, in an avenue where, as I was walking rapidly, the king sought to give me his hand, and having ever so lightly struck mine against his sword handle, with a charming gesture of anger, he drew the sword from its scabbard and threw it away, I cannot say how gallantly; there are no words to express it!" What charming, juvenile, and sprightly tenderness! Nothing can be prettier than this explosion of anger.

The enchantment lasted all winter (1658-1659). Mazarin, with great complacency, looked on. He meant always to govern his niece and, by her, the king who, visibly, was getting restless in his leading strings. Louis had the audacity to confer favours. The cardinal had roughly checked these attempts at revolt, but a certain unacknowledged uneasiness resulted from them. With Marie on the throne, he would become more powerful than ever. Anne of Austria would be indignant, but Anne of Austria was the past, and Mazarin was ungrateful. Besides, he knew how to bend her will.

He had a conversation with his niece. Marie told him that it would not be impossible for her to become queen if only he would help her. He could not refuse to play his part in so fine a game and spoke one day to the queen mother, making fun of his niece's folly, but after so ambiguous a fashion that he led her to understand his real thoughts. Her answer came like a blow. "I do not think, Cardinal, that the king is capable of so base an act; but should he commit it, I warn you that the whole of France would rise against you and him; that I, myself, would head the revolt and do my best to drag my son after me."

Mazarin remained stunned by this speech, which he never forgave, and for which he avenged himself after a truly conjugal fashion. He bowed, and waited. His niece lost the game by her imprudence and impatience. It would have been as easy to imprison lightning in a cloud as to prevent an explosion from Marie Mancini. She went her way, regardless of the fact that she was alone. So much the worse for her uncle if he abandoned her; later, she would break his power. She had no sooner determined upon her course than she set to work. She told the whole tale to the king, with her accustomed fury. She ridiculed the cardinal from morning to night; this greatly amused his Majesty. Before long, Mazarin asked himself whether the day of her coronation would not be that of his disgrace. This suspicion enlightened his soul and revealed



ANNE OF AUSTRIA
After the portrait by S. Harding

to him the beauty of unselfishness. We must remember what Brienne said on the subject of the marriage: "If his Eminence sees in it security for himself." That security had disappeared with Marie's imprudence. She paid the penalty of her recklessness with the loss of a throne. Mazarin now turned completely around and wished to have the benefit of his conversion. He became inflexible: everything must be sacrificed to the welfare of the state and the dignity of the king. He took the attitude of a "hero who despised a crown,"¹ gave himself heart and soul to furthering the Spanish marriage and breathed the incense due to virtue. Marie fought with desperation. It was the moment of her life when she was most interesting.

V

SHE had to depend on herself alone, as the whole family trembled at the thought that the cardinal might fall; she had no other arms than her keen mind and her peculiar fascination. She had grown prettier; her lips were very red, her teeth very white, her hair very black, and her complexion less sallow. She was, however, as yet, no beauty. Her nose was clumsy; her mouth and eyes, almost out of drawing, turned upward at the corners; her cheeks were too heavy,

¹ *Memoirs of Choisy.*

giving her a somewhat common appearance. But all that mattered so little! With a beautiful face could she have had greater power? This singular power, to which others beside Louis XIV submitted, consisted in a sort of voluptuous fascination which deprived men of their reason and made of them her captives. Luckily for them, she was as capricious as alluring; this sorceress could never, long, follow one idea.

She was never accused of intrigue or perfidy. She went her way, breaking down all obstacles. She treated Anne of Austria, who opposed her, with the greatest insolence. She would follow the king even to his mother's chamber, whispering in his ear the gossip and calumnies of which the queen was the victim. Under her influence, the most respectful of sons became insolent. One day when, as he refused to obey her, Anne menaced to take refuge at the Val-de-Grâce, he answered "that she might go." The cardinal brought about a reconciliation.¹

Marie defied her uncle so outrageously that his last scruples abandoned him; she tried to blacken the Infanta of Spain to the king. Whoever spoke in favour of this princess incurred the hatred of this terrible girl; a Spanish lady, for this crime, was driven from the Louvre.

The king was bound to her so securely that, even during his absence, he felt her tyranny; she was determined that, at any cost, the events of

¹ Memoirs of Mademoiselle de Montpensier.

Lyons should not be repeated. What remained of common sense in the young prince's brain was drowned in a torrent of passion. Burning vows, savage anger, loving and caressing words, — he knew them all, enjoyed them all, and lived in a state of perpetual intoxication. He was no longer his own master; he belonged to a pair of black eyes which looked into his at all hours of the day, at meals, during the walks, at the card table, in the ballroom, in all the nooks and corners of the palace; these eyes, full of dangerous fire, were seconded by the murmur of a voice both tender and tragic.

It has been said that, in all this wild passion, there was no love; that both he and she were incapable of loving, for his heart was hard and full of himself, whereas she, in spite of all her ardour, carried her heart in her brain; that each deceived the other, being meanwhile deceived, taking the appearance of love for love itself.

It would be a bold thing to assert that all this wild passion was mere comedy with Marie Mancini, mere sensuality with Louis XIV. There are many kinds of love, even when the heart has but little part in it: love through reason or instinct; out of interest, duty, vanity, habit; with the whole soul or with the whole body; and after a hundred other fashions, too numerous to mention. Those feelings which spring from inferior sources bear the stigma of their origin. They, nevertheless, are genuine, and we should bless them, for

do they not fill the emptiness of many hearts? We think we love, and yet our love is but a form of our egotism, of routine, or of a coarse impulse. Nature has willed this deceit, lest we should discover at twenty that we are incapable of love, for that would be sad indeed. During a whole year Louis XIV and Marie Mancini really believed that they loved wildly enough to die of their passion. Let no one despise a feeling capable of giving so precious an illusion.

Meanwhile, during the winter and spring of 1659, the negotiations with Spain had been going on. Things were in the state we have seen, when Mazarin prepared to leave for Saint-Jean-de-Luz, where he was to meet the Spanish minister, Don Luis de Haro. A hundred times a day, the king and Marie swore eternal and reciprocal fidelity. Anne of Austria, at last, understood that this state of things could not continue and that she must get rid of Marie before pledging her son to the Infanta. The cardinal alone could help her in this dilemma, and she was by no means sure that he would be willing to do so. He was unkind to her, rough, making fun of her, keeping the purse strings tightly in his own grasp, speaking of her to the king in no measured terms. The queen confided to her intimate friends that "the cardinal was so cross and stingy that there was no living with him."¹ She was losing her illusions with regard to her handsome, perfumed

¹ Memoirs of Madame de Motteville.

favourite, with his coquettish moustaches. The convictions that his inspirations were low, that he was nothing but a *parvenu*, had not yet entered her mind, but the thought hovered not very far away.

Great was her delight, extreme her gratitude and admiration, when, at the first word she ventured to stammer on the necessity of separating the lovers, she found his Eminence as eager as herself to exile Marie. Mazarin played his part like the great actor that he really was. The queen never suspected his sincerity. Her eyes once more were blinded; she reproached herself for having doubted his love of the public weal, and made up for it by great praise, leaving to him all the honour of his patriotic abnegation. They agreed that Marie Mancini should be sent to the castle of Brouage, near La Rochelle.

One can imagine the thunderbolt. The king's sorrow at first was wild enough. He wept, but he listened to his mother. When he saw Marie, however, when he witnessed her despair, listened to her sobs, her bitter reproaches, her heart-rending wailings, his sorrow almost equalled her own. He rushed into the presence of the queen and the cardinal, crying out that it was impossible for him to see Marie "suffer for love of him";¹ that he would marry her, that he begged and prayed of them to consent. He threw himself on his knees² and showed a grief so genuine that

¹ Motteville.

² Montpensier.

his mother was greatly moved. Mazarin remained firm and answered "that he was master of his niece and that he would stab her rather than consent to so great an act of treason."¹ The king's tears flowed anew; he vowed that he would marry no other woman; nevertheless, he allowed things to follow their course. As to Marie, her despair was deep and savage.

" Elle n'entend ni pleurs, ni conseil, ni raison,
Elle implore à grands cris le fer et le poison."

Thus, Racine shows us Bérénice exiled from Rome by Titus; so also appeared, to the eyes of the court and of France, the passionate Mancini driven from Paris. Every one knows that Racine's play is supposed to be the poetical translation of the amorous drama which ended at Brouage.² The tragedy of "Bérénice" is usually called elegiac; the "gentle Racine" shows here that he can be strong even to brutality. No mistress abandoned by her lover could utter more terrible imprecations than did Bérénice. She uses magnificent verse, but the sentiments expressed are as violent, for example, as those of Daudet's Sapho. Those who wish to understand Marie Mancini should reperuse Racine's passion-

¹ Motteville.

² M. Félix Hémon, in his excellent work: "Théâtre de Pierre Corneille" (Delagrave) gives interesting details as to the origin of Racine's *Bérénice* and as to "Tite et Bérénice of Corneille."

ate and powerful scenes from the moment when Bérénice exclaims wildly:

“ He ! bien, il est donc vrai que Titus m’abandonne !
Il faut nous séparer ! et c’est lui qui l’ordonne ! ”

The dialogue which follows is admirably true to nature. No poet ever noted with more subtlety the various feelings of a woman abandoned by the man she loves; this is easy to understand: Racine did but follow step by step the story of Louis XIV and Marie Mancini, as all their contemporaries followed it, as these have told it in their memoirs.

Bérénice begins by reproaching Titus with his treachery. Why should he have encouraged her hopes if he did not mean to marry her? Why did he not say to her:

“ Ne donne point un cœur qu’on ne peut recevoir ”?

After the reproaches, when she sees her lover moved, comes the expression of her tenderness:

“ Ah, Seigneur ! s’il est vrai, pourquoi nous séparer ? ”

When he refuses to yield, she threatens to kill herself, rushes away, comes back when she discovers that Titus does not follow her, and bursts into violent upbraidings:

“ . . . Pourquoi vous montrer à ma vue ?
Pourquoi venir encore aigrir mon désespoir ? ”
N’êtes-vous pas content ? Je ne veux plus vous voir . ”

From anger, she then passes to irony:

“Etes-vous pleinement content de votre gloirie?
Avez-vous bien promis d’oublier ma mémoire?”

Bérénice, after more reproaches, lets herself fall on a chair. Daudet’s Sapho rolls on the floor: this is a mere question of education. With both, it is the final nervous crisis, to which Marie Mancini will also be subjected.

In many a book and play, since Racine, we have seen a man break with his mistress. Nowhere have we encountered a more passionate and clinging mistress than Bérénice. A little later, we shall examine the sudden change of the fifth act, when Bérénice gives up the struggle. The episode which furnished Racine with his concluding scenes took place at Brouage, September, 1659. For the moment, we are still at the Louvre, June 22d. Marie Mancini has not yet exhausted all her furious anger.

It was excessive, like all which came from that volcano. The king, beside himself, wept and cried out with her, renewed his vows, yet, still weeping, conducted her to the travelling coach. The celebrated exclamation uttered at parting is the only one which Racine weakened when he said:

“Vous êtes empereur, Seigneur, et vous pleurez!”

Madame de Motteville and Madame de La Fayette both give the same version of Marie’s

words, "You weep — and you are the master!" which is much stronger. But the truth is stronger still. In her *Memoirs*, Marie gives her own words as these, "'Sire, you are king and you love me, why do you let me go?' . . . Upon which, as he was silent, I tore his lace ruffle, saying, 'Ah, I am forsaken!'"

Here we have the real Marie Mancini. When she sees that all is over, that the king allows her to leave him, she clutches hold of him, tears his lace furiously and exclaims: "Ah! I am forsaken!" She recalls Sapho even more than Bérénice.

VI

THIS stormy departure provoked other storms. The king, like a madman, rushed off to Chantilly, where his sorrow, instead of diminishing, turned to a veritable paroxysm. He had had the courage to let Mademoiselle Mancini leave him: *dimisit invitam*; yet it seemed to him impossible to live without her. As to Marie, she was a pitiable object. She was ill, half fainting, fever seized her, she was worn out. When the cardinal met her on the road to Brouage, having himself started for Saint-Jean-de-Luz, he wrote to the queen,¹ "Her grief exceeds my power to describe it." Many years later, she herself could not find words strong enough to express this immense despair: "Never,

¹ Letter of June 29, 1659.

in all my life, have I felt my soul more harrowed. The worst torments seem but trifles compared with so cruel an absence, with the vanishing of hopes so tender and so high. I longed for death as the only possible end of my woes. I was in a state so dreadful that nothing I can say would ever picture it.”¹

In the midst of this anguish, Marie made use of a childish feint, which, however, succeeded. She pretended that she was resigned. Her uncle allowed himself to be deceived and announced this good news to the queen, “She assures me that she is submissive and that she surrenders herself to me.” So praiseworthy a conduct called for a reward. It came in the person of a musketeer. “He brought me,” says Marie, “five letters from the king, very long and very tender.” The cardinal was generous enough to allow the messenger to take back an answer, and a regular correspondence was established, which, unfortunately, we do not possess, but at which we can guess by the effect produced. On June 29th the king wrote to his mother a dutiful and respectful letter in which he said that “he appreciated the motives of her resistance.”² Fifteen days later, the cardinal, about to enter Saint-Jean-de-Luz, received such news of the relations between mother and son that he wrote to the former: “I fear that I shall go out of my mind; I can neither eat nor sleep; I am overwhelmed with anxiety and sorrow.”

¹ Apologie.

² Memoirs of Madame de Motteville.

(Cadillac, July 16th, 1659.) The same courier took a long letter to the king which reflects the situation as in a mirror:

“I have seen what the *confidante*¹ writes about your sorrow and how you treat her. . . .

“The letters from Paris, Flanders, and other places, assert that, since my departure, you are terribly changed, not on account of me but on account of some one who belongs to me, that you have made promises which keep you from giving peace to all Christendom. . . .

“It is said (and this is confirmed by letters addressed from the court to persons of my suite) . . . that you shut yourself up continually to write to the person you love, that in that way you lose more time than you used to do conversing with her when she was still at court. . . .

“It is said that you have quarrelled with the queen, whom you avoid as much as possible.”

He reproached the king with encouraging his niece's revolt by promising to marry her; he pictured the results of such a deed: a rupture with Spain; war, and a third Fronde; he threatened to retire to Italy, taking his niece with him, if his young master did not give up a passion which had become the derision of all Europe. He repeated his supplications, sending letter after letter, and was terror-stricken when he learned that Louis XIV was determined to see Marie once more, at the very time when he was expected in the Pyrenees for his

¹ Term used to designate the queen; the king was the *confident*.

marriage with the Infanta. But letters and supplications were of no avail. Thanks to the weakness of Anne of Austria, the interview took place at Saint-Jean-d'Angély, on the 10th of August. The love ecstasies were touching, the farewell accompanied by gentle tears only, for the lovers swore eternal constancy.

They agreed to lay siege to the cardinal, to persuade him of his niece's tender love for him. Marie wrote many letters to her uncle, but a Mazarin is not twice hoodwinked by a little girl. He wrote to Madame de Venel, her governèss:

"My niece has taken a fancy to write to me oftener than is needful. I beg you to insist that she should not give herself so much trouble. I know what is in her mind and heart; I also know what to think of her affection for me."

To the king, he wrote:

"I begin by answering what you say in your letter of the 23d (August) about the tenderness of a certain person toward me, and about all the other pretty things you say of her.

"I am by no means surprised that you should speak thus, for it is your passion which blinds you; otherwise you would agree with me that this person is by no means fond of me, but rather hates me, because I do not favour her wild folly; that she is eaten up with ambition, has a distorted and violent nature, no dignity in her conduct, and that she is ready to commit a thousand absurdities; that she is madder than ever since she had the

honour of seeing you at Saint-Jean-d'Angély and that, instead of two letters a week, she now receives one from you every day; before long, you will acknowledge that she has a thousand weaknesses and not one quality that justifies your good will toward her."

He filled eighteen pages with much the same matter and renewed his menace of retiring to Italy. The king's answer reached him on the 1st of September. It was short. The king wrote "that the cardinal must do as he chose and that if he gave up public affairs, others would gladly take charge of them."¹ On the receipt of this note, Mazarin was bound to recognise that his mad niece with her "distorted nature" was an adversary worthy of his steel.

She had done wonders in her sorry exile of Brouage. She had not lost a day. According to the family custom, she had called in an astrologer to know what chances she had of winning the crown. This astrologer was an Arab. He drew up all manner of horoscopes and took care that they should be favourable. He, besides, gave her lessons in his art so that she might, unaided, peep into the future. The Arab strengthened her belief in herself, and we know that faith can move mountains.

She was penniless, closely watched, surrounded with spies: She persuaded the spies that she was their future queen, and they devoted themselves

¹ Memoirs of Choisy.

to her, body and soul. Money flowed in. This money secured the services of unscrupulous persons, ready for any adventure: among these was her brother, whom their uncle, on account of his scandalous debauchery, had cast into prison; she set him free. Her star was in the ascendant, and Mazarin, on the verge of the precipice, was aware that Marie would never forgive the exile of Brouage: "since his departure, she vowed that she hated him more than ever."¹ Despair had well nigh taken possession of him. He still struggled, but feebly, and without Anne of Austria he might have succumbed. The queen's letters were his consolation and his stay. They were full of affection and devotion. She considered it so magnanimous of her handsome Mazarin to have given up the throne for his niece, that she was his, more than ever. On the other hand, his danger had very opportunely revived the cardinal's somnolent passion, so that their correspondence was a veritable love duet.

The other nieces, the court, all Europe, followed with impatient curiosity and varying emotions this duel between the all-powerful cardinal and a mere girl. The Mazarines trembled. These bold *parvenues* had not forgotten the days when the Paris rabble, seeing them enter the Louvre, called out against the "little fish-mongers." In their palaces, surrounded by a court more brilliant than that of the king, they knew that their uncle's

¹ Memoirs of Madame de Motteville.

disgrace would be, for them, the stroke of the wand that changes castles into huts and rich garments into rags; their terror was great. The Abbé Choisy relates that they already saw themselves tumbled back into poverty. They were by no means reassured by the fact that the cardinal's power was threatened by one of themselves, and in that they were right. The Mazarines could not depend much on family affections.

The court was divided between the horror of such a deplorable marriage and the hope of being rid of the cardinal. It is a curious fact that Mazarin, who was not ill-natured, should have inspired more antipathy among the nobles than Richelieu, so relentless in his dealings with them. On that point we can believe Saint-Simon, who never betrayed his caste. "Cardinal Richelieu," says he in his *Memoirs*¹ "little by little destroyed that power and authority of the great which balanced and even over-shadowed that of the king; by degrees, he reduced them to the degree of honour, of distinction, consideration, and authority alone due to them; they were no longer permitted to act or to speak loudly in the king's presence, and he was soon in a position to fear nothing from them. This was the result of acts wisely and uninter-ruptedly directed toward one goal."

In the same page, Saint-Simon denounces Mazarin to the execration of posterity for "the lies, the baseness, the treachery, the terrors and

¹ Volume xi, p. 244 (Hachette).

the *spropositi*¹ of his government, as avaricious as it was cowardly and tyrannical, the consequences of which were, first the Fronde, and then the ruin and complete debasement of the French nobility, despoiled of all posts, distinctions, and dignities, in favour of the lower orders, so that the greatest noble is powerless and depends in a thousand ways on some vile burgher." Richelieu decapitated the nobles; Mazarin slyly degraded them. The first has been forgiven; the second never will be.

The country, like the town, was divided. Europe laughed, with the exception of Spain, who had offered the Infanta and felt the humiliation of a refusal.

Things were in this state, and the cardinal, having learnt humility, wrote to the king, "I feel such profound veneration and respect for your person and for all that emanates from you, that I could not take upon myself to dispute with you. On the contrary, I am willing to submit to your wishes and to declare that you are right, in all things."

Suddenly everything was changed by a dramatic turn of events, singular, yet natural. Bérénice, as portrayed by Racine and by Corneille also, gives up Titus, at the fifth act, out of pure heroism; she sacrifices herself to the nation. Poetry has ennobled history, which is not the same thing as betraying it. At Brouage, Marie Mancini learned that the clauses of the Spanish marriage had been agreed upon. Not knowing that her uncle was on

¹ Foolish talk, things said out of season.



MARIA THERESA
From an old copper engraving

the point of capitulating and of yielding to the king's desires, she thought herself lost at the very moment when victory was perhaps within her grasp. Wounded pride prompted her to break of her own free will; anger helped her decision. Unstable as she was, she was relieved by this change, after her long obstinacy, so contrary to her nature. This heroic resolution would be sure to secure for her praise and yet more solid compensations. She wrote to Mazarin that she gave up the king. Once this determination taken, the all-consuming passion which was to have been unique in the annals of love, suddenly ceased to consume her. It would be an error to think that Marie Mancini did not love the king. Only, as has been said, the heart, with her, was placed in the brain.

She was too clever not to understand that the last act of the drama might seem to turn short and would spoil the play in the eyes of the world. She took pains to arrange it in the *Apologie*, where she represents herself as refusing with indignation the proposals of marriage made by the connétable Colonna, soon after the great sacrifice. She forgets to mention that she made use of the messenger to suggest to her uncle another admirer, whose image flattered her unoccupied imagination.

The astounding news flew, lightning-like, and excited varied comments. Mazarin, wild with joy, could scarcely believe his senses, and suddenly discovered that he quite adored this niece whom, just before, he had dubbed a dangerous maniac.

His heart overflowed with love and admiration: compliments, protestations, and delicate attentions were showered upon her. He went so far as to open his purse: nothing better can prove how terrified he had been. "I have ordered Teron," he writes to Madame de Venel, "to give all needful money so that she (Marie) should have every sort of pleasure. Pray give orders that her table be lavishly supplied." He promises his dear Marie to find her a husband. He wishes her to be happy and he will do all in his power to further that end. Meanwhile, he bids her amuse herself, hunt, fish, eat good dinners (the cardinal knew how to appreciate dainty living; thanks to him, France was blessed with several new sauces), read Seneca. "And, since she has a taste for books on morality, tell her from me that she should read treatises of philosophy, especially the works of Seneca, wherein she will find much consolation and many things which will confirm her in her new resolution." Anne of Austria, by a reflex movement, basked in the sunshine of her minister's joy. Philemon and Baucis feel youth surge anew in their veins, and exchange tender declarations. "I confess," writes Mazarin to the queen, "that my patience is greatly tried at being kept here and thus deprived of your love." (Saint-Jean-de-Luz, September 14th, 1659.) More touching still is the passage on his gout which prevents him from joining her: "As much as possible I keep secret the hope of seeing you here; if my gout were to guess such a thing, it

would take malicious pleasure and pride in tormenting me, so as to boast of such a victory as, till now, no fit of gout ever knew." Trissotin could not have said this in more gallant terms, and the couplet on the gout is a fit set-off to the *Sonnet sur la fièvre qui tient la princesse Uranie*.

Out of spite at having been so unexpectedly abandoned, the king became at once enamoured of the Infanta. Besides, he had meditated on the threat of the cardinal to leave him in the lurch, and he knew that such a position would be singularly embarrassing. He was weary of being in leading strings, yet he did not feel equal to walking without them. He knew nothing of public affairs. Peace had not yet been signed; and the scandalous contempt shown the Infanta in marrying an obscure girl would inevitably have opened hostilities once more. He had heard it said (and it was true) that "his revenues were absorbed for two or three years in advance."¹ Thanks to all these good reasons, it was with the greatest possible alacrity that he married the Spanish princess, June 6th, 1660.

VII

THE hope of being queen had, for a time, given to Marie Mancini, to her feelings and conversation, a sort of inflation that might have passed muster as nobility. But as this sort of dignity was not

¹ Memoirs of Choisy.

genuine, it disappeared with her dream. The romantic heroine vanished; the adventuress alone remained. The cardinal had scarcely authorised her to return to Paris before she began with Prince Charles of Lorraine a second romance, more fiery even than the first. An Italian abbé served as go-between. Meetings were frequent in churches and parks. All this took on an appearance of most displeasing intrigue, but Marie could never keep within bounds. Her passion drove her mad. She must have her Lorraine. She swore a hundred times that if she were not allowed to marry him, she would enter a convent.¹ Never had she made such a threat when she was in love with the king; this he never forgot or forgave.

Prince Charles was completely fascinated. His head, as had been the case with the king's, whirled in the presence of this southern enchantress.

The court returned in the very midst of this wild romance, bringing back the new queen, Marie-Therese. During the journey, the king had accomplished the only act of sentiment which can be attributed to him. He left his young wife at Saintes so as to go "in a post-chaise to visit Brouage and La Rochelle,"² sacred spots, which had witnessed the passion and sufferings of the beloved one. This would have been poetical and touching if Marie, as he was convinced, had been spoiling her eyes by over-weeping; it was only

¹ Memoirs of the Marquis de Beauveau.

² Memoirs of Monsieur de Montpensier.



PRINCE CHARLES OF LORRAINE
From an old copper print

ridiculous in case she had dried them. When he reached Fontainebleau, the king learned the truth. Another had taken his place. He — forgotten for another! Few men can admit such a thing. Louis XIV never could, not so much from vanity as from faith in the monarchy. Alone on the throne, alone in the heart; both these things seemed to him the attributes of divine right. Marie Mancini grown faithless was lost, and forever. He could not understand that the king of France should be exposed to the misadventures of common lovers, and he was right; he knew his business as monarch.

Marie Mancini, in her *Apologie*, carefully avoids any mention of her passion for the Prince of Lorraine. Her love for Louis XIV gave her in the eyes of the world and of posterity such lustre, that, in order to keep it undimmed, a little lying seemed but a venial fault. As long as she possibly could, she kept her attitude of forsaken Ariadne; the *Memoirs* of her sister Hortense¹ tell us of her despair when she saw the king as a married man. Who knows if, spite coming to the rescue, she was not sincerely jealous of the king, even while she adored her prince? It would have been very feminine. However that may be, this is her own account of her first meeting with the king after his return:

“The court reached Fontainebleau and the cardinal ordered us to pay our respects to the new

¹ *Memoirs of the Duchess of Mazarin.*

queen. I foresaw all that this would cost me and it was not without anguish that I accepted it; the presence of the king was sure to open a wound, scarcely healed, and to which it would have been wiser to apply the remedy of absence. However, as I had not imagined that the king could receive me with the cold indifference he displayed, I own that I was so overwhelmed with sorrow that no event of my life was as cruel as this change in his manner. I begged to be allowed to return to Paris."

The king carried his "cruelty" to the extent of praising the young queen to her. "This was too much for a creature so full of passion and violence. She burst into a torrent of reproaches." . . . "My impatient wish for an explanation . . . caused me two or three times to speak in private to his Majesty, but he received my complaints so coldly that, from that moment, I vowed never more to bewail my fate, and to crush my heart rather than to allow it to grieve, after so much indifference."

All went wrong with her. Once the king married, her uncle forgot his promises and she ceased to be his darling niece whom he flattered and praised. Mazarin remembered her only to order her governess in future to take better care of her charge, and he pitilessly refused her hand to the Prince of Lorraine. This young man took his heart elsewhere, so that poor Marie was in the rather ridiculous position of being at the same time jealous of her two faithless swains. She

carried off the situation with spirit, but found it hard to bear. For the time being, all who depended on Mazarin complained of him. The glory of the Pyrenees treaty and the security which came of it quite turned his head. Two months before Charles II became king of England, he had asked for the hand of Hortense, which the cardinal had refused; now, in vain, he sought to mend matters. Gout and gravel, from which he suffered greatly, soured his temper and made him more avaricious than ever; he deprived the young queen of nearly all her New-Year gifts, granting her only ten thousand livres out of twelve thousand crowns, and spent his time weighing his gold pieces so as to give her all that were under-weight. He could no longer control his brutal temper and treated Anne of Austria "as if she had been a servant." Death found him gloating over his gold and scolding. He saw his end approach, however, with a courage no one expected of him. He divided his fortune and saw to the future of his two nieces, Hortense and Marie. The former married the Duke of La Meilleraye, who took the name of Mazarin. Marie was given to the Connétable Colonna. She, who still adored her faithless Prince of Lorraine, felt "a despair so violent that she could not refrain from reproaching the king for his weakness, and the cardinal for the outrage he committed in thus sacrificing her affections and her person."¹ If the king, as has been said, felt at that moment a slight return of his old passion,

¹ Memoirs of Beauveau.

he was forever cured by reproaches, so mortifying to his pride. It was too much to claim the Lorraine of him. He showed himself freezingly cold toward the faithless one.

Mazarin died on the 9th of March, 1661. His family, with touching unanimity, exclaimed: "*Pure e crepato!*" (At last he has given up the ghost!) Such was the emotion shown at the death of a man who had drawn his relatives out of nothingness to set them on a pinnacle. The people gave the same deep sigh of relief as the family, but with greater cause.

Soon after the cardinal's death, the king, by proxy, concluded the marriage of Mademoiselle Mancini with the connétable Colonna, who had remained in Italy; the bride was sent to her husband. "She had the sorrow," says Madame de La Fayette, "to see herself exiled from France by the king. . . . She bore herself with dignity and haughtiness; but at her first halt, after her departure from Paris, she was so crushed by her despair, so overwrought by the violence she had exerted over herself to hide her feelings, that she nearly died." Only she did not die, and reached Milan where the connétable, a handsome man and an honest one, met her. He, in his turn, drank of the philter this sorceress presented to him and, like the others, lost his wits. She showed him nothing but aversion, ill-temper, and caprices. He made of her a sort of fairy queen and surrounded her with luxury and a hundred festivities given in her

honour; he showed himself "gallant and was always superbly dressed."¹ He showered on her "all the attentions and kindnesses that it was possible to imagine;"² was patience itself with her rebuffs and caprices. One fine day he replaced the Prince of Lorraine in the heart of his wife, with the rapidity and violence she always showed in like matters.

"They were happy and had a great many children." Thus end all pretty fairy tales; but this is a real story, and it ends very differently.

The first years, indeed, recalled the fairy tale. Children came, a great many children, and the connétable only prayed that his happiness might continue. His weakness toward his wife was boundless; her wishes were his law. When her first child was born, Madame Colonna was visited by the Sacred College. She judged it appropriate to receive the cardinals in a bed shaped like a shell in which she represented Venus. "It was," says she, "a sort of shell that seemed to float on the sea; it was so well represented, with the lower part of the bedstead forming waves, that it seemed real. It was supported by four sea horses mounted by sirens, all so beautifully carved and gilded that all thought they were made of gold. Ten or twelve cupids amorously held the curtains, which were of gold brocade, hanging loosely so as to show only what deserved to be seen; they were more for ornament than use."

¹ Apologie.

² Ibid.

As soon as she had left her theatrical couch, Venus deigned to take part in merely human pleasures. Games, balls, banquets, tournaments, journeys to Venice and Milan, cavalcades and boating, concerts and plays, succeeded each other endlessly, so much so that it is a marvel that one could take so much pleasure without dying of *ennui*. As her fifth child nearly cost her her life, Marie signified to her husband that she refused to bring any more little Colonnas into the world. He loved her too much to rebel; after which, as was to be expected, he gave a bad example of conjugal infidelity. His wife was imprudent enough to exhibit her jealousy; more imprudent still in avenging herself. Once on that road, she went far. Her powers of seduction now gave themselves all license. No man could resist her, her conquests were innumerable.

First came a cardinal, Flavio Chigi, ill-favoured, dark-skinned, with a round face and pop-eyes that always seemed ready to fall out of their sockets; but he was nephew to a pope, gay and dissolute. Madame Colonna caused him to play all sorts of antics. One day when he was expected to preside over some church assembly she carried him off in her coach "only half dressed," took him into the country and kept him till evening. Another time she found him in bed, ran away with his clothes, dressed herself as a cardinal, and vowed she would receive in his stead. Once, they spent a fortnight hunting and camping in the woods.

Then came the infamous Chevalier de Lorraine, exiled in spite of the tears of monsieur, brother to Louis XIV. Even in Rome, where Cardinal Chigi could, without exciting any indignation, preside over the congregations, the chevalier was black-balled. It was whispered that Madame la connétable, in monsieur's name, had given him "a hunting suit worth a thousand pistoles, covered with a quantity of ribbons, the most beautiful and expensive that could be found in Paris."¹ The "little fish-monger" of Rome could not resist the temptation of showing herself in her native town in company with so gorgeous a cavalier; the Chevalier de Lorraine was always at her side. The connétable became very angry. Fate had played him the trick of giving him a jealous nature and marrying him to a Mazarin. If he had chosen to see nothing when Cardinal Chigi was in attendance, he opened his eyes when the chevalier took his place and he stormed violently. "But," continues the *Apologie*, "I knew how to answer." The connétable sent a monk to reprove the guilty one. She took the monk by the shoulders and pushed him out of the room. Cardinal Chigi, jealous on his own account, preached to her. Thereupon they quarrelled. She became the talk of Rome, and the outraged, but still enamoured husband could but scold and hire numerous spies.

Nature is very clever, as we know, in disguising the defects of a face with the charm of youth. It is

¹ *Apologie*.

no less clever in hiding defects of character, thanks to the glamour and fire of the twentieth year: so young a soul is nearly always lovable. Moral taints are brought to light with the revolving years, and inattentive observers wonder at the change. That change is only apparent; the ugly taint is not a new one. At the court of France, during her romance with Louis XIV, Marie Mancini did not seem an adventuress; her youth, with its brilliant and joyous seduction, deceived and entranced all who saw her. Less than ten years later, the real nature was revealed. The stories we still have to relate of her might be those of a circus rider. We shall speak of them as rapidly as possible.

VIII

A FRAGMENT¹ written by the *connétable's* wife will show into what a singular world she had fallen. "Every day, the chevalier came to see me, and when the weather was favourable we went out together, choosing especially the banks of the Tiber, near the *Porta del Popolo*. I had even caused a bath house to be built there, so that I might plunge in the river."² . . . It was not

¹ *Les Mémoires de M.L.P.M.M.* (*Madame la princesse Marie Mancini*, published at Cologne, 1676.) It is a confidential statement made to an intimate friend by Madame Colonna, more lively, less truthful, than the *Apologie*, and written in view of the public.

² In the *Apologie*, she describes the little house, but does not mention the purpose for which it was built. This detail indicates the difference between the two books. The *Apologie* was written to soften the effect produced by the *Memoirs*.

through love, as pretend my enemies, but out of mere gallantry that the chevalier, seeing me in the water up to my throat, begged to have my portrait painted in that state, as he had never seen so shapely a form nor so beautiful a face; he vowed that Zenocrates would have fallen in love with my perfections." The husband, however, in his jealousy, did not believe in the perfect propriety of all this bathing; mere calumny, his honourable wife informs us: "My servants can testify that I never left the cabin to step into the water without having donned a chemise of gauze which fell to my feet." The insupportable husband was not content with this transparent garment; he complained of many other things likewise, and made himself so extremely disagreeable that she concluded that the only thing to do was to run away from him.

Her sister Hortense had already left her lord. It is true that the Duke of Mazarin was a sort of maniac with whom life was impossible. The duchess had taken refuge in Rome, and as she was a woman of experience, having travelled many leagues in male attire, Madame Colonna begged her protection in her flight back to France. They left Rome, May 29, 1672, with men's clothes under their skirts, as though they had gone out for an airing.

Their coach took them to Civita Vecchia, where a boat had been ordered to await them. They took off their feminine garments, sent back their coach, and walked up and down in the broiling

sun. The boat was nowhere to be seen, and they took refuge in a grove where they well-nigh died of fright, fatigue, and hunger. They had been twenty-four hours without food, and every moment fancied they heard the connétable's soldiers pursuing them. Suddenly they perceived the gallop of a horse and thought the end had come. Hortense bravely cocked her pistols, determined to "kill the first man who might present himself;" but her sister made a rather pitiable heroine. "If my veins had been opened," she says, "not a drop of blood would have trickled from them. My hair stood on end, and I fell, half fainting, into the arms of my sister who, more accustomed to misfortune, was braver than I."¹ Hortense, indeed, had known many a tight place. She had endured a siege in a convent, against her husband and sixty horsemen who had been forced to beat an ignominious retreat. She was doubtless ashamed of a sister who, in spite of her pretensions, was nothing but a poor little woman.

A servant was sent in search of the missing boat, found another, and they sailed away. This little vessel was manned by veritable pirates, and the nine days of navigation were full of emotions. Once out at sea, the ladies had to give up their gold, under penalty of being thrown overboard or left on a desert island. The same evening a Turkish privateer was espied, and night alone saved

¹ Les Mémoires de M.L.P.M.M. The story is told after the same fashion in the Memoirs and in the Apologie.



HORTENSE MANCINI
From an old copper print

them from capture. The fugitives, it may be, regretted so interesting an adventure as that of entering a Turkish harem. Their husbands would have bought them back, and they would have had a few more reminiscences wherewith to enliven their old age. The next day there was a tempest. On reaching Marseilles, they were not allowed to enter the port, as Civita Vecchia was plague infested. They bought false passports and landed. They had scarcely had an hour's sleep in an inn when Captain Manechini, a terrible *bravo* employed by the connétable, appeared before them. The Duke of Mazarin, on his side, had sent the no less terrible Captain Polastron to capture his wife. The two women escaped, stopping here or there whenever they thought themselves in safety, to snatch what pleasure was within their grasp. They were obliged to beg Madame de Grignan for help, and she sent them a little linen. Dodging their pursuers, Hortense barely escaped from Captain Polastron by crossing the frontier. Marie pushed on to Paris. She was bent on seeing the king, on throwing herself at his feet, on — who knows? — adding a second volume to her royal romance.

The news that Marie Mancini had appeared in Provence, in men's clothes, without so much as a shift, produced a great stir at the court of France. When she was reported on her way to Paris, no one doubted her object, and the curiosity of the public was vastly excited. The king's rule was

never to be ungrateful toward a woman who had loved him, and his first impulse was to take Madame Colonna under his protection. On the other hand, he greatly respected the proprieties. He was even disposed to admire austerity, for it gave greater zest to his victories. Marie Mancini had not covered him with glory. Louis XIV was the last man in France to admire romantic adventures, and hers were particularly romantic. Then he felt very bitterly the fact that he had had successors; at court, many remembered his red and swollen eyes at the time when Mazarin refused to let him marry his niece. All this caused him to send a very cold answer to a letter in which Madame Colonna begged his permission to dwell in Paris. He advised her to shut herself up in a convent "in order to put an end to the scandal her departure from Rome had caused."¹

Marie argued from this letter that she must lose no time, that it was urgent for her to see the king, and she set out forthwith. The postmaster refused to let her have horses. A nobleman sent by Louis XIV was in hot pursuit. Somehow she procured horses and a vehicle, took to cross-roads, to rough fields also, upsetting, hiding, dodging, finally reaching Fontainebleau, where her pursuer caught up with her. It was Monsieur de La Gibertière; if he happened to possess any sense of humour, he must greatly have enjoyed the interview.

¹ Apologie.

He did his best to persuade her to return to her husband, adding that the king regretted that he had granted her his protection; the only other alternative was a prolonged sojourn in a Grenoble convent.

“This,” she says, “was my answer: that I had not left my home with the intention of returning to it so soon; that mere caprice had not guided me, but good and solid reasons, which I could only divulge to the king in person; that I was certain of his fairness and justice as soon as he had heard me (I asked for nothing more), for he would then acknowledge that he had been misled in his appreciation of my conduct; . . . that, as to Grenoble, I was too weary to undertake such a journey; . . . that I would await his Majesty’s answer, according to which I should then decide upon my conduct.” Whereupon, she snatched up her guitar and began to play, thereby greatly disturbing Louis XIV’s envoy. Evidently, Monsieur de La Gibetière proceeded to expostulate, for she had time to play him “several tunes” before, in sheer discouragement, he took his leave.

What an adorable scene! Madame Colonna, in an upper chamber of a poor inn at Fontainebleau, dressed in the cast-off garments of Madame de Grignan, with a guitar by way of baggage! A cicada under wintry breezes.

The king sent her another messenger, the Duke of Crèqui, who, in spite of himself, was touched at finding so much fallen grandeur in so woeful a

plight. He renewed the king's orders: she was not to see him; she was not to go to Paris. She felt that she must gain time and asked to be placed in a convent at Melun. This was granted; but she could not take it upon herself not to bewail her fate, not to insist on seeing the king who showed her "so little courtesy." Louis XIV at last, fearing some scandal, or that she might burst into his presence, in spite of his body-guard, ordered Colbert to put her in some convent at least sixty miles away. She could not yet believe that all was over between them. She wrote to Colbert: "I never thought to see what I see; I can say no more, for I have less control over myself than you. Let it end. All I ask is to see the king once more before leaving for the last time, as I shall never return to Paris. Obtain for me this favour, Monseigneur, after which I will go even further than he wishes. . . ." (September 25, 1672.) Colbert did not answer. This was plain enough. Then she uttered this cry of despair: "It is not possible that the king . . . should, with me, begin to show himself pitiless"¹ This would be touching, could we forget the goggle-eyed cardinal and the Chevalier de Lorraine. Louis XIV, very well informed as to her vagaries, remained relentless and sent, once more, Monsieur de La Gibertière who escorted her to a convent at Reims. In her *Memoirs*, she shows the extent of her disappointment: "I was deceived

¹ Letter to Colbert, October 1, 1672.

in all my hopes; the king, on whom I had depended, treated me with great coldness, why, I cannot imagine." It is possible that she never understood the reason of this coldness. The absence of moral sense blunts the brightest wits.

IX

WE have reached the last stages of degradation. The life of Marie now loses every vestige of dignity and self-respect. Her troubled brain, a perpetual disquiet, keeps her from resting anywhere. She spends her time running away from the different convents where the king or her husband imprisons her. She is to be met with on the high-roads of all Europe, in France, in Italy, in Germany, in Holland, in Spain. The letters of that period make frequent allusions to her. Madame de Sévigné writes to her daughter, November 24th, 1673, "Madame Colonna was discovered on the Rhine, in a boat-full of peasant women; she was going I know not where in Germany." January 27th, 1680, Madame de Villars, wife of the French ambassador to Madrid, says that she and her husband saw a veiled woman who made signs to them that she wished to speak to them alone. "Monsieur de Villars exclaimed: 'It is Madame Colonna!' On which, I addressed some compliments to our visitor. But as that was not what she wanted, she went straight to her object." The "object" was that she had once more

run away and claimed the protection of France against her spouse.

Nothing could persuade her that, if he saw her, Louis XIV would not at once fall at her feet, repentant and amorous. Her one goal, therefore, was France. At last, the king, weary, sent orders that she was never to be allowed to cross the frontiers.

Half the convents of Europe looked upon her with terror, for they were never sure of being free from her. Many had endured the infliction of her presence. We are accustomed to pity the wives and daughters whom paternal or conjugal tyranny condemned to the cloister, and certainly they were often fit objects of compassion. But I think it but fair to pity likewise the nuns ordered to receive and keep them. Their unwilling guests avenged themselves on the community. One should read in the *Memoirs* of the Duchess of Mazarin how she and an amiable marchioness, shut up by a jealous husband, put everything topsy-turvy in a monastery. They organised a chase in the nuns' dormitory, running full-tilt, followed by a pack of hounds, crying: "Tuyant! tuyant!" They put ink in the holy water founts and water in the beds. Hortense pretends that all this is "invented or exaggerated," but she adds, "We were watched and guarded; for the purpose, the oldest nuns were chosen as less likely to be corrupted; but, as we walked about all day long, they were soon worn out, until one

or two, having tried to run after us, twisted their ankles.”

Life was not easy in the convents that had the honour of harbouring the connétable's fugitive wife. Sometimes she would make a hole in the wall and creep through; or she would bewitch the door-keepers and, at night, go off carousing, which did not greatly add to the good renown of the establishment. “Sometimes,” relates Madame d'Aulnoy, speaking of a sojourn in Madrid, “she escaped in the evening with one of her women, and walked on the Prado, a white mantle on the head, enjoying many an amusing adventure. The women who frequent the Prado are not always reputable, but the most aristocratic of our ladies often mingle with them, when they think they will not be recognised.”¹

Marie played such mad pranks that it required strict orders from the nuncio, with threats of excommunication, to induce the convents to receive her. In one monastery of Madrid, the nuns, in despair, resolved to go in procession to the palace, so as to entreat the king to free them from Madame Colonna. His Majesty rejoiced at the thought of receiving them and of hearing them sing, “*Libera nos, Domine, de la Condestabile.*” They thought better of it and did not give him that unholy joy.

The nuns were greatly disturbed by the visitors received by Madame Colonna. Many fine gentle-

¹ Mémoires de la cour d'Espagne.

men called upon her, and their gallantry was scarcely in keeping with the sanctity of the place. One of the most frequent of these visitors for Madame Colonna was her husband, that strange spouse, each year more enamoured, more faithless, and more jealous. "He went every day to visit her," says Madame d'Aulnoy: "I have seen him pay court to her, like a lover to his mistress." The passion with which she had inspired him was strong enough to make him forgive everything; all he asked was to take her back again.

As everything with Marie Mancini was doomed to be strange, she grew beautiful when she was about forty. The ugly little gipsy, with her long, thin arms, was no longer either thin or dark-skinned. Her figure was fine, her bright eyes had grown soft and touching, her hair and teeth remained perfect. Her very lack of repose had its charm. The *connétable*, on his side, was still as handsome "as a picture"¹ and he was madly in love; but the astrologers kept these two apart. Marie had once more had her horoscope drawn, and in it was said "that if she had another child she would die." Therefore, she would have no husband. Yet she had a lover, the ugliest man in Madrid.

One fine day, like a madcap that she was, she ran to her husband's house. She had broken loose once more from her convent, and thought fit to try another sort of life. The *connétable*

¹ Letters of Madame de Villars.



LORENZ'ONOFRIO COLONNA

*Duca di Tagliacozzo, de' Marsi, et Ernica,
Marchese dell' Aversa, e di Giuliana Conte di Pignepo,
della Valle di Proutto, di Cal Corrente, del Castel dell' Oluero, di Calamouro, della Città d' Aydone, del Burgo di Montecallegro,
della Contessa di Cerro, della Nobara di Pflaisano, di Catarmia etc Grande di Spagna di 1^{ma} Classe, e Gran Contestabile del Regno di Napoli*



PRINCIPE ROMANO

*del Ceruaro Principe di Polino, Sonnino, e Castiglione,
Albe di Chiura, e Manoppello Barone di Carroli,
della Città d' Aydone, del Burgo di Montecallegro,
della Contessa di Cerro, della Nobara di Pflaisano, di Catarmia etc Grande di Spagna di 1^{ma} Classe, e Gran Contestabile del Regno di Napoli*

Giacomo Bichi del.

F. Sporre delop. 1662.

THE CONNETTABLE COLONNA
After the portrait by Giacomo Bichi

received her very well, but shut the cage's door on the wild bird. She made a fine uproar, vowing that her husband wanted to take revenge "after the Italian fashion," that is, by poisoning her. The king, the queen, the ministers, the grand inquisitor, took the affair to heart; she stirred up the whole country. Some were for her, others against. One night she was carried off, by her lord's orders, with but small ceremony; the ravishers dragged her, half naked, by the hair and threw her into a dungeon where she was only too happy to accept a solution which completed the masquerade of her life. The *connétable* pledged himself to become a Knight of Malta if she consented to take the veil. She was all the more willing, as she had had some experience in breaking through convent walls. Madrid, with great edification, beheld her in a monastic habit. "Madame Colonna arrived on Saturday, early," writes Madame de Villars. "She entered the convent; the nuns received her at the door with tapers and all the ceremonies in use on such occasions. Thence, she was led into the choir where she took the habit (of a novice) with great modesty. . . . The costume is pretty and becoming, the convent agreeable."¹

Poor convent! if it had received the devil in person as penitent it would not have been in a worse plight. "Under her woollen garment, she wore skirts of gold and silver brocade; as soon as she was free of the nuns, she threw off her veil

¹ February 1, 1681.

and dressed her hair after the fashion of Spain, with many coloured ribbons. When a bell announced some function at which she was bound to assist . . . she threw on her habit and her veil so as to hide the ribbons and her thick hair; it was a perpetual comedy.”¹ Disguised as a nun twenty times a day and as often throwing off that disguise, it was impossible that her vocation should be taken seriously. The husband, discouraged, and without the slightest desire to become a Knight of Malta, finally abandoned his wife. He went off to Rome; but he was guilty of leaving her penniless, in an attic, without a fire, lacking every decent comfort. From that moment, Marie disappears in darkness. Now and again a faint glimmer of light falls upon her; then, once more, she vanishes.

In 1684, she is seen in France. In 1688, the French ambassador speaks of her as being in a small convent “where she is free to come and go.” The following year she becomes a widow. In love, even to the last, “the connétable, in his will, begs his wife’s pardon . . . and for fear his children should harbour some anger toward their mother, he accuses himself, and endeavours to inspire them with respect, gratitude, and admiration for her.”² What an excellent husband! She rewarded this magnanimity by returning to Italy where, under her children’s eyes, she lived

¹ Mémoires de la cour d’Espagne.

² Saint-Evremond de.

after a most profligate fashion. She was nearing her fiftieth year. A last ray of light falls upon her in 1705. "Madame Colonna," relates Saint Simon, "took it into her head to land in Provence, where she remained several months, without permission to draw nearer; at last it was granted her . . . on condition that she should not enter Paris. She went to Passy. Outside of her family, she knew no one; . . . disgusted at having been so ill received, she went quickly back of her own accord."

And in her family, what universal ruin! What a return to the original nothingness! The Princess of Conti, the saint, was dead. Dead also the Duchess of Modena, leaving one son, weak mentally and physically, soon to die. Dead, the beautiful Hortense, Duchess of Mazarin; her husband claimed her body, and carried it about with him. Olympe, Duchess of Soissons, compromised in the poisoning affair, had come away from a fête, in January, 1680, to throw herself into a coach, never stopping until she had crossed, for ever, the frontier of France. Marie-Anne, Duchess of Bouillon, implicated in the same affair, was banished, recalled, then once more banished for ever from the court. The only brother had survived and amused himself with writing pretty verses; he could do nothing else. Pushing our investigations a little further, we find that the Mazarin blood, mixed with that of so many illustrious families, brought ill-luck with it to all. The

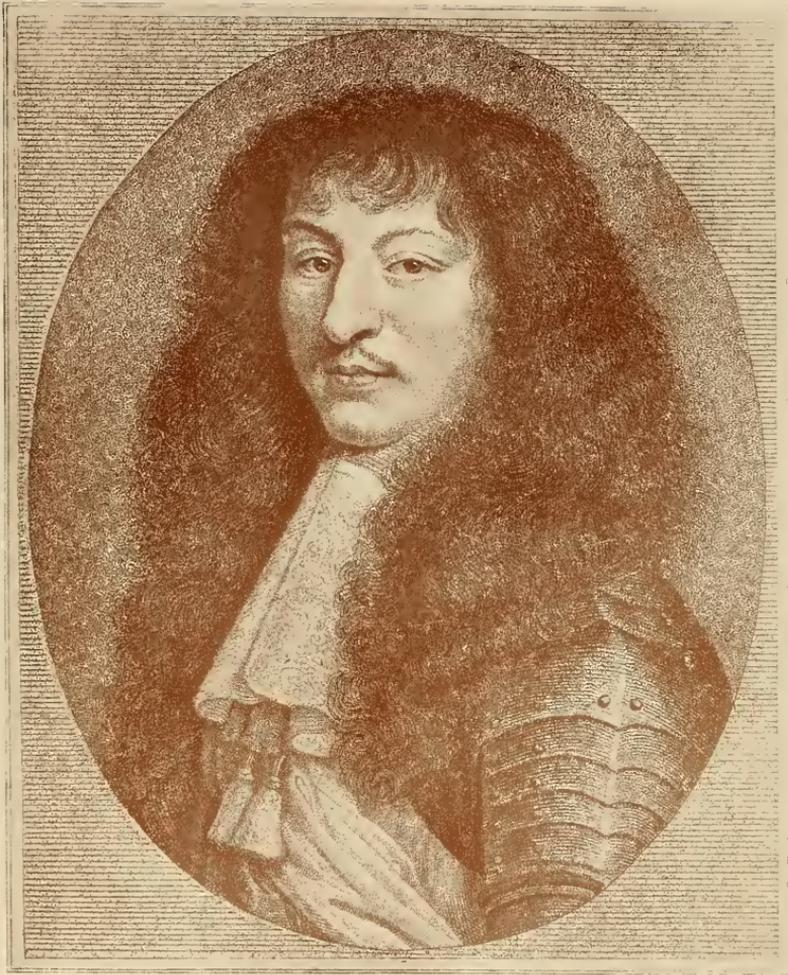
houses of the d'Estes, of the Stuarts,¹ of the Vendômes,² of the Contis, of the Bouillons, of the Soissons, died out, one after the other.

And the treasures amassed by Mazarin, his millions, his old masters, his antique statues? The Duke of Mazarin, his heir, mutilated the statues with a hammer, smeared over the pictures, spent millions in law suits before all the courts of justice in France; so that, according to Monsieur Amédée Renée's witty remark, "It was the Fronde that, after all, was Cardinal Mazarin's real heir."

Marie Colonna saw these things, found that France was no longer amusing, and plunged definitely into oblivion. We do not know when she died, or where; probably in Italy or Spain, somewhere about 1715. She had become skilled in the occult sciences, which accorded well with her witch-like face. One can imagine her old, with her wild, unkempt hair, sordid in her dress, wrinkled, half-impotent. Of her lost splendour nothing remains but the fire of her black eyes. She tells fortunes and the future remains dark. She lives in the past. She takes her guitar, plays and muses. She dreams that once she barely missed being queen of France.

¹ The daughter of the Duchess of Modena married James II.

² Sons of the Duchess of Mercœur.



LOUIS XIV
After a print by Nanteuil

CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN

IN the character of Christina of Sweden, daughter of the great Gustavus Adolphus, there was a mixture of strange brilliancy and of enigmatic romance. Her contemporaries did not know what to make of her. Few beings were ever during their lifetime more praised and more reviled. Pages might be filled with the mere titles of the odes, discourses, panegyrics, plays, in which Christina is exalted in prose and verse, in German, Italian, Latin, Swedish, and French. An equally long list could be composed of the pamphlets, memoirs, and epigrams in which she is dragged in the mud. Even now she is a puzzle; we find in her traits of grandeur and absurdity, of nobility and perversity. It is an open question whether she was sincere, or whether she threw dust in the eyes of all Europe. The perplexity increases when the comedy of her life turns to tragedy.

Yet, light begins to dawn. Listening to Christina herself through her letters, her diplomatic documents, her collections of maxims, her autobiography and her marginal notes, we come to know her and, at the same time, to understand the contradictory judgments of her day. As this

ambiguous figure reveals itself to us, we are moved by feelings equally ambiguous. We are amused and revolted, fascinated and disgusted.

1

CHRISTINA was born at Stockholm, December 8, 1626, of Gustavus Adolphus and Mary Eleonore, daughter of the Elector of Brandenburg. A son had been predicted by the astrologers; dreams had confirmed the predictions of the stars, and the son was eagerly expected. When the child came into the world it seemed as though the stars and the occult powers had been only half mistaken and that nature had really meant to fashion a boy. The child was so hairy, so dark, its voice was so rough and loud that it was thought a prince had been born. Unfortunately, it was but a tomboy of a girl, and such Christina remained all her life. Gustavus Adolphus was soon consoled; not so the queen, who looked upon the black little creature in horror. She could not forgive her for being a girl, especially for being an ugly little girl. Christina insinuates in her autobiography¹ that her mother's aversion was answerable for the many accidents of her in-

¹ Life of Queen Christina, written by herself. Memoirs concerning Christina, published by Arckenholtz, librarian to the landgrave of Hesse-Cassel (Amsterdam and Leipzig, 4 vols., 1751-1760). The Memoirs contain most of the facts used by historians. Granert, in 1837, added certain other facts to those related by Arckenholtz in his *Christina, Königin von Schweden und ihr Hof*.



QUEEN CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN
From an old copper print

fancy, and that it was a marvel that she came out of this dangerous period merely with one shoulder higher than the other. Nothing that we can learn of Mary Eleonore warrants such an accusation.

The queen was eccentric and much given to tears, but she was not bad at heart. Gustavus Adolphus describes her in a word "without judgment." In point of fact, she was quite lacking in common sense. Her husband, however, was very much in love and easily forgave her stupidity and eternal weeping, because she was "beautiful and gentle." He loved her after the superior fashion of great men towards feminine idiots; he enjoyed seeing her gorgeously dressed, and never thought of confiding in her. He was in the right, for the queen adored him and was perfectly contented with her lot. She surrounded herself with dwarfs, buffoons, and people of low degree, and by way of occupation made lotions for the preservation of her complexion. She was outside of everything, entirely ignorant of what went on in the world, and left to the mercy of her servants and their low intrigues. With her superstitions, her old-time notions, her barbarous court of misshapen monsters and parasites, she represented mediæval times at the Court of Sweden during the seventeenth century under the reign of Gustavus Adolphus. She was too gentle to have attempted to kill or maim her daughter, to punish her for not being a boy; she was, however, a

deplorable mother, and it is but fair to remember this in judging Christina. From her mother Christina inherited a great many faults and not one virtue. All there was good in her nature came from her father.

Gustavus Adolphus left a dazzling reputation. He was the hero of popular fancy. Nothing which could strike the imagination was lacking in him. He came from the distant and mysterious North, which fancy pictured as icebound and lost in darkness. Thirty years later, Huet and Nandé, when they reached Sweden, were childishly amazed at the flowers, the sunshine, and the cherries. The king himself seemed the very incarnation of Scandinavian mythology. Emperor Ferdinand called him "the king of snow," and the name suited him wonderfully well. He was a fair-haired giant, with a golden beard, a white and pink complexion, and gray eyes full of fire. He was easily moved to anger, terrible in war, but gentle in times of peace and when he was truly himself. He was then the good and joyous giant, amenable to laughter. Like the Ases, companions of Odin, he loved to drink with the brave and to strike gallant blows in battle. Some historians have blamed him for being over rash, a mere soldier, contrary to the custom of sovereigns and generals. Christina took his part with great warmth. "The cheap fashion of being a hero," said she, "at the cost of cowardice, was not then in vogue. Nowadays, the greater the

poltroon the greater the hero." Whether the doughty onsets of Gustavus Adolphus were reasonable or not, they at least gave him great renown in the world.

His prowess, worthy of the old-time knights, did not prevent a great taste for letters. He spoke several languages, and had a well-chosen camp library which followed him everywhere. He had meditated on human affairs, on ambition, on the passion for glory, on the fate of nations, and he had come to the conclusion that he was the scourge of Sweden, that all great kings are fatal to their people, and every great man a plague to some victim or other. "God," said he, "never diverges from the law of mediocrity without crushing some one. It is a proof of love toward the humble when kings are blessed with commonplace souls." He adds "that, on the other hand, mediocre princes at times also bring down calamities on their subjects." But these calamities are light as compared with those which result from a sovereign's greatness. His violent passion for glory, which deprived him of peace, causes him naturally to deprive his subjects of it as well. He is like a torrent which brings destruction there where it passes. God had sent him in a moment of anger against Sweden to win battles; he pitied his country but never dreamed for an instant of resisting this Heaven-appointed vocation. When the victory remained uncertain, he would dismount, kneel, and call out

loudly to the "God of battle." And God testified His favour by removing him from the earth, in the glory of his youth and strength, and in the very midst of a victorious battle. Gustavus Adolphus left the scene as he had entered it. Europe was dizzy with the spreading renown of his genius and his virtues. His daughter Christina, like him, loved glory; but she could never distinguish between that which was genuine and that which was spurious.

She was not quite six years old when her father was killed at Lutzen, November 6, 1632. All the details of the regency and the guardianship of his daughter had been ordained by Gustavus Adolphus. First of all, he forbade that his wife should have any voice either in the government of the state or the education of the child. He had shuddered at the mere thought that she might have any influence; she was debarred from all action. This was specified in the archives of the senate and repeated in the instructions given to the Chancellor Oxenstiern. In his letters during the campaign, the king insisted on this point, and, just before the battle of Lutzen, he wrote again on the subject to his minister. It is remarkable that a husband, much in love with his wife, should have recognised her shortcomings so clearly.

He placed Christina under the guardianship of a regency council. The senate and the ministers were to superintend her education, and to under-



QUEEN ELEONORA OF SWEDEN
From an old copper print

take in concert to make a great prince of a very wide-awake little girl, for the king had commanded that she was to be brought up like a boy. He himself chose for her a governor, of whom Christina, grown old, approved. "He had been," said she, "associated with the king in all his pleasures, the companion of his journeyings and wild doings, the confidant of his loves."

This nobleman was proficient in all manly exercises, a courtier but very ignorant; moreover, he was violent and choleric, much given to women and wine in his youth; his vices did not abandon him until his death, though he had moderated them. This model of a governor for a young princess was seconded by an under-tutor equally fond of the bottle, and a professor, doctor of theology, honest John Matthiæ. Chancellor Oxenstiern had absolute command of the palace. Unfortunately for Christina he had been detained in Germany at the death of his master. The other regents did not dare to resist the widow of Gustavus Adolphus, and Mary Eleonore had leisure to commit some follies. Thanks to her, the child nearly went out of her senses.

The loss of a husband was too good an excuse for weeping for the queen not to make the most of it. She resolved that her sorrow should be the talk of the world. Night and day, sobs, deluges of tears alarmed the palace; this lasted for weeks, for months, for years. She caused her apartments to be hung with black; the windows

were hidden under sable draperies, so that "it was impossible to see an inch before one's face,"¹ and she wept, wept, wept, by the light of wax tapers. Once a day she "visited" a gold box hung above her bed; it contained her husband's heart, and she wept over the box. At other times, woeful lamentations sounded in the funereal chambers. If the queen had only shut up her dwarfs and buffoons with her, there would have been little anxiety; they could take care of themselves. But she had taken possession of Christina, whom she guarded jealously, took to bed with her, so as to force the child to weep and lament with her, and to pass her life in the shadow of the black draperies. If an attempt was made to snatch the poor little girl from her, she would screech and howl. The regents hesitated, consulted with each other, and meanwhile time went on. The return of Oxenstiern released Christina. The chancellor hastened to send Mary Eleonore to one of her castles, where she might shed tears to her heart's content. In the chronicles of the day, her name appears only now and then, accompanied by some such comment, "The queen wept several hours; . . . the queen shed tears all night long; . . . the queen could not stop her sobs. . ."

Christina for years was unable to shake off this nightmare; she was haunted by the black chambers, the golden box, and the paroxysms of sobs, bursting out at stated moments. Mary

¹ Autobiography of Christina.

Eleonore is responsible for many of her daughter's eccentricities.

The regents, the senate, and the representatives of the state could now undertake their great task and give the rare example of a monarch brought up by the people to govern according to that people's ideas. Christina's professor was the nation itself, not excluding the fourth Swedish order, that of the peasantry. To make the case still more singular, Sweden, then a very illiterate nation, became alive to the necessity of education and believed with an ardent faith, which has never been equalled even in our days, in its mystical and magic power. During ten years the nation lived in anguish, watching the royal child's progress in Latin and in mathematics. The proficiency of this brilliant pupil was heralded abroad, to the farthest limits of the kingdom "and excited," says an historian, "the most joyful hopes for the future happiness of the country."¹ The queen was learning Greek; all thrilled with pride; she was reading Thucydides; joy became delirium. Strangers looked upon her as a little prodigy; she was the pride of the nation.

Some of Christina's school tasks have been preserved and a selection of them printed. The French themes are much such as are written nowadays in ordinary girls' schools. There is one on *Patience*, one on *Constancy*. A third, in the form of a letter, condoles with a lady

¹ Granert.

on the death of her husband. The schoolgirl, endeavouring to express noble sentiments, made rather a muddle of them. "We must consider," said she, "that as no captive leaves his prison without great profit to himself, likewise the souls, imprisoned on earth, feel at the moment of their deliverance the joy of a life free from regrets and sighs; thus, death gives the assurance of happiness." Christina was sixteen years of age when she composed this masterpiece, which imprudent courtiers offered to the admiration of posterity. The same enthusiastic persons went into ecstasies over her Latin exercises, which they discovered to be full of "elegance." I dare to call it "Kitchen Latin," but in any case the quality of her Latin mattered very little for the happiness of the nation.

The Swedish government was by no means of that opinion. What would become of Sweden were its queen to be guilty of a solecism? Precautions were taken against so great an evil. Matthiæ was obliged to render a strict account of her progress. The regency was thus made aware that, on the 26th of February, 1639, the queen had undertaken the *Dialogues Français* of Samuel Bernard; that on the 30th of March she had committed to memory Cato's speech, in *Saluste*, and on April 6th that of Catilina to his soldiers; that she was learning astronomy in a book which dated from the thirteenth century, in which no heretical opinions on the rotation of the

earth could be found; that in history she began with the *Pentateuch*, which was followed by the *War of Thebes*, and that she read, most attentively, an old Swedish book recommended by Gustavus Adolphus, in which the art of governing was condensed in maxims. A commission of senators, to make sure that the queen was a conscientious pupil, examined her on each branch of learning. The states voted as to the best way that the queen "might be brought up and educated," and made use of this good opportunity to recommend that her Majesty should have no ideas inculcated "that might be dangerous to the liberties and circumstances of the state or the subjects of the kingdom."

Never was pupil subjected to a harder training, and no pupil ever needed this training less. The little queen was gifted with remarkable facility and a passionate desire to learn. She wanted to know all things and she understood them all. She forgot to eat and drink, she deprived herself of sleep; in a word, she made her poor little brain work until it was in real danger. Christina had no luck in her bringing-up. Scarcely had she been snatched from her mother's terrifying black chamber when she fell a prey to very honest people who thought it their duty to make of her a youthful prodigy, and who, most unfortunately, succeeded only too well. No one about her seemed to understand that a little girl ought to play with her doll. The less child-like she was

the more pleased were these good souls. She knew neither rest nor recreation. From year's end to year's end she worked unremittingly, feverishly, taking, by way of diversion, most violent and excessive exercise. She was stunted in her growth, her blood was over-heated, and several times she was at death's door; but she knew eight languages, could embarrass her professor at Greek, discoursed on philosophy, and had her views on the woman question. She was really a little scholar and, in spite of all, she was bright, witty, and sometimes very amusing. Those about her were some time before discovering that, as a result of all this forcing, the springs of her mind, already taxed by the absurdities of her mother, were really somewhat out of order. Sweden prided itself on the accomplishment of its task and admired its young sovereign without any misgivings.

What more could one ask of her? She knew by heart the Lutheran catechism, and quoted the Bible like a bishop. She was to have become to all intents a boy; she went farther. She was dishevelled, grimy-handed, ill-dressed, she swore like a musketeer; but she rode to perfection, killed a hare with a bullet, slept on a hard bed, and from the depths of her soul despised women, women's ideas, women's work, women's talk. When she galloped along, free and bold, wearing a man's hat and doublet, her hair flying, her face tanned, her subjects were perhaps not quite sure



GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS
 From an old copper print

that they were governed by a prince, but they were certainly persuaded that they were not under the sway of a princess. Her face, which was that of a youth, helped to bewilder them. Christina was large-featured; she had a powerful, aquiline nose, her underlip was a little over-hanging, her fine blue eyes were full of fire. She also had a manly voice which, however, she knew how to soften. She was small and slightly misshapen, but her agility and liveliness made of her an amusing and pretty boy. The people were passionately fond of her. Neither the "five big old fellows," as she called the regents, nor honest Matthiæ, nor the drunkard of a governor, nor the court chaplain, nor any of the courtiers, the soldiers, the magistrates, nor the scholars who surrounded her from morning till night, ever suspected the volcano hidden under that frolicsome appearance. They would have shuddered had they been able to read the confessions of the *Autobiography*.

In this precious bit of literature, which was never finished, Christina erected an altar for herself. It was the fashion of the day. This was the era of "portraits," which, with perfect candour, initiated the public into one's intimacy, relating good and evil of oneself, always leaning a little more upon the former. In truth there is less pride, and especially less evil pride, in trying to appear at one's best before the crowd, than in exhibiting one's vices, after the example of Rous-

seau. The only fault we can find with Christina is that she slightly exceeded her right to make the most of her model's good points.

She dwells, more than anyone would ever dare to do nowadays, on her heart, "great and noble from its earliest being;" on her soul "forged of the same steel;" on the "innumerable talents," which singled her out for the admiration of the world. As to her faults which, according to the rule of such writings, she does not wish to hide, she ascribes to herself such as may become her royal rank, such as do not disqualify a superior being. "I was suspicious," said she, "and ambitious beyond all bounds. I was passionate and violent, proud and impatient, contemptuous of others and sarcastic." All that does well enough, but a little later she adds, "Moreover, I was incredulous and by no means given to piety; my impetuous nature was as prone to love as to ambition." She however protests that God, who does not seem to have taken umbrage at her want of faith, preserved her from the errors to which her nature had predestined her. "However close to the precipice I may have gone, Thy all-powerful hand drew me back." She is quite aware that calumny has not spared her. On one occasion she accuses herself of "having been too contemptuous of the proprieties to which her sex should be subject," and that it is this which caused her to be often most unjustly condemned. She acknowledges that in this she was wrong, but

adds that, were the occasion to present itself once more, she would be even more reckless. "I am persuaded that I should have done better to rid myself, once and for all, of these trammels; this is a weakness which I cannot forgive myself. I was not born for the yoke; I should have thrown it off altogether, as became my rank and my nature."

Her most religious Lutheran subjects believed even more firmly than did this "incredulous" princess, so little given to piety, that a divine hand was sure to keep her from tumbling down certain precipices. Still, had they guessed how necessary this help was to keep their young queen on the straight road, they would have been horror-stricken. In spite of drinking, swearing, and much native coarseness, these half-barbarians were of a grave and religious turn of mind, as it behooves sincere Protestants to be. God was a witness of their daily acts, and thus ever ready to help or avenge them. When Gustavus Adolphus took leave of the states, before sailing for Germany, all sang in chorus the hymn, "In the morning, fill us with Thy grace. . . . We shall be joyous all through the day." These people looked upon life seriously, whereas to Christina it was a masquerade. In spite of the wit, the charm, the courage, and the science of this extraordinary girl, she and they could not long agree. She lacked one gift, a sense of morality, and she fell upon a nation which would lose everything rather than that.

When she was eighteen, the states proclaimed her majority, and the regents gave up the power into her hands. The value of this education, given by the whole nation to the girl-queen, was now to be tested.

II

THE states, very wisely, had recommended that she should be fashioned into a true Swede, obedient to the manners and customs of the country, "both physically and morally." The senate and the regency, in this respect, were of one mind with the states. With this end in view, we are aghast at the means employed to reach it. The more we consider the Sweden of Gustavus Adolphus the less we understand why great culture and studies, carried over-far, should have been employed to inspire Christina with the love of her country.

A great prince had covered it with glory, but the campaigns of Gustavus Adolphus, while they made Sweden powerful, had by no means softened the people. He found it rough, and rough he left it. When he came to the throne, in 1611, ignorance was deep and almost universal. There was a single and mediocre school at Upsal;¹ for various reasons but few young men frequented foreign universities. The middle class was not

¹ The University of Upsal was founded in 1476. At the period we are studying, it had fallen to the rank of a mere school. Gustavus Adolphus reorganized it.

rich. The nobles despised learning according to a tradition still dear to aristocrats. Numbers of magistrates could barely sign their name, and many excellent generals were in the same case. Gustavus Adolphus founded schools and imported a bookseller from Germany, but he could not create a learned faculty out of nothing. At one time the medical school of Upsal boasted but of one professor; he sufficed, however, the number of pupils being very small. The evil of the day was pedantism, which flourished, thanks to the efforts of a few scholars. Doctor Pancrace and Trissotin would, in Sweden, have found kindred spirits.

Theology alone prospered in this intellectual desert. A zealous clergy catechised the faithful and preached to them with a sort of fury and with such fervour that, in spite of an ardent faith, the congregations bewailed the length of the sermons. The lower classes, to what they were taught, added a thousand superstitions which, to them, represented poetry; the people were very poor, very ignorant, and their lives were hard and dreary.

The customs were as primitive as the ideas. The deputies, sent by the order of peasantry, took part in state affairs in rags. The houses of the nobles were whitewashed and very scantily furnished. At meal times a canopy was suspended over the table to keep the spiders and their webs from falling into the dishes. The table

appurtenances were in keeping with the furniture. At the wedding feast of Gustavus Adolphus pewter dishes were used, and even these had to be borrowed. The food was coarse; even at the king's table there was nothing superfluous, such as cakes or desserts, nothing but meat, and what was left over was served anew. The mother of Gustavus Adolphus made her own purchases of wine, and the merchant had to wait long before he was paid. Prince Charles Augustus, who reigned after Christina, wrote lengthily to his mother before he could make up his mind as to which would be more economical: to have an every-day suit made, or to wear out one of his Sunday doubtlets. A traveller¹ relates that the copper money was "as big as tiles." If this detail is correct it is characteristic.

They had only one luxury, drinking; but they certainly did justice to that. At the marriage of Gustavus Adolphus, seventy-seven hogsheads of Rhine wine and a hundred and forty-four casks of beer were drunk, without counting other kinds of wine and brandy. Great rejoicings took the form of sitting in front of numberless bottles, drinking to one's heart's content, throwing glasses at each other and, finally, rolling under the table. At court and at the inn things were much on the same level. No one, not even a bishop, had the right to refuse a toast.

Stockholm had the appearance of a half bar-

¹ Huet.

barous capital. From afar one saw a multitude of monuments and palaces, whose sparkling roofs, covered with copper, looked down upon mounds of grass. Massive towers, Turkish minarets, steeples of every shape, palaces with Greek colonnades, formed a most heterogeneous and picturesque mass.¹ As to houses, there were none. On drawing near, one saw that the green mounds were habitations made of wood and covered with turf. In such a case it is well to quote one's authorities. We give way to the very truthful Huet, bishop of Avranches, who visited Stockholm in 1652. "The windows," says he, "are pierced in the roof, which is formed of boards and the bark of birch that does not rot, the whole is covered with grass. This sort of roof, according to Virgil, was used by the peasants in Italy. With the grass, oats and other grains are sown; their roots cling to the wood and strengthen it. In this wise, the tops of the houses are like fields of verdure and flowers; I have seen sheep and pigs browse thereon. Roofs are thus formed, so I was told, in order that the houses, made of resinous wood, should be protected from lightning, and also that, in time of war, the animals may there find their food." Stockholm could boast of being a very original city.²

Sweden would have required a great effort to

¹ Ch. Ponsonailhe, Sébastien Bourbon.

² A learned Icelander, who wrote during the eighteenth century, Jonas Arngrim, gives a similar description of the houses in his country (Reipub Island, chap. vi).

catch up with other Occidental nations, and the reign of Gustavus Adolphus gave no scope for pacific enterprises. The hero knew what he was saying when he assured his astonished officers that "God was very good to the nations whose sovereigns had commonplace souls." He left his kingdom exhausted, without money, ruined by the frequent passage of troops, crushed with taxes, and at his death the war was not ended. His political confidant, Oxenstiern, went on with it, and the fate of the land was most lamentable. The peasants were at their wits' end. Tormented by the soldiery, tormented by the tax-gatherer, finding neither succour nor pity when they applied to the all-powerful chancellor, they entered into open revolt and, in despair, emigrated. A part of Sweden had gone to waste.

In order to govern this simple nation, they had formed a queen, fed on fine literature, in love with poetry, fond of rare editions and costly manuscripts. To govern this poverty-stricken land, they had formed a queen who adored beautiful furniture, pictures, statues, medals, royal pomp. To live in this rough country, they had formed a queen whose dream was of southern scenes and Italian skies. To win the confidence of this dreary intellectual abyss, they had formed a queen whose mind was the most restless, the most disturbed, the most audacious, the most undisciplined, the most distorted that ever was created. And to cap the climax, they had formed



AXEL OXENSTIERN
CHANCELIER de SUEDE.

J. de Licqun sculpsit

COUNT AXEL OXENSTIERN
From an old copper print

a queen so masculine in her tastes that she considered marriage degrading and refused to bear children, wishing to learn the art of war instead. And when it was discovered that Sweden, loyal and devoted, but fanatical and rustic, bored Christina beyond expression, Sweden was amazed and much scandalised. So much evil has been heaped in the balance against Christina, that it is but fair to consider what may excuse her. She was brought up to reign over Florence rather than over cobweb-hung Stockholm. It was not quite her fault if she found her fate a hard one.

Oxenstiern had been the real sovereign of Sweden during her minority. He was responsible for the greater part of this deplorable education; it was he who plucked its first bitter fruits. For eight years past he had spent three hours a day teaching the art of government to the little queen, and during those eight years he had found in her a docile and grateful pupil. Once Christina took the reins in her own hands — farewell to submission! This sort of boy in petticoats had her own ideas on government, and they were by no means those that had been inculcated to her. Oxenstiern had fed her with the purest aristocratic traditions, and her own convictions smelt of the gutter. She insisted that personal merit was everything, birth nothing. “There are,” said she, “peasants born kings and kings who ought to be peasants; there is a rabble of kings as there is a rabble of ruffians.” Having discovered a

talented but low-born Swede, she proclaimed him ambassador and senator, and foisted him on the senate with these words, worthy of Beaumarchais, "Salvius would doubtless be a great man had he come of a noble family."

In foreign affairs the same kind of surprise was in store for those who had praised her superior mind. Taking her flatterers at their word she refused to accept a guide. She wished for peace, in which she surely was not wrong, and, in spite of Oxenstiern, signed the treaty of Westphalia. The old statesman was bound to acknowledge that he had found his master. He had to do with a young woman who did not fear a struggle. "Our passions," said she, "are the salt of the earth; one is happy or unhappy according as one has wrestled with them."

III

It was plain that she meant to establish her independence. What she meant to do with it was less clear. She wrote, "To some, all things are allowed, and all are becoming." She was, of course, among these privileged few and acted in accordance. She was of opinion that follies have less importance than is usually attributed to them. Feeble souls alone stop to weep over past faults. Strong minds never forget that "there is so little difference between wisdom and folly that this difference is scarcely worth considering, especially

if we remember how short life is." What is wise and what is foolish? Instead of wasting our time looking at the past, let us look at the future. "All that is no more is not worth a thought; one must ever begin anew." A convenient precept, and one which Queen Christina always adopted for her own use. Whatever might be the past she made up her accounts with her conscience and began afresh. In so doing she took on such an air of bravado that she irritated the gallery and brought upon herself severe strictures. She ought perhaps not to have forgotten certain things so easily.

She has been accused of having had a band of favourites, immediately after her emancipation, and ugly words have been used with regard to her conduct. The subject is a delicate one, but in spite of many injurious pamphlets there has been sufficient uncertainty for the queen's virtue to find some champions.¹ How can one be sure of such things? She made no secret of choosing favourites among the younger and more amiable men who crowded about her. That, in her day, scurrilous pamphlets found much echo in the public mind, that her conduct was severely criticised, is also quite true. That one should take as gospel truth the declarations of her *Auto-*

¹ Among others, Arckenholtz and Granert, who ingenuously confess that they were influenced by the desire to contradict the French writers. Arckenholtz in a footnote says that a Swedish historian of his day, Gioerwell, told him that he was alone of his opinion "that Christina had not overstepped the boundaries of chastity."

biography on the subject of the precipice, often approached, always avoided, is quite another matter. The argument that her masculine tastes were sufficient protection is not altogether convincing. On the other hand appearances might be misleading, with a young woman who dressed like a man, lived a man's life, and had valets in place of maids. After all, each one is free to have his own opinions of Christina's virtue.

From one reproach the queen could not vindicate herself. She says somewhere, "The passion of those we cannot love is insupportable." She might have completed the aphorism thus: "The passion of those we *no longer* love is insupportable." Favourites came and went with alarming rapidity. At first she adored them, showered dignities, honours, money on them, as, for instance, on Magnus of Gardie, the first on the list, who was twenty-two, handsome, and of "noble air." She made him ambassador, colonel, senator, grand master of her household, grand treasurer. When she wearied of these poor fellows she got rid of them without the slightest ceremony; this was the case with Magnus when she replaced him by Pimentel, ambassador from Spain. She refused to see her ex-favourite and wrote, in her own hand, on the margin of a history of her reign, "Count Magnus was a drunkard and a liar." On all occasions she put into practice her own maxim that one should never look back, but always begin life anew. "Those who make good use of all

things," said she, "are wise and happy." As far as favourites went, she made use of all who were within her grasp.

The reign of La Gardie was also, at Stockholm, the reign of French politics, of French wit, of French literature, of French fashions. The treaty with France was renewed (1651). The queen gave the lion's share to France in the crowd of scholars, of writers, of artists, that composed her famous and superb court. Naudé took charge of her library. Saumaise spent a year with her, not however without much coaxing, for no man of letters was ever vainer than he. Descartes allowed himself to be tempted, for his own misfortune and for science's loss. Christina forced him to come at five o'clock in the morning, through the bitter cold, to discuss philosophy with her. After some months of this tyranny he died. Bochart, the Orientalist, brought his friend Huet, future bishop of Avranches. Sébastien Bourdon, Nanteuil, François Parise, the medal engraver, the architect Simon de la Vallée, worked in Sweden for the queen. Her secretary for state affairs was Chevreau, who later was tutor to the Duke of Maine. Her four other secretaries were French. French, her doctor and her surgeon. French, a heterogeneous crowd of men; scholars, philosophers, grammarians, makers of court verses, pedants, intriguers, fine gentlemen, charlatans of every description, valets fit for any sort of low work. Among these we must distinguish Clairét

Poissonnet, a veritable genius in his way, first valet of the chamber, and confidant of the queen's secrets. Poissonnet could neither read nor write, but whenever his mistress had on hand some very complicated affair, she entrusted it to him. She sent him to the Pope, also to Mazarin. He was celebrated for the way in which he wormed secrets out of others while he kept his own counsel; but he was forced to have his letters written for him and the answers read. Mazarin, well up in such matters, greatly admired Poissonnet.

Swedish, German, Dutch scholars and writers completed this original court, of which Christina was the soul. The care of the state did not encroach on her studies. She took from her hours of sleep, of meals, from those which might with advantage have been given to dress, in order to attend to public affairs. Thanks to this system, she had trained herself to sleep but three hours, to dine in a jiffy, and to comb her hair once in eight days — sometimes, she would skip a week. To the ink-stained schoolgirl had succeeded an ink-stained, grimy-handed, ill-kempt queen, whose linen was doubtful and torn, but who had read Petronius and Martial, was afraid of no ill-sounding words, was very learned, and could discuss and argue with the best. She hated pedantry, so detestable in women; the sparkle of her wit saved her from it, even when she discoursed with pedants on pedantic subjects. Her reputation spread all over Europe, so that her people were very proud of her;

only it was becoming very evident that brilliant sovereigns are an expensive luxury.

We can scarcely, nowadays, realise the cost of such a court. Our monarchs have scholars for nothing. Two and a half centuries ago that was not the case. The honour of a great man's visits was paid for, and Christina was generous. A bag of gold, a pension, a golden chain were bestowed on the men who gave lustre to her throne. When she could not secure their presence she wrote to them, and other pensions, other chains of gold found their way out of the country. Europe was full of leeches that sucked the lifeblood of Sweden; throughout the land the people murmured and rebelled. The Swedes could not think without bitterness of the money which they had produced by the sweat of the brow and which went to foreigners. Their anger grew as they saw these aliens devouring their fair country like a prey, and who encouraged their queen in her disastrous extravagance. Her people died of hunger while she completed her artistic collections.

She took great glory in these collections, and in truth they were remarkable. Her library was unrivalled in Europe and boasted of eight thousand rare manuscripts. The old masters, beautiful curios abounded in her picture gallery and cabinets, where, beside antique statues there were medals, ivories, and innumerable costly gems. And yet, real connoisseurs held these in mediocre esteem, because Christina had proceeded like a

veritable *parvenue*, spending money lavishly, but showing no discernment, no real love of art. Her library and museums were but a setting for her own extraordinary personality. She had paid one hundred and sixty thousand crowns for two manuscripts,¹ but she did not even know that many books in her library had been stolen from her. She possessed eleven pictures by Correggio and two by Raphael; but she cut up her finest paintings so as to ornament with the heads, hands, and feet the ceilings of her palace. Such things stamp a collector.

In her noblest tastes we find that unhealthy desire to attract the world's attention which caused her ruin. Even her most ardent admirers acknowledged her insatiable vanity. This female philosopher adored flattery and, with joy, breathed in whatever incense was offered her. She did not disdain to burn incense to herself, and innumerable are the medals that she caused to be struck which represented her as Minerva, Diana subduing wild beasts, or as winged Victory crowned with laurels. She encouraged panegyrics in verse and prose. She confirmed herself in the sense of her own importance by bombarding with officious advice Retz and Mazarin, Condé and Louis XIV, the kings of Poland and Spain. Her advice was

¹ For the benefit of scholars, here are the titles of these two manuscripts: *The Ecclesiastical History of Philostorgus* and *The Babylonics of Jamblique*. After the death of Christina these manuscripts went to the Vatican library. The second was considered as spurious. It is not known whether the first contained the original text or an extract given by Photius.

ill received; but, undaunted, she continued to give it. Her attempt to correspond with the king of Spain is an amusing example of her mad desire for notoriety.

In 1653, an unfortunate negro, lost in Germany, was seeking for something, he could not explain what, as no one understood his language. A scholar of Erfurt, Job Ludolf, author of works on Ethiopia and the Ethiopian language, was then at Stockholm. He persuaded Christina that this negro was an Ethiopian and that, doubtless, he was in search of her august person in order to compliment her on her researches with regard to his country. He added that in all probability the traveller's name was Akalaktus. This was the very occasion to make her name known in Africa. The queen wrote a fine Latin epistle to her "very dear cousin and friend," the king of Ethiopia, *Consanguineo nostro carissimo, eadem gratia Æthiopum regi*, etc. By way of beginning "a regular correspondence with him," she wished him every sort of prosperity, and recommended Akalaktus to his good will.¹ The parcel was sent to the negro in Germany. Whether he received it or not is a mooted question. All that history teaches us on that subject is that he wandered in Germany for another twelvemonth, departed, evidently disheartened, and was never heard of more.

¹ A copy of this letter still existed a century ago in the Swedish archives.

Sweden, as we have seen, was hurt by the queen's marked preference for strangers, and ruined by expenses, the utility of which they could not see. There was only left to them to take what consolation they could in the fact that she was an excellent Greek scholar and that she had begun the study of Hebrew. The one hope was that Christina would marry, for everyone knows that matrimony changes the notions of women; but this hope had to be abandoned. Candidates for her hand had not been wanting; they came from the East and West, from the North and South; they were young and old — a motley crowd. She sent them all about their business, declaring that she wished to remain single. She would have no master, and the thought of maternity was odious to her. Her education had completely unsexed her. As her ministers and the senate insisted, she offered to abdicate (October 25, 1651). All implored her to remain. She consented, but on condition that no one should ever speak to her again of marriage. Three months later, Bourdelot entered upon the scene and the whole country, for very shame, hid its face.

IV

BOURDELOT, of whom Sweden still speaks with anger, was the son of a Sens barber. He studied to be an apothecary, started off to see the world,

and turned up in Italy. A certain shady business forced him to return post haste to France. He complained that he had thus missed the scarlet robe; the Holy Father had wished to appoint him as his physician with the dignity of cardinal. Henceforth, he set up as doctor. His colleagues dubbed him an *ignoramus*. It is hard to say on what they based their judgment when one remembers what, in those days, passed for science. Bourdelot could murder Latin with the best of them. With the best of them, also, he could discourse on the humours of the blood or the movements of the bile. Like others of his species he could bleed or purge his patients. Of these things we can speak learnedly, having read one of his consultations, in four quarto pages, all written in Latin.

The brothers of the lancet could say what they would, Bourdelot had great success. The women were for him. He was the model of doctors for fine ladies. He was amiable and gay, witty, and the advocate of pleasure. He knew admirable secrets for preserving youth, sang agreeably, played the guitar, and could turn out exquisite little dishes. He had no rival in the art of organising festivities or perpetuating practical jokes. For the rest, a veritable *Gil Blas*, quite convinced that morality consists in making the most of one's opportunities, and that scruples are a luxury which poor devils like himself could ill afford. Clever and amusing, playing pranks

like a veritable monkey, yielding when it was necessary, insolent when he could safely be so, believing neither in God nor in the devil, happy to live and to laugh and to lie: such was Bourdelot.

He had been recommended to Christina by Saumaise. The queen had long felt herself ill. Nature had avenged itself for the barbarous regimen of dictionaries and scribbling, without any recreation except the Latin disputes of the Upsal professors. She was eaten up with abscesses and undermined by fever. She could neither eat nor sleep; she often fainted and thought herself dying. Her ordinary physicians could do nothing for her. She called in Bourdelot who showed some common sense. He took her books from her, ordered rest and amusement, and soothed her regrets by assuring her that, at the court of France, pedants in petticoats were turned into ridicule.

Christina submitted to this treatment and found that it was a pleasant one. Health returned as by magic. She took to amusement, first grudgingly, then willingly, finally with frenzy. She sent her scholars, her ministers, her senators flying, threw her dictionaries out of the window, and made up for lost time. She was twenty-five years of age and had long arrears; but this did not trouble her. Few women have ever enjoyed themselves as did Christina of Sweden. By a touch of the wand the palace was transformed. From a veritable Sorbonne, Bourdelot made of it a small Louvre. of the time when the youthful



ABBÉ BOURDELOT

After the painting by N. de Largillier

Louis XIV amused himself in the company of Mazarin's nieces. Christina spent her days in festivities! Christina walked minuets! Christina disguised herself at masquerades! Christina made fun of scholars! She forced Bochart to play at battledore and shuttlecock with her, Naudé to perform in the Attic dances about which he had written learned articles, Meibom to sing the Greek airs he had reconstituted, and she laughed like a mad-cap at the false notes of the one, at the awkwardness and grotesque contortions of the other. One day, at Upsal, the professors prepared to discuss philosophy before her, according to their wont; Christina rushed to her coach and drove away. Did her ministers try to lay public affairs before her? She would not listen. Public affairs wearied her. If an audience was requested she did not grant it; there was a ballet to be rehearsed. Was she to preside at the council? She ran away to the country and shut her door against her ministers. Every hour her passion for frivolity increased, and Bourdelot did his best to encourage her in this mad career. He constantly invented new games, new festivities, new tricks to play on the learned dons. He capped the climax by administering a powerful medicine to the queen the day when Bochart was to read fragments of his sacred geography.

Sweden looked on its sovereign as raving mad. Rumour whispered that her mind was giving way. None of the statesmen, Oxenstiern least of all,

had expected this reaction. None had foreseen that, unless she had become imbecile under the strain, there would come a moment when a young woman, full of life and ardour, would wish to breathe and enjoy her youth; when she would discover that there were other things in life beside books, and that the twentieth year has been given us to make use of, as the sun is made to shine. They had thought that things would always continue as they had begun; that, after Hebrew, she would learn Arabic, and after Arabic, the Ethiopian language, and that she would never crave other pleasures. This natural and inevitable result struck them with as much surprise as sorrow. For a whole month the queen had neither assisted at a council nor received a senator; to all serious discussion she answered with a flippant remark about a ballet; since her sudden departure from Upsal the university was offended and showed it. All this was profoundly sad and still more incomprehensible.

The amazement of all these good people was diverting; their sorrow, however, was well-founded. It is scarcely pleasant for a nation to fall under the rule of a Bourdelot, son of a Sens barber, and he was master of all he surveyed. The queen saw with his eyes. She told him everything. Bourdelot had become a political power! He disposed of Sweden's alliances and was about to transfer its friendship, for reasons best known to himself, from France to Spain. Whoever

opposed him was thrust aside. His triumph was by no means modest. His airs of conqueror, like those of a turkey-cock ruffling its feathers, exasperated the country; to this he was quite indifferent. He felt himself secure, and so he was. He amused Christina, and for the moment she asked for nothing else.

In the camp of the learned consternation was rife. With most of them, at the bottom of their regrets, lurked selfish preoccupations. Great sums of money were lavished on feasting and revelry; this, thought they, would greatly diminish their share of the spoils. Those who were really disinterested could not abide the thought that they were supplanted by a buffoon. Bochart wrote to Vossius that he was so unhappy "since the change" which had taken place at the court of Sweden, that he was eager to leave, for fear it might kill him.¹ That excellent man, Huet, was still more sorrowful, sixty years later,² at the remembrance "of this deplorable desertion of learning." The news flew rapidly in Europe. It was whispered that Christina had abandoned her studies to give herself up *ad ludicra et inania* under the influence of a charlatan;³ that she scoffed at philosophy and had adopted this horrible maxim, "Better enjoy things than know about them."⁴

¹ Letter of April 26, 1653.

² Memoirs. Huet lived to be ninety-one years of age.

³ Letter from the historian Henri de Valois to Heinsius (1653).

⁴ Maxims of Christina.

At about this time Benserade declined an invitation from the queen, either on account of the change or for some other reason. The letter she sent by way of reply is one of her best, though it is not very good. Pen in hand, Christina was apt to find her wit heavy and confused. "Thank your stars which keep you from visiting Sweden. A mind as delicate as yours would have been ill at ease and your heart would have caught its death of cold. You would have had great success in Paris with a square-cut beard, a Lapland coat, and snowshoes on your return from this land of ice. I fancy that thus accoutred, you would have made singular havoc among old hearts. No, I swear that you need regret nothing. What would you have seen here? Our ice is like yours, only it lasts six months longer. And our summer when, in its fury, it swoops upon us, causes our flowers, that try to resemble jessamine, to wither in the heat. A Benserade, of noble and delicate tastes, can hope for no greater happiness than to live in the most beautiful court in the world, near a prince whose virtue inspires such high and cheering hopes. . . . Continue to immortalise yourself in adding to the joys of this prince and beware of ever deserving to be exiled from him. And yet I almost wish you could be guilty of some crime deserving such a doom, so that Sweden might possess France's most gallant and witty son. . . ."¹

¹ The end of 1652.

Meanwhile, the anger of the Swedish court grew, as grew the misery engendered by the influence of Bourdelot. Christina had no idea of order, and under her sway financial difficulties became alarming. The gallant inventions of her favourite emptied the treasury; the state was ruined, its credit gone; the fleet was neglected. An ambassador came near abandoning his post for lack of money. Even in the palace there were debts, and the household was carried on by dint of expedients; the servants, during two years, had not received their wages. In order to obtain four thousand thalers, which she needed for an important journey, the queen was obliged to pawn her travelling plate. Everywhere ruin was felt, and in order to collect the taxes the peasants were persecuted; but nothing could be got out of them; they had been robbed of their last pennies. This comes of popular glory. However cruel was their distress, the young queen's subjects suffered yet more when they learned that, in Bourdelot's company, she uttered a thousand impieties. This was too much. The indignation of the nobles became menacing and Bourdelot no longer dared to walk the streets unattended. Christina understood that it was time to yield.

Perhaps, also, she had wearied of this personage. However that may be, he left during the summer of 1653, loaded with gold and recommended to Mazarin, who thought it politic to bestow an abbey on him. Bourdelot played his

new part of abbé, as he had dubbed himself doctor, and he diverted Paris with the spectacle of his dignity. "Master Bourdelot," wrote Guy Patin to a friend, "is carried about in a sedan chair, escorted by four great lackeys. Until now he had been satisfied with three, *sed e paucis diebus quartus accessit*. He boasts of having performed miracles in Sweden." Christina corresponded with him until his death. He gave her the news of Paris, and she consulted him about her health.

After his departure the country, freed from a shameful yoke, began to breathe once more, when a new trouble fell upon it. The queen was causing all her furniture, her books, her art treasures to be packed. Before long her intentions became evident. On the 11th of February, 1654, Christina called the senate together and announced her resolution to abdicate in favour of her cousin, Charles Augustus. She added that it would be useless this time to combat her resolution, which was unalterable; that she did not seek for advice, but merely for help to carry out her plan.

"This speech," says an old historian, "caused such amazement in the assembly that no one knew what to answer."

We are accustomed to see the fate of thrones at the mercy of royal or popular caprice. We are astonished neither by revolutions nor abdications, and this speech might to-day pass for a clever witticism. During the seventeenth cen-

ture, the monarchical spirit had not yet been weakened and the case was a very serious one. It seemed as though a sovereign and his people were bound together by mutual duty; that neither one nor the other had the right of desertion. There existed between them a contract sanctioned by God, since God has chosen and fashioned the prince given to the people. Charles V had abdicated, and his case has been likened to that of Christina; but the example is ill-chosen. Charles V was old and infirm. He retired to a convent. Even so, it is not sure that he had a right to do this; it was said that he often regretted his act. Christina was young and strong. She had no thought of retreat, and she boasted loudly of an act which called rather for humility. Under such circumstances the forsaking of her post was a public calamity.

She had an inkling of this and expected to be blamed. A few days after the dramatic scene of February 11th she wrote, "I know that the play in which I acted was not prepared according to the ordinary rules of the stage. It is rare that what is really strong and powerful pleases."¹ She also said, "I care nothing for the *plaudite*." This is not true. She abdicated partly to be applauded by the pit. She had three other motives; she was penniless, her queenship bored her, Sweden and the Swedes bored her still more.

¹ Letter of February 28, 1654, to Chanut, ex-ambassador from France to Stockholm.

The opinion of the pit finds expression in these two fragments: "What times are ours, great Heaven!" wrote Vossius to his countryman Heinsius. "Queens lay aside their sceptres in order to live like private ladies, to devote themselves to their own pleasures and to the worship of the muses." In the *Memoirs* of Montglat, on the other hand, we read, "An extraordinary event took place in Europe this year, the abdication of the queen of Sweden. This princess was of a capricious temper, and had taken to poetry and novels; . . . in order to live a romance on her own account, she resolved to give up the crown."

In Sweden the feeling was that of an excellent nation incapable of forgetting that Christina was the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus. She was entreated to remain and, at the ceremony of her abdication, her subjects wept. Her demands for money, which were by no means moderate, were generously granted. She was to receive the revenue of vast domains and of several towns, amounting to something like five hundred thousand francs. A fleet was armed to take her where she chose. Then, having performed its duty, the affection of the nation began to cool towards the ungrateful one. She continued to give orders and was reminded that she was no longer queen. She showed indecent joy at leaving Sweden: the people murmured, deeming that she ought to spend her revenues in her own country. Christina, hearing these things, grew furious.

Her people had prepared for her the voyage of a sovereign; she ran away like an adventuress.

In advance, she had sent her collections, and with them her gold and silver plate, the furniture, and the crown jewels. It is said that her successor found nothing in the palace but two carpets and an old bed. When she was at a certain distance from Stockholm she sent back her retinue, cut her hair, adopted men's clothes, high boots, took a gun and announced her intention of fighting in Flanders under the orders of Condé. Sometimes she disappeared; then again her presence here or there was revealed by some escapade. At the frontiers of Norway she jumped over the line with a hurrah! so glad was she to be out of Sweden. A little farther she met, without knowing it, the queen of Denmark, who, disguised as a servant, was watching for her at an inn. When royal ladies, in those days, threw off etiquette, they did not adopt half measures. It was discovered that while the fleet was awaiting her in one port, Christina had sailed from another. Her intention was to go and exhibit herself to Europe, sure of being received with the plaudits which, according to her estimation of herself, she deserved.

V

SHE landed in Denmark, took a fancy name, jumped on a horse after a manly fashion, and galloped to Hamburg, accompanied by four gentle-

men in waiting and a few valets, who performed the office of maids. Montglat reported, "She travels like a vagabond, from province to province, visiting all the courts of Europe." She made one think of a travelling circus. Every now and again she gave a representation. For these occasions she improvised a royal retinue, gathered together no one knew how, put on gorgeous attire, and made a solemn entry into a city, where, with a haughtiness that delighted the populations, she received the honours due to her rank. Crowds hastened to meet her, for she was one of the great curiosities of Christendom. She answered the official harangues with perfect ease and grace, each in its own tongue, presided over feasts given in her honour, like a great sovereign, and discoursed with learned men as with colleagues. "She speaks of all things under the sun," said one of her hearers, "not like a princess, but like a philosopher *e Porticu*."¹

She enlivened the solemn ceremonies by comic interludes of her own invention. Sometimes she would "make faces at the crowds that followed her."² Or, with the suppleness of a clown she would change her dress in the coach, so as to bewilder the lookers-on; they did not know what to make of it. At times, in the midst of a grave

¹ Letter of Whitelock, ambassador from Cromwell to the court of Sweden.

² Collection of the State papers of John Thurloe, Secretary of Council of State, etc., vol. vii, London, 1742.

address, she would let fly some tremendous oath or some ill-sounding joke, worthy of a young woman who at twenty-three had known Martial by heart. At times she would take a fish-monger's attitude and burst out laughing in the face of some great personage who was addressing her. In Brussels she tarried several months, and led such a life that the "all-powerful hand" which, according to her, kept her from falling over precipices, down which she liked to peep, was kept very busy. Many of her contemporaries, in Brussels at least, were convinced that the Almighty, having doubtless too much to do elsewhere, had not always prevented the catastrophe. However that may be, whenever she recovered her senses, she, by the same occasion, recovered her grand royal air. The pit laughed. From the boxes came some hisses.

The performance ended, the curtain down, the costumes packed, the improvised retinue dismissed, there remained a young female knight-errant who dropped jewels at the pawnbroker's, went from inn to inn, and took pleasure in disappointing sightseers. She was expected in one place and appeared in another. She seemed on the point of being caught, and vanished in the night. She came, went, returned, until fancy prompted her to don petticoats once more, to play the part of the Swedish queen, and to give another representation.

She gave several at Hamburg, at Brussels, at

Antwerp, at Inspruck, where she added to the bill the attraction of her conversion. She had already secretly changed her religion in Brussels, on the night of Christmas, 1654. But at Inspruck she made a public profession of Catholic faith (November 3, 1655).

There have been many discussions, some of them very bitter, as to the motives of her conversion. The event was one of great importance to Rome. Of all possible neophytes, the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus was the most precious. It is natural that the church should have undertaken the conversion of Christina with even more than its usual cleverness. It is equally natural that, having succeeded, it should have attributed its triumph to the power of truth and presented the abjuration of Inspruck as an effect of divine grace, which had revealed the true faith to a heretic. It is also natural that, after a victory, the echo of which sounded all through Europe, filling the hearts of the faithful with joy, the papacy should have thrown Noah's cloak over the failings of its convert and feigned belief in her sincerity. It could trust to the work of time, to habit, to a hundred circumstances which might come to pass, to complete the work only half accomplished. In very truth, the queen's language with regard to the church and its glory was somewhat hyperbolic:¹ What Christina really thought on the matter was of minor

¹ Especially in the Maxims.

importance, and doubtless the Pope was of that opinion.

Of course, Protestants, greatly incensed, rather than admit the sincerity of this conversion, accused the queen of hypocrisy. They proclaimed that, very far from having been from her early years attracted to Rome and having abdicated in order to follow the promptings of grace, which was the Catholic version of the story, she believed in nothing at all, and had abjured Protestantism out of self-interest. According to them, the pompous ceremony of Inspruck was merely intended to touch the Pope and the Catholic sovereigns, from whom the queen of Sweden could then, in the hour of need, turn for help.

In our day, judging the case from a dispassionate point of view, one is tempted to agree with the Protestants. Christina changed her religion as she changed her clothes, to astonish the crowd. After the secret conversion of Brussels, she wrote to a friend in Sweden, where some inkling of the truth had penetrated: "My occupations are to eat well, sleep well, study a little, talk, laugh, see French, Italian, and Spanish plays and thus to pass my time agreeably. *I no longer listen to sermons.*" Elsewhere, she declares that her conversion was due to the fact that Protestant sermons wearied her to death. Sermons were her great objection to the reformed religion. At Inspruck, her indifference during the ceremony of abjuration was much commented upon. The same day, in the afternoon, a play was

given in her honour; it is said that she exclaimed, "Gentlemen, it is but fair that you should offer me a comedy, since I gave you a farce." No doubt the Pope knew the value of this conversion from a spiritual point of view, but he was content, for the time being, to look upon it as a worldly triumph. From Inspruck, Christina went to Rome, where a triumphant reception awaited her.

It was necessary to show the world how important, politically and religiously, was this conversion. The congregation of ceremonies ordered every detail of the entry, deciding that the cardinals, prelates, ambassadors, and nobles should go to meet the queen of Sweden in gilt coaches, drawn by six horses and accompanied by numerous retainers, richly liveried; that the coach of the governor of Rome should be lined with gold and silver at the cost of three thousand crowns and surrounded by forty persons magnificently clothed; that each noble Roman lady should have a suite of thirty-six attendants whose costumes were to cost from five hundred to six hundred crowns each. The Holy Father on this occasion spent one million three hundred thousand crowns. When the queen arrived, the Roman tailors had been working for six months in view of the procession.

On the 21st of December, 1655, Christina was more firmly than ever persuaded that she was the most important personage of Christendom and a marvel among women. Cannon thundered,

trumpets sounded, troops were drawn up on either side of the road, the shops were closed, Rome was enjoying a holiday, and the air was rent with acclamations. A procession of unequalled magnificence extended from the Porta del Popolo to the Vatican, and at the head of this procession, the admired of all admirers, the object of all these adulations, was a misshapen little creature wearing "many coloured breeches" striding a white horse and prancing between two cardinals. In this guise she reached the Vatican, where the high clergy was ready to receive her and lead her to the Pope. She thanked his Holiness. "He answered that her conversion was of so high a value that the rejoicings in Heaven put to blush those that took place on earth." The compliment was gracious, fit to turn even the most humble head, and Christina certainly was not humble.

Henceforth, Rome became her favourite residence. Here she gathered together her collections, remained for longer periods as time went on, and finally, still protected by the Popes, never left the city. She greatly tried the patience of the successive Popes; all determined to make the most of Gustavus Adolphus's converted daughter. Her attitude, however, was deplorable. The Pope thought it prudent to surround her with cardinals. She was by no means in awe of them, and carried them off in the whirl of her existence. There was no noisy affair in Rome, no scandal,

where one did not recognise Queen Christina surrounded by her admiring cardinals; at mass and out walking, she was to be seen with her red court. Mad pranks succeeded each other. She was insolent with the Roman nobility, greedy of honours; she quarrelled first with one, then with another, ignoring the fact that she was no longer a reigning sovereign. Once, Cardinal Medici having displeased her, she with her own hand bombarded his palace; the trace of the cannon balls was still visible a century ago. "Patience," according to her, "is the virtue of those who are lacking in courage and vigour." She prided herself on not being patient.

The Vatican had no great reason to be proud of its convert. She loudly proclaimed her aversion for pious conversations and books of piety. The first person who spoke to her of penance and mortifications was received after a fashion which took away all wish to revert to such subjects. She rarely took part in church ceremonies and when she did she laughed and joked with her attendant cardinals, even in the presence of the Pope. This could not be tolerated. After a scene of this kind, the Pope handed her a rosary, advising her to make use of it. Scarcely out of his presence, she exclaimed, "He can't turn me into a hypocrite!" Then the Holy Father was reduced to ask for a little ostensible piety, for the edification of the crowd. He sent word to Christina that, "One Ave Maria recited in public

would be more acceptable than a whole rosary said in private." She obeyed only when her purse was empty.

Christina's finances were a subject of great disquiet to the court of Rome. Sweden, indignant at the change of religion, half ruined by wars and troubles at home, was but a poor paymaster. Christina spent recklessly, under the pretext that "there is an economical way of being extravagant." She kept up a royal household. She completed her collections, which at her departure from Sweden had been somewhat despoiled by her foreign scholars. Her library had been shamelessly pillaged; out of eight thousand manuscripts only a quarter reached Rome. There exists a letter in which Vossius acknowledges to Heinsius, with admirable calm, that he was appropriating for his own use *non paucus libellos rariores* belonging to the *serenissimæ regina*. Large sums were necessary to fill the voids. Still larger sums were spent from a lack of order of which nothing can give an idea. Six months after her arrival in Rome, Christina was dunned by her creditors. She applied to the Pope who, with the idea of reducing her to submission, offered two thousand crowns a month if she would behave herself. This was too much. The queen, in a towering rage, sent her remaining jewels to the pawnbroker, got ten thousand ducats for them, and sailed for Marseilles. She knew that France was full of curiosity about her, eager to see a singular person, who had been

dubbed the Sibyl of the North and the tenth muse, and who now was known as the "strolling queen." This journey to France was to be Christina's last triumph.

VI

MAZARIN ordered that she should be royally received. The magistrates of the different cities presented the keys to her; prelates and governors delivered fine speeches to her; the towns treated her with great magnificence, and their inhabitants rushed to see the spectacle and marvelled that a queen should travel like an indigent student. At Lyons she met the Duke of Guise, sent by the king to conduct her to Compiègne, where the court was sojourning. The duke wrote to a friend: "While I am spending my time somewhat lugubriously, I must seek to divert you by portraying the queen whom I have been ordered to accompany. She is not tall, but somewhat stout, with broad hips, a well-shaped arm, a white and pretty hand; she is a man rather than a woman. One shoulder is higher than the other, but she hides that defect so cleverly by the strangeness of her attire, of her walk and manners, that one could wager for or against this deformity."

Guise describes the queen's well-known face, with its aquiline nose and fine eyes, her "very strange wig," like that of a man in front and at

the back like that of a woman. He continues thus: "Her bodice, laced behind, is not straight, and is made after the fashion of our doublets; her chemise shows above the skirt which is ill-fastened and awry. She is much powdered and pomatumed, and rarely wears gloves. She has men's boots, and in point of fact has almost a man's voice and quite a man's ways. Her pretension is to be an Amazon. She is quite as proud and haughty as could ever have been the great Gustavus, her father. Yet she can be very polite, even caressing in her manner. She speaks eight languages, especially ours; she has no more accent than if she had been born in Paris. She is as learned as our academy and our sorbonne put together. Indeed, she is a very extraordinary person. . . . She sometimes carries a sword and wears a buff collar."

Christina could indeed be "very polite" when she chose, but the effort was too great to last. Her urbanity was exhausted before she reached Compiègne. The grande mademoiselle met her on the road and was quite fascinated by her flatteries and high air. They went to the play together and the grande mademoiselle opened her eyes very wide. "The queen swore like a trooper," writes she, "threw her legs about, putting first one, then the other over the arms of her chair; she took attitudes such as I have only seen in the case of Trivelin and Jodelet, who are two buffoons. . . . She repeated the verses that took

her fancy; she conversed on many topics, and that quite agreeably. She would indulge in deep reveries, sigh audibly, then, all of a sudden, come to her senses, as though she had awakened from a dream: she is quite extraordinary."

Christina confided to Mademoiselle de Montpensier that she was wild to see a battle, that "she could have no peace of mind until she had seen one." This was one of her hobbies. She was jealous of Condé's laurels, and dreamed of being a great general.

On September the 8th, 1656, she entered Paris by the Faubourg Saint Antoine, escorted by five thousand horsemen. She wore a scarlet doublet, a woman's skirt, a plumed hat, and rode astride a big white horse; pistols were at the holster, and she carried a cane. All Paris turned out to see her, and the people pressed forward "furiously;" as they continued to do whenever she went out in Paris. She was taken to receive holy communion at Notre Dame, and all through mass she talked, never a moment remaining quiet. She visited the monuments and libraries, received the learned men of the day, and caused them to admire her knowledge of all French matters. She knew about the great families and their heraldry, also about the intrigues and gallant doings of the court, the tastes, the occupations, the achievements of each and all. At last she started to join the king at Compiègne. Anne of Austria went to meet her. Mademoiselle de Motteville,

who accompanied the queen mother, has given a description of the meeting.

Christina left her carriage in the midst of such a crowd that the two queens were obliged to take refuge in a house, to which Louis XIV escorted his guest, taking her by the hand. Mademoiselle de Motteville followed, unable to see anything but the strange creature thus led by the king of France. "Her wig that day," wrote she, "was all uncurled; the wind, as she stepped from the carriage, blew it awry; the little care she took of her complexion, which was anything but white, made her look like a wild and bold gipsy that by chance was not too black. As I examined this princess, all that I saw seemed to me extraordinary, more likely to terrify than to please." Mademoiselle de Motteville paints the strange gear of the Swedish queen with her clothes on one side, her big shoulder "humped up," her short skirt showing her men's boots, and she adds: "After having studied her with an attention which sprang from curiosity, I began to grow accustomed to her dress, her hair, and her face. . . . Then, to my amazement, I discovered that she pleased me, and in a moment I was quite changed with regard to her. She seemed to me less tall than I had expected, and less ill-made; but the hands, supposed to be beautiful, were too dirty to appear so."

This is a striking instance of the real fascination exerted by this strange being. When she chose to please, she pleased indeed, despite her ridicu-

lous costumes, her masculine ways, and her dirt. But this fascination did not last. The feelings she inspired were as fleeting as her own moods. At Compiègne, during the first quarter of an hour, she terrified all who saw her; during the second, she interested and amused them. She was witty and gracious: she provoked admiration. Before the evening was over, she was feared for her impertinence. She borrowed the king's valets to undress her and to assist her "in moments of the greatest intimacy," and this seemed very shocking. The next day, she appeared clean and curled, bright and gay; she pleased once more. She greatly diverted the young king, and all would have gone merrily had she not been taken with one of her sudden fits of impious swearing and of kicking up her heels in her anger. This very much astonished the polite court, which finally decided that the queen of Sweden must be looked upon as one of those heroines of chivalrous romance in the days of adverse fortune, when Marfise and Bradamante, in a pitiable plight, can only eat when by chance they are invited to a royal table. The starved fashion in which Christina fell upon the collation offered at her arrival, added to the deplorable state of her wardrobe, authorised these comparisons. Yet, she had her partisans as well as her detractors. Christina spoiled all her chances of success by a stupid blunder. Being naturally indiscreet, she meddled with the king's private affairs. He was then in

love with Marie Mancini, and this romance greatly displeased the queen mother. Christina advised Louis XIV to follow his inclinations, and to marry the girl he loved. Anne of Austria hastened to send away the queen of Sweden, who by no means wished to go.

She was forced to yield. Christina then went to see Ninon de l'Enclos and overwhelmed her with compliments. She seemed to appreciate this person more than any woman, no doubt because Ninon's career had proved that she was above mere prejudice. Christina wanted to present her to the Pope. Luckily, Ninon knew the world too well to let herself be tempted.

The queen once more started for Italy. She spent a night at Montargis and the grande mademoiselle took it into her head to see her again, arriving at ten o'clock. "I was requested," relates Mademoiselle de Montpensier, "to go up alone. I found her in a bed where my women slept every time I went to Montargis, a tallow candle stood on the table; a towel was twisted about her head by way of a nightcap and that head was bald; she had recently been shaved; a nightgown, without a collar, was closed by a great knot of flame-coloured ribbon; her sheets only came up half way on the bed, over which was thrown an ugly green coverlet. In this state she was not pretty." The following day the grande mademoiselle put Christina in her travelling coach, which was hired and paid for by Louis XIV.

She found the plague in Rome, spent a few months in the north of Italy, then returned to France, where her presence was by no means desired. Public curiosity had been satisfied. It was rumoured that the Pope had entrusted her with a mission to bring about a peace with Spain, and Mazarin wished for no advisers. In October, 1657, she arrived in Fontainebleau, during the absence of the court, and lodged in the palace. She was requested to go no farther until she received permission. Then took place a mysterious event, which, without the slightest preparation changed the comedy into a tragedy. Quite another woman, unexpectedly, is here revealed. The joyous queen of Sweden, the madcap prodigal, the veriest royal Bohemian, becomes, one fatal day, bloody Christina, pitiless and ferocious. A dark stain sullies this picturesque figure, at which, till then, one merely smiled. We can here take leave of the old-time Christina. We shall see her no more.

VII

THE queen of Sweden had brought with her to Fontainebleau two young Italian noblemen, the Marquess Monaldeschi, grand equerry, and the Count Sentinelli, captain of the guard; the favourite of yesterday and the favourite of to-day. Monaldeschi was stupidly jealous of his successor. He wrote letters in which the queen was grossly

insulted, and rendered his offence unpardonable by imitating Sentinelli's writing. This, at least, is what transpired from the little that is known of the mystery; it was never really cleared, for the queen's only confidant was her valet, Poissonnet, Poissonnet the impenetrable. At any rate, this at least is known. On the morning of November 6, 1657, at a quarter past nine, a monk of Fontainebleau, Father Le Bel, prior of the Trinitaires, was sent for by the queen. She imposed secrecy upon him and gave him a sealed parcel, which he was to return to her whenever she called for it.

On the following Saturday afternoon, November 10th, at one o'clock, the queen again sent for him. Father Le Bel took the sealed parcel, thinking that it might be needed, and was introduced into the "galerie des cerfs," where he found the queen. She was standing talking on indifferent matters with Monaldeschi. Near them was Sentinelli, and a little farther two Italian soldiers. Father Le Bel, in the "Narration" he left of this tragedy, confesses with simplicity that as soon as he entered he began to be much afraid, for the valet who introduced him banged the door when he left the gallery. The monk, however, approached the queen; her manner instantly changed, and in a loud voice she claimed the parcel. She opened it, took out some papers which she showed to Monaldeschi, asking him with great violence whether he recognised them. Monaldeschi grew

pale, tried to disclaim all knowledge of them, finally confessed that he had written these letters, fell at the feet of his mistress, and implored his pardon. At the same moment, Sentinelli and the two soldiers drew their swords.

The scene which ensued was frightful. It lasted two hours and a half. We owe all the details to Father Le Bel, who, by a not unfrequent phenomenon, remembered them all, in spite of the horror with which he was filled.

When he saw the weapons, Monaldeschi rose from his knees and ran after the queen as she crossed the gallery, speaking "without stopping," trying to justify himself, "greatly importuning her." But Christina showed neither anger nor impatience. Father Le Bel noticed that as she walked she used "an ebony cane with a rounded top." She listened to the supplications for a little more than an hour, then, going to the monk, she said gently to him, "Father, I leave this man in your hands, prepare him for death; minister to his soul." The monk, "as terrified as though the sentence had been pronounced against myself," threw himself at her feet and implored the pardon of the poor wretch who grovelled at her side. She coldly refused, went to her own apartments, where she talked and laughed, quietly and peaceably.

Monaldeschi could not believe that all was over. He dragged himself on his knees, crying and imploring his executioners. Sentinelli was moved

to pity. He left the gallery but came back very sad, saying with tears, "Marquess, think on God and your soul; you must die." Monaldeschi "beside himself," sent Father Le Bel, who, sobbing, prostrated himself before Christina imploring her "by the wounds of the Saviour" to have pity. She, "with a serene and composed face . . . replied that she was very sorry but that it was impossible to grant this request."

And all this lasted another hour. During still another, the poor man refused to resign himself to his fate. Several times he began his confession, and his anguish choked him. He cried out, he implored all to intercede for him once more. The queen's chaplain having entered, he embraced him as a possible saviour, and sent him to the queen. Then, once more Sentinelli went to the barbarous woman. Christina turned the "coward who was afraid of death" into ridicule, and sent away Sentinelli with these horrible words, "Force him to make his confession, then wound him."¹ Sentinelli "pushed Monaldeschi against the wall at the end of the gallery, where hangs the Saint Germain painting,"² and dealt him a first blow. Monaldeschi was unarmed. With his hand he attempted to avert the sword, and three fingers fell to the floor. Covered with blood, the poor wretch received absolution, and then a disgusting butchery began. The marquess wore a mail shirt so that the blades could not penetrate. His exe-

¹ Motteville.

² Narration of Father Le Bel.

cutioners cut at the face, the head, the neck, wherever they could. Covered with wounds, half dead, Monaldeschi heard a door open, caught sight of the chaplain, and took to hoping once more. He dragged himself toward the priest, leaning against the wall, and sent him once more to cry for mercy. As the chaplain left, Sentinelli ended his victim's agony by running his sword through the throat. It was then three quarters past three.

The effect produced on the public was disastrous. Every heart was filled with horror. So much cold cruelty for a man, once loved, seemed the act of a savage. It was with a sort of horror that one thought of this young woman conversing about trifles, politely interrupting herself to refuse Monaldeschi's pardon, then quietly resuming her conversation, while close at hand her former lover was undergoing his cruel agony. How many times, during the remainder of her life, this murder of Monaldeschi was thrown at her! Why — she could never understand.

On the news of the event, Mazarin sent Chanut to Fontainebleau to warn the queen of Sweden not to show herself in Paris for fear of the people. Not long ago,¹ Christina's answer to the cardinal was discovered. The letter, written by herself,

¹ The letter was discovered in the Archives of the Foreign Office by M. A. Geffroy, who published it in the *Recueil des instructions données aux ambassadeurs et ministres de France en Inède*, Paris, 1885.

evidently in a state of rage, is crooked, ink-stained, and almost illegible.

“MY COUSIN: — Monsieur Chanut, a good friend of mine, will tell you that all which comes from you is received by me with respect; and if he did not succeed in arousing in my soul the abject terrors to which he would willingly have given rise, it was by no lack of eloquence on his part. But, to tell the truth, we Northerners are of a somewhat rough nature and not much given to fears. You will therefore forgive me if the communication thus made to me did not have all the success you expected of it. I beg to assure you that I should be glad to please you in all things, save in harbouring the slightest tremor. You know that men of more than thirty do not believe in sorcery. For my part, I find it easier to strangle people than to fear them. As to my conduct toward Monaldeschi, I assure you that were he still living, I should not sleep to-night before seeing that the deed was accomplished. I have no reason to repent. (Here some illegible words.) This is all I have to say on the subject. If you are satisfied, I shall rejoice; if you are not, I shall remain unchanged and shall, all my life, be your affectionate friend

CHRISTINA.”

This letter was not likely to mend matters. Christina was left to herself at Fontainebleau during the next three months. She asked for an

invitation from Cromwell, to whom tragedies were familiar, but he "pretended not to understand." She insisted on going to Paris during the carnival (February, 1658), frequented places of public amusement, under a mask, was treated icily by the queen mother, and almost turned out of doors. Before she left, she assisted at a sitting of the French Academy.¹ The Academy, taken by surprise, first exhausted the collection of its poets' verses, such as the madrigals of the Abbé de Boisrobert, a sonnet on "the death of a lady," by the Abbé Tallemant, a little love song by Monsieur Pellisson, verses by the same "on a sapphire that had been lost and found again." Then, to fill up the time, the dictionary work was resumed. The word *jeu* was discussed, and the chancellor, turning toward the queen, said gallantly that doubtless the word "would not displease her Majesty, and that, surely, that of melancholy would have been less welcome." Then, this was given as example: *Jeux de princes qui ne plaisent qu'à ceux qui les font.* (Princely games agreeable only to those who play at them.) This looked terribly like an allusion to the death of Monaldeschi. All eyes were turned toward Christina, who blushed, lost all self-control, and tried unsuccessfully to laugh. Almost immediately after this she took her leave, accompanied, with many bows, by "Monseigneur le Chancelier" and all the academicians. Such was the farewell of Chris-

¹ Memoirs of Courart.

tina to Paris. She started the next day, with money given by Mazarin, and went to Rome in order to make the Pope's life a burden to him.

VIII

AND that was the end of our brilliant Christina. She still had thirty years of life before her, and that long period of time was one long downfall. She still loved to astonish the world, and the world refused to be astonished. She insisted, and was voted insupportable. The world is not tender to old heroines. She was soon called the "shaved adventuress and intriguer." People wondered, with much distrust, for what services Mazarin had given her two hundred thousand francs. This vagabond, who without shame knocked at closed doors, became less and less interesting. She was still feared, for she was clever and unscrupulous; she was no longer esteemed, as in justice she could not be. On her return from France she committed an act more criminal, lower even than the murder of Monaldeschi. She did not blush — she, the ex-queen of Sweden, she, on whom her people had lavished fidelity and kindness, she who had deserted her post to wander all over the world — she did not blush to send Sentinelli to the Emperor of Germany with this message, that, "Since Charles Augustus, King of Sweden, did not give her the

pension of two hundred thousand crowns a year, which had been agreed upon, and left her in want, she begged the emperor to lend her twenty thousand men under the orders of General Montecuculli, as with such an army she felt sure of conquering Pomerania (which belonged to Sweden) where she had many adherents. She would keep the revenues during her lifetime, and after her death Pomerania should return to the empire." Thus she offered to carry war into her own country, for a question of money, because Sweden, ruined partly through her own fault, did not pay her regularly. This creature had no spark of royal honour in her soul. She belonged to the cast she herself had called "the rabble of kings."

The negotiation came to nothing, we do not know why.

The Pope did his best to shape into some sort of dignity this deplorable existence. He gave Christina a revenue of twelve thousand crowns; then he sent her a steward to keep her accounts and direct her household. His Holiness's choice fell upon a young cardinal, Dece Azzolini, a "handsome man, of an agreeable countenance," witty and well-read, clever, supple, selfish; "he spent most of his time in amorous discussions." The steward's success was overwhelming. According to the queen, he was "divine," "incomparable," an "angel." She likened him to her favourite hero, Alexander the Great. Azzolini, by way of acknowledging the favours showered

upon him, rendered real services. He brought about serious reforms in the household, stopped the robbing and waste, redeemed the jewels and the plate. He could not, however, with twelve thousand crowns keep up a court, buy rare curiosities, and yet make the two ends meet. The wrangling with Sweden continued, so did the negotiations with usurers and the quarrels about money. Christina's correspondence with her agents wearies one to death. One hears of nothing but expedients, compromises, and double-dealings. She had none of the dignity of a self-respecting person, who applies to no one for help.

Expedients are a terrible curse to a princess. Christina knew another sorrow which many had predicted to her at the time of her abdication: she regretted the crown. When she had enjoyed liberty to the full of her bent, shown her doublet to courts and to the rabble, she wanted something new. What? That she could not tell. What theatrical part could she now adopt? That was a puzzle. She had not given up the hope of blooming out as a great general, but the sovereigns of Europe seemed by no means eager to confide their armies to her care. She thought of becoming queen once more — or king — according to the choice of the people.

In 1660, she heard of the death of her cousin and successor, Charles Augustus. He left a son four years old, Charles XI, sickly according to Christina; in robust health according to the states

of Sweden. The queen started for Stockholm, under the pretext of looking after her pension, crossed Germany in all haste, entered Hamburg August 18, 1660, and was respectfully requested by the government not to visit Sweden. Whatever might be her projects, she had sown the wind to reap the whirlwind, and the government feared her presence. By way of answer she sailed at once. The regency received her with great honours and kept strict watch over her. She was imperious, imprudent; she wounded the nation by making a show of her Catholic faith. The people, growing hard and insolent, destroyed her chapel. The Swedish clergy came to remonstrate with her and saw the proud Christina shed tears of rage. She sent the states a "Protestation," in which, should little Charles XI die, she put in her claims to the throne. An hour later the states sent her a formula of renunciation which she was to sign under penalty of forfeiting her pension. Christina's signature, it is said, shows the violence of her anger. After many petty persecutions she was pushed out of the country.

Such a reception would have disgusted her forever, had she not known that, in spite of all, the daughter of Gustavus Adolphus still had partisans. Thus only can we explain her second attempt of 1667, which resulted in a still more crushing disaster. The senate and the regency agreed that: "Her Majesty, Queen Christina, should not be allowed to reënter the kingdom

or any of its provinces, with the exception of Pomerania, Bremen, or Verden; still less was she to appear at his Majesty's court." On the road to Stockholm a messenger sent post haste met her at past midnight. He brought her such hard and mortifying orders that she instantly ordered horses, and left Sweden never to return. From a letter of Peter de Groot, ambassador from Holland to Sweden, we learn that the death of Monaldeschi was all through the land a dark stain on her glory.

As she passed through the duchy of Bremen, she visited the Swedish camp, commanded by Wrangle, who had served under her father. Christina wished to show all she knew. Brilliantly uniformed, astride a prancing steed, she rode up and down the ranks, commanding the manœuvres. Naturally she made numberless mistakes, which Wrangle, hiding a smile, repaired as best he could. Christina continued, unabashed, for nothing could persuade her that she was not born to be a great captain. At that time she was intriguing for the throne of Poland, and her agents were representing her as capable of commanding an army. "I vow," wrote she, "that the hope of doing this alone made me wish for the throne of Poland."

This Polish plot is the strangest of her strange adventures. Christina's master-stroke is certainly that of having persuaded the Pope to second her pretensions to the throne, left vacant by the

abdication of John Casimir. The papers relating to the negotiations have been published, and no authors of a spectacular piece ever imagined so fanciful a bit of diplomacy. The Pope recommends Christina in a brief in which he praises her "piety, prudence, her masculine and heroic courage." Christina wrote to the nuncio: "As to the piety which the Pope mentions in his brief, let me tell you that I am by no means sure of the wisdom of such a boast; I doubt whether I deserve it, and I doubt still more whether they would appreciate it." The Polish Diet, alarmed at so unexpected a candidature, hastened, without much order, to present some objections. Christina found answers to all. Her sex was a drawback? She would be king not queen, and command the army. What more could the Poles desire? The death of Monaldeschi? "I am in no humour to justify myself of this Italian's death." Besides, she had taken care "that the sacraments should be administered to him before the end." Her violence was feared? "As to the beating of a few valets, even if I had administered the blows myself, I do not think such a trifle need exclude me from the throne, for, in that case, Poland would find no king." The Diet was not to be persuaded, and Christina's candidateship fell to the ground.

This Polish venture was but child's play compared with others. Christina was not to be daunted; she believed that the world belonged to those who dare and who risk all. "Life is busi-

ness," said she, "in which one cannot make money without risking to lose it. . . ." She turned her back on Poland. She had thought to do as much for the Fontainebleau incident, but here she met with an obstacle on which she had not counted,—the world's conscience. She was astonished to find it ever before her. What a singular thing eternally to reproach her with Monaldeschi's death! It was, after all, so very simple. "One must," wrote she, "punish crime as one can, according to the forms of justice, if possible; but, when that is out of the question, by other means." She pitied people for entertaining such low scruples as to make so much of a servant's death, killed by order of a queen. From time to time, so as to hush the importunate murmur which arose about her, she would burst out: "Write to Heinsius from me . . . that all this fuss which he makes about Monaldeschi seems to me as ridiculous as it is insolent. I am willing that all Westphalia should deem Monaldeschi innocent; it is to me a matter of absolute indifference." This letter is dated August 2, 1682, twenty-five years after the crime. And the murmur would not be hushed. It never has been.

It is said that the shade of Monaldeschi sat at Christina's death bed, like the ghost of Banquo at Macbeth's banquet. This is merely a romantic invention. She put this trifle to one side and forgot it.

The second voyage to Sweden closes the adven-

tures of Christina in Europe. Not that she lacked an itching desire for adventure. In 1675, she applied to the court of Vienna, renewing her demand for troops in order to detach Pomerania from Sweden. These shameful negotiations lasted for more than a year. Repulsed by the emperor, she turned to France to whom she proposed that, during the Swedish internal troubles, means should be found to revoke the laws against Catholics. Her Swedish Majesty did not neglect to mention the price she put on her intervention. (Letters and despatches of 1676 and 1677.) Not having succeeded with France, on the rumour that Charles XI had been killed by a fall from his horse, she once more turned her attention to Sweden (1682). Then came the news that the king was alive and well. Later, when she was more than sixty years of age, Christina wanted to leave Rome because she was not longer treated like a queen. She had already quarrelled on that score with Pope Innocent XI, who carried economy so far that, according to a legend, he spent but half a crown a day for his meals. He found it intolerable to pay twelve thousand crowns a year to a very troublesome queen: he suppressed the pension. Yet Christina remained, not knowing where else to go.

The days of cavalcades were past. This vagabond of a queen is now forced to keep quiet. She is old, "very fat and heavy," with a "double chin, short and rough hair." She still wears her

doublet, her short skirt, her thick boots. "A sash tied over the doublet showed the ample proportions of her waist."¹ Thus decked out, she seemed smaller and even less feminine than of yore. The many-coloured breeches could no longer be donned. One can understand that the Italians were puzzled, unable to make out her real sex. Farewell to the amazon! The scholar took her place and kept it. At the time of her quarrel with the Pope, Christina was much tempted to put herself at the head of her guards. The Pope spared her this last feat, by ignoring her threats.

Of the scholar, there would be much to say. She was one of those philosophers who believe in quack predictions and was too much engrossed in astrology and alchemy to be taken very seriously. She believed that astronomy should be subjected to a religious censorship; she wished Rome to suppress all heretical portions of this science. On the other hand, her influence was not favourable to the numerous academies she founded or protected. Was it necessary to assemble prelates, monks, and scholars in order to discuss the following subjects: "Love comes but once in a lifetime. It gives eloquence to those who are not naturally eloquent. It inspires chastity and temperance. One can love without jealousy; never without fear."

In 1688 she had a severe attack of erysipelas. It was a warning. She understood it and put

¹ Misson, *New Voyage to Italy*, 11 vol.

all in order for her last representation. She wished it to be original, rich, and singular, in order once more to astonish the world. She invented a sort of gown which partook of the skirt and of the mantle and had it made "of white brocade, embroidered with flowers and other gold ornaments; it was to have buttons and gilt trimmings, with a fringe of the same around the bottom of the skirt." On Christmas eve she tried it on, to see what effect it would produce on her court. The costume fitted well. God could now raise the curtain and allow her to die.

The Divine Manager gave her a respite of three months wherein to reflect that, perhaps, the comedy had a sequel in the next world. Then He gave the signal. In April of that year, 1689, Christina grew rapidly weaker. When she was incapable of discussion, Cardinal Azzolini, her major-domo, presented a testament for her signature, assuring her that it was "advantageous for her Majesty's household." Christina, without reading it, signed the paper. The will made Azzolini her heir. The furniture and collections were worth millions. She died soon after, April 19, 1689. If the dead can see what goes on in the world, she must have been satisfied. The apotheosis of the fifth act was gorgeous.

She was clothed in the fine costume of brocade, covered with gold trimmings, a royal crown was placed on her head, a sceptre in her rigid hand, and, in a magnificent coach, she was taken to the

church of Saint Dorothea, that of her parish, where she lay in state. Three hundred tapers flooded the church with their light. It was draped in black, decorated with escutcheons of white mock marble, which "seemed to point to the vanity of life and the certainty of death." Toward evening men carried the bed in parade to Saint Peter's. Scholars and artists led the way; then came sixteen confraternities, seventeen religious orders, five hundred other monks with lighted tapers, the clergy of Saint Dorothea and of Saint Peter, the household of Christina in mourning, Christina herself, more magnificent than ever, for over her was thrown a great royal violet mantle, edged with ermine. Following the body were lords and cardinals, officers and archbishops, equerries and valets, gilded coaches and gaily decked horses, a shimmering of satins and embroideries, a nodding of plumes, a mixture of liveries, bright uniforms, and church vestments. It was as fine a sight as that of Christina's entry into Rome. Crowds pushed forward to see her, and decidedly the brocade robe was becoming; it hid the heavy form and hunched shoulder. It was a most successful funeral: *Plaudite, cives!*

This was her cry even in death; she never knew any other. The *Autobiography* claims plaudits for Christina in swaddling clothes, for the baby that did not fear new faces, that did not sleep during speeches: *Plaudite, cives!* Applaud the schoolgirl, the incomparable horse-

woman, the unequalled scholar, the unrivalled sovereign, man and woman in one, the great stateswoman, the great general, the great lover. Applaud the joyous student, cap on ear, the bold and clever adventuress, the tragic queen who kills, as in the noble days of olden despotism, the eighth wonder of the world, the prodigy of her day: *Plaudite, cives!*

The play ended magnificently at Saint Peter's, where the body was placed in a coffin, enclosed in a vault, and Christina awaited the verdict of posterity.

This verdict is somewhat contradictory. Some historians have praised her, dazzled by so many brilliant qualities. Most have condemned her, indignant at her ferocity, at the indecency of her life, at her cowardly treason for which she hoped to reap golden rewards. To-day, stirring up the dust of old documents, wherein lies the record of Christina's existence, we no longer see the bright eyes, the joyous smile, the tomboy gestures. We no longer hear her witty and insolent repartees. We no longer feel the equivocal grace of this feminine cavalier. But we read the narrative of Father Le Bel, the correspondence with Montecuculli and with the emperor, the propositions to France in 1676-1677, the violent discussions on money matters with Sweden. Neither the talents of Christina, nor her superior intelligence, nor her courage, can save her from an implacable judgment. She was beyond the

bounds of all honest and responsible humanity. This crooked body contained a crooked soul, which knew neither right nor wrong. This brilliant Christina, almost a genius, was, morally, a veritable monster.

THE MEMOIRS OF AN ARAB PRINCESS

THE life of the Arab woman is little known to us, and her feelings and ideas must be left to the imagination. It is fairly safe, however, to say that, being a mere sensual little animal, she can be led only by fear. It is equally safe to accord her much pity, though not unmixed with contempt, and to believe that any princess of the Far East would be happy to change places with one of our street sweepers. Very few of these ladies have tried the experiment, however, and none have given us the benefit of their impressions; we are free, therefore, to believe what best suits our fancy.

But here is one who has chosen to favour us with her confessions.¹ A sultan's daughter, after having lived twenty years as a Mussulman highness, ran away with a Hamburg merchant, and for twenty more years has led the life of a good German housekeeper. In her new surroundings she learned more or less to analyse her impressions, and she published her *Memoirs*. The object of her candid book is to compare the first part of her life with the second, and her Arab family with her Christian one. If the volumes of

¹ *Memoiren einer Arabischen Prinzessin*, by Emile Ruete. (II vol. Berlin.)

the fugitive, whose Christian name is Frau Emilie Ruete, should ever fall into the hands of one of her country people, he, in his heart, would blame her for having opened to the eyes of all, her father's harem, and revealed the secrets of a home which once was hers. As to us who have not the same scruples, these artless pages have all the more value that they are written with the conviction that all our preconceived notions would be reversed by their perusal. We shall unveil the picture of Frau Ruete's youth, leaving it just as she herself painted it. The reader must decide for himself whether or not her conduct was wise and just.

I

SHE was born in a palace situated in the island of Zanzibar; her name was Salmé, and she was of a chocolate hue. Her father was the glorious Sejjid Saïd, iman of Muscat in Arabia, sultan of Zanzibar, by right of conquest since 1784. She probably came into the world somewhere about 1844, when her father must have been at least eighty years of age; but she mentions no dates, perhaps because in her world dates and numbers are as vague as they are unimportant. These good people are spared the mania of calculating, a mania which imparts so much dryness to our lives and takes from it all charm of fantasy. Events for them floated in the space of time, as

did life itself, measured only by the fact of living. Little Princess Salmé saw that her father's beard was white, that several of her sisters might well have been her grandmothers, that one of her nephews was almost an old man, and that many generations of women had succeeded each other in the harem; the chronology of all these things, events, and people, was beyond her. How many brothers and sisters had she? How many lawful wives had her father? How many unlawful wives, or *sarari*?¹ She did not know. In her family affections, there existed a certain mystery and uncertainty which were not without charm. She experienced a delightful emotion when, for the first time, she entered her father's town harem and saw numberless brothers and sisters, quite unknown to her. She for a whole day went from discovery to discovery, and this greatly interested her.

Her infancy had been spent in the country harem of Sejjid Saïd, near the town of Zanzibar. The place was called Bet-il-Mtoui, and it was the noisiest and most complicated of palaces. Bet-il-Mtoui was originally composed of an immense court surrounded by buildings. As the family increased, a wing had been added, then a gallery and a pavilion; all these buildings were huddled together in picturesque confusion. As this had been going on for a long time, the palace had become like a small town harbouring about a thou-

¹ Singular, *surie*.

sand inhabitants. There was so prodigious a number of rooms, of doors, of passages, and staircases, such a tangle of constructions of every shape and of every size, that it required long practice not to get lost among them. From one end to the other of this labyrinth swarmed a motley crowd of brown, black, and white women, of children, fair or dark, of growling eunuchs, of male and female slaves. Water-carriers, cooks, negro runners, masseurs, nurses, embroiderers, in one word, the never-ending domesticity of Eastern lands, hurried to and fro. Brilliant colours enlivened the costumes, jewels sparkled on the women's arms, ears, necks, legs, heads. Even the beggars, affirms Princess Salmé, wore jewels; not one woman in Zanzibar went without anklets or bracelets. Flocks of parrots and of pigeons flew, screeched, or cooed in the open galleries, adding to the flutter and noise of this ever-moving crowd, which spoke a dozen different languages and dialects. The eunuchs scolded the slaves, and sent them about their business with a whip. The children screamed and tumbled over each other. The wooden sandals of the women resounded on the marble pavement, and the gold pendants about their bare ankles tinkled daintily.

The court was everybody's passageway, the great playground, the refuge of all idlers, the hospitable menagerie and farmyard. Quantities of ducks, geese, guinea-fowls, peacocks, and flamingoes, of tame gazelles and ostriches, lived here in

unrestrained freedom. Outsiders, messengers, carriers, artisans, shopmen, hustled each other in the hurry of their various avocations. At one extremity were a dozen tanks, surrounded by covered galleries, where, night and day, hundreds of men and women bathed. To get to the court one passed through an orange grove, the branches of which were often laden with a singular sort of fruit, chiefly children who had deserved a whipping, and there sought a hiding place. It was also in this immense court that the young princes and their sisters learned, under the direction of the eunuchs, to mount the thoroughbreds of Oman and the great white asses of Mascat. Morning and evening they took their riding lessons, prancing and galloping on their high, embroidered saddles. The strips of gold and silver on the harnesses clinked merrily, and frightened birds flew before the horses' hoofs. Movement, noise, light, colour, everything was spirited at Bet-il-Mtoui, and dazzling to the senses.

In all the palace there was but one quiet and silent nook: it was the apartment of old Sejjid Saïd of the snow-white beard. He lived in a wing overlooking the sea, and his windows opened on a wide, round terrace, surmounted by a pointed roof of painted wood and closed with balustrades. This construction inspired Princess Salmé with boundless admiration; she compares it to a merry-go-round without the wooden horses. When the old man was not busy with his orisons or in giving

audience, he would go alone on his terrace, where he could be seen for hours, absorbed and sad, walking up and down, limping, for an old wound had crippled him. Who can say what cares bowed that white head? There are burdens common to all monarchs in every latitude, but Sejjid Saïd had still other cares of which we know nothing. Who can guess his thoughts when one of his *sarari*, or his children, craved some favour, and he was forced to send them to their common tyrant, the legitimate spouse, the imperious *bibi* Azzé?

Bibi is a word of the country which means *she who gives orders*, and is employed at Zanzibar in the sense of *her Highness*. This title belonged to a little bit of a woman, without youth, without beauty, childless, who ruled Sejjid Saïd with a rod of iron; she often decided even state matters. She was the last surviving of Sejjid Saïd's *bibis*, and she held him under a heavier yoke than was ever put on an oppressed Christian husband. It is in vain that the Koran has said: "Men are superior to women. . . . Husbands lead and their wives follow." *Bibi* Azzé did not interfere with the Koran, but she had her own way. Quite uselessly had Sejjid Saïd endeavoured to weaken the inevitable influence of the wife by dividing it among many; he had added young Persian to young Arab maids, to Abyssinian and Circassian beauties, until Bet-il-Sahel, his town palace, was full, until a third and fourth residence were equally

overflowing. He still continued to obey the terrible Azzé, and all he got by his tactics was to be caught between two fires. On the one hand, the herd of *sarari* always had some request to submit to him, and these requests, childish or eccentric, had to be decided by his tyrant. The most vivid impressions of Princess Salmé's infancy are connected with this terrible stepmother, whom she always remembered as followed by her court, haughty, carrying stiffly her diminutive person. She struck everyone dumb. Her stepdaughter is obliged to borrow a comparison from the Prussian army, with its inflexible discipline, in order to make us understand her own terrified humility with regard to *bibi* Azzé. "All those," she says, "who crossed her path were crushed as a recruit might be before a general." Nothing stronger could be said.

The old sultana rarely left her white palace, embowered among great cocoanut trees. Sejjid, during four days of the week, dragged his chain in her presence. The other three days he spent at the joyous Bet-il-Sahel, where there was no *bibi* and where all felt at liberty. He himself wore another countenance; he was enjoying his holiday. The three days over, he returned to submit to Azzé's caprices and to walk around his terrace. How had she conquered him? By what mysterious ties did she hold him? Either from ignorance or discretion, Princess Salmé keeps silence with regard to this enigma. She merely

refers at different times to the "incredible power" exerted by her stepmother over her father.

Sejjid Saïd had not always been as submissive. In olden times he had known anger comparable to that of wild beasts. It was whispered in the harem that he had once, sword in hand, rushed at a *bibi* who had misbehaved and that, but for the intervention of a eunuch, he would have killed her. Old age had softened him, and the valiant conqueror of 1784 now seemed a good-natured stage king. He was a good deal imposed upon at Bet-il-Sahel; the *sarari* and their daughters went their several ways according to the caprice of the moment. Princess Salmé, who spent there most of her time after she had reached her seventh or eighth year, lets us into the secrets of this extraordinary household.

This is the first time that we have been initiated, by a competent writer, one whose good faith is unimpeached, into the woes of a man at the mercy of a hundred or more women. His tribulations surpass all we could imagine on the subject. It is true that Sejjid Saïd singularly complicated matters. Well on toward his hundredth year he still caused pretty girls from Asia and Africa to be sent to him, and the passions of these young persons enlivened the palaces. The Abyssinians were distinguished by their stormy natures. Jealous and vindictive, they flew into rages and sought to revenge themselves. The Circassians, less violent, were not any easier

to govern. They had a just appreciation of their superiority, and were very haughty. One of these, named Courschit, no longer young, was the only person in the whole kingdom capable of defying Azzé. She had a son whom she governed despotically, and by whom she had a finger in the political pie. This strong-willed lady occupied a place apart at Bet-il-Sahel, and with great deference each consulted her. Her tall figure, her glittering eyes, frightened the little children. She was greatly admired for her intelligence, but in no way loved.

None of these primitive creatures had the slightest notion of moral discipline. Nature made them good or bad. Custom imposed upon them the observance of certain exterior rules. The idea of self-control, of self-improvement, was as unknown to them as the precession of the equinoxes. If their instincts were good, so much the better; if they were bad, the fear of punishment was for them the beginning, the middle, and the end of wisdom. Good behaviour was rendered doubly arduous because of race rivalry. Sympathetic groups were formed according to nationalities and colour, and out of these alliances sprang furious friendships and still more furious hatreds. The harems of Sejjid Saïd were fiery centres. Passions took on a superb volcanic character, unknown to our calmer societies, where we are taught self-restraint. Princess Salmé was struck by this contrast when she arrived in Europe. She concluded

that our feelings are as pale and cold as our sky, and she pitied us, for she is tender-hearted. During twenty years she sought a German woman who knew the meanings of the verbs *to love* and *to hate*, as the least among her countrywomen knew them. She never found one, and could not understand why. Whenever she alludes to these things it becomes evident that the Arab and the European are by nature utterly at variance.

Twenty years of Christian and German education have not rendered Princess Salmé more capable than she was at first of assimilating our ways, our thoughts, or our customs. She persists in feeling that life has narrowed for her since she left her country. If she were capable of abstract reasoning, she would say: "You mistake a ghostly phantom for life itself; you are amused by such vain toys as railways and observatories. In reality, nothing counts for man except what he has felt; one feels more in a single week at Bet-il-Sahel than in Berlin during a whole year. My father, the great Sejjid Saïd, knew more about human passions than a German philosopher. You fancy that a man of the Far East, because he is grave and reserved, sleeps away his life; but I, a slave's daughter, I who have tasted both cups, affirm that it is your life, not his, that is insipid."

I see very well what we might answer; but I also know that the answer would fall upon deaf ears. The daughter of Sejjid Saïd, Christian spouse to an honest merchant, in the two volumes

of her *Memoirs* does not utter a single word against a harem, and she hides nothing which filial duty would have bidden her hide had she understood the ignominy of her mother's position. Accustomed from babyhood to Mussulman ways, in the depths of her heart she prefers them to ours. A little more, and on the strength of her experience, she would proclaim the failure of Christian marriage; one feels that if she does not go quite so far, it is that she does not dare to do so. She likes to recall the thoughtless mirth of her young friends, their content at the fate that awaited them, and to compare it with the stereotyped smiles of a Berlin dame, whose private life was stormy enough under its correct appearance. "I can declare in conscience," writes she, with ingenuous pleasure, "that I have in this country heard of amiable husbands who beat their wives, whereas an Arab would feel himself degraded by such brutality." Her birth destined her to become a *bibi*, and, had she the choice, *bibi* she would still be; there is no indiscretion in saying so, as Herr Ruete died long ago. His widow does not seem to understand that the rivalry of the *sarari* and the struggle against their influence are enough to miserably degrade the position of a Mussulman wife.

Let us do justice to her frankness; she confesses that she judges us by the light of her resentment. Frau Ruete, Princess of Zanzibar, suffered from our customs and habits. We have lost the respect

for the aristocracy, and that to races who have retained it is intolerable. We have inflicted suffering on this fallen Highness; she moans gently over little foolish things. We cannot refrain from smiling, but to her the sorrow was genuine. She makes us think of certain tropical birds, the size of an emerald, that we are cruel enough to shut up in a cage. They roll themselves, shivering, in little fluffy balls, hiding their heads under their wings, so as not to see their prison; a prison lacking sunshine, light, and flowers. One of her great griefs was that she was treated by the merchants of Hamburg as one of their own set, and not as the daughter of a great monarch. She was, for them, nothing but Frau Ruete, the dark-skinned spouse of Herr Ruete, dealer in cottons and hardware, who had contracted a queer marriage during a business voyage in Africa. "I did not find," she pitifully writes, "the attentions to which I thought I had a right." She felt her downfall very bitterly, and when she was assured that the condition of women among us is far superior, that human dignity is more respected in a German scullery maid than in a sultan's *bibi*, she thought that her fate would have been more enviable and glorious and romantic had she fallen in love with one of the handsome slaves who, when she went out in the streets of Zanzibar, walked before her with a great noise of weapons. Among her people, when a girl marries, she keeps the name, the rank, and the title which she holds from her

parents; from this state of things flow many adorable adventures on which Princess Salmé doubtless counted when she eloped.

Her people are persuaded that unequal marriages do not exist. Neither the customs nor public opinion are opposed to the union of a prince and a shepherdess. Nothing untoward can come of it, since the shepherdess does not become a princess but remains "so and so, daughter of so and so." In Arabia, where strength and courage are still held in great esteem, it is not rare that a chief gives his sister or his daughter to a slave who has distinguished himself by his valour. He is then by right a free man, but nothing more. He remains his wife's servant, speaks to her with all humility, and calls her "Mistress" or "Your Highness." On his wedding evening, a certain etiquette is required of him.

The bride does not rise when her husband enters the room. She remains squatting on her heels, motionless and dumb, covered with jewels, her rich garments redolent with perfumes, her face hidden under a black mask trimmed with gold and silver; she resembles some magnificent idol, recently incensed, still giving forth aromatic perfumes. The bridegroom approaches; she remains silent. He is bound to speak first, and in that he confesses his inferiority. He addresses her with words of homage; she then answers, but does not yet remove her mask; he must humble himself still more before he is permitted to contem-

plate her face. Then he bows as before his sovereign, and deposits his offering at her feet. If he is rich, he offers a treasure. If he is poor, if he possesses nothing but his strong arm and his gun, he places before her two or three coppers.

Princess Salmé is convinced that marriage does not annul distances, and that the respect of an ex-slave, who has become the son-in-law of a grandee, is as undying as the majesty of his spouse. He never reminds her that Mahomet said of woman "that she is a being who grows up amid ornaments and finery and who eternally discusses without reasoning." He must still less remember the passage of the Koran which says that: "Men are superior to women on account of the qualities with which God has endowed them, thus placing them above women. . . . Virtuous women should be obedient and submissive. . . . You should chide those who rebel . . . you should even beat them." The ex-slave is a servant as well as a husband, and a king's daughter remains a princess even in the tent of a freedman. This is mere romance, you will say. Surely. What young girl has not woven her dream of romance? That of the Arab maiden is very simple and primitive. A prince's daughter dreams of a husband who will salute her courteously and not beat her.

It is easy to guess at the bitter sorrow of a poor *kibibi*,¹ who knew nothing of Europe, when, one fine morning, she woke to find herself a German

¹ Little Highness, little *bibi*.

housekeeper. We pity her, and very sincerely. We cannot go so far, however, as to imagine a young German, English, or French girl of the middle classes who would enjoy being a *kibibi*, and who would contentedly play the part of a heroine of the *Arabian Nights*. Princess Salmé devotes a whole chapter to prove that the fate of her Oriental sisters is as dignified as, and more enviable than, that of the European women condemned to servile work and sordid occupations. As I read her arguments, I recalled a scene noted during a voyage. It was on a road of Anatolia, one autumn evening. Before us were a couple of unequal height and of very different aspect. To the left was a grey-bearded man, mounted on a horse whose silver trappings tinkled as he went. The man wore flowing trousers of some dark colour, and weapons were in his sash; the upper part of the body was draped in a burnous of fine white wool, the hood of which covered his turban. In his high-backed saddle, his appearance was exquisitely graceful and haughty. His whole person denoted a calm habit of authority.

To his right trotted mincingly a tiny donkey, miserably pack-saddled, with ropes by way of reins. A woman, wrapped in an ample blue cotton garment, rode, huddled up, astride the pack. Her round, hunched body swayed gently to and fro, following the movements of her beast, and the impression she gave was of something very humble, and of no account at all.

These two figures formed a laughable contrast, and when they disappeared at a turn of the road, one of us said, "The problem of the Eastern woman in a nutshell." All Princess Salmé's arguments fall before the remembrance of that shapeless little mass, trotting in the shadow of the fine horseman.

II

THERE was no compensation for the sufferings she endured in Europe. In our world, she found nothing which made up for what she had lost in hers. Mahometanism had stamped her, and she was doomed to the intellectual stagnation of her religion and of her race. In Germany she acquired knowledge, she read and worked, but her thoughts remained stationary. Condemned not to lose a single idea, not to acquire a single one, she lived among us without understanding us, without loving us. The meaning of our civilisation she always ignored; between her mind and ours there was a wall.

The reasons for this state of things appear in that part of her *Memoirs* where she explains the education given to the boys and girls huddled together in her family palace. One can hardly imagine a system better fitted to fashion minds in a mould, and for ever to separate the Oriental from the European. These pages, in spite of their literary clumsiness, are of vital interest. We all

know by what infantile simplicity Islamism governs the minds and hearts of a hundred million of human beings; but we have few opportunities of studying the working of this education, except from the outside. A Mahometan is a man who is essentially secretive. We needed the indiscretions of a renegade to learn how this unbending and closed soul is formed; to what influences it is subjected under the paternal roof, and what lessons it receives. Thanks to Princess Salmé, we can assist at its development from birth to the flowering time of life.

The years of infancy are given up to the mother, whoever she may be, *bibi* or *sarari*; this is the curse of the sons of the rich, who alone are able to afford harems. What the *sarari* are, we know. What their moral influence can be, we guess, even when native kindness serves as an antidote to the pernicious atmosphere of such a place. Princess Salmé had been fortunate, and had been as well nurtured as it was possible to be in such a place as Bet-il-Mtoui or Bet-il-Sahel. Her mother was a robust Circassian, plain and gentle, whose history may be told in three lines. She was the daughter of farmers who had three children. At six or seven she was stolen by wandering marauders, who massacred the father and mother and took the children into captivity. She never shook off this nightmare: she had heard her little sister sobbing and crying for their mother all day long. At nightfall they were separated, and she

never knew what had become of the others. The chances of the slave market had brought her to Zanzibar, where the sultan gave her as a plaything to his daughters, until the time when she should become his own toy. She grew up, lived, and died in the harem, resigned and inoffensive, thinking but little, and embroidering a great deal. Her daughter was tenderly attached to her.

When the child was born, in one of the innumerable rooms of Bet-il-Mtoui, its eyes were scarcely open when two black hands seized it, covered it with violent perfumes, and put it in swaddling clothes, consisting of a long band, after the fashion of Egyptian mummies, the legs straight, the arms close to the body. It remained thus, quite stiff, for forty days, to keep its spine from deviating. After the first week, Sejjid Saïd paid a visit to the mother and gave her the infant's jewels: heavy gold loops for the ears, bracelets and anklets. After his departure, slaves pierced the poor baby's ears six times and passed red silk in the holes.

On the fortieth day the chief of the eunuchs presented himself before the mother. He shaved the head of the child according to certain rites, amid the fumes of odorous incense. Then the little princess was unbound. Her legs and arms were burdened with heavy gold bracelets, amulets were hung about her neck, a cap of gold cloth placed on her head, and massive earrings put instead of the threads; the custom of the country forced her to wear these until the day of her death. A silken

chemise, strongly scented, completed her outfit. She was placed in a cradle, redolent with strong perfumes of jessamine, musk, amber, and rose; she was then presented to the friends and neighbours whose curiosity prompted them to crowd the room. An infant, be it the child of a mason, is always an interesting object to a woman. A birth was the cause of rejoicing in the harems of the old sultan, however customary the event might be. Even in his extreme old age, Sejjid Saïd had at least five or six children a year.

Princess Salmé, who brought up several children amid the fogs and snows of North Germany, always remembered with a sort of wistful regret the merry nursery gifts of her own country,—jewels, and a scrap of blue or pink silk. She compares the fate of a German housekeeper—her own—with that of an Arab woman, and she sighs. Eve, thrust out of Paradise, wept thus over the lazy hours, quite free from care, in her beautiful garden. Yonder, in Zanzibar, there were no stockings to mend, no woollen gloves out at the finger tips, no great “wash days.” Oh, those laundry days in Germany! they seemed the very symbol of the hateful law of work to this sultan’s daughter, whom slaves soothed to sleep with great waving fans, and who thought no more of work than did the small parrots perched beneath her window. Then, she did not even know the name of flatirons. To-day, she perhaps is busy folding sheets and piling up dusters.

Her first years were spent toddling about barefooted in a shift, with other Highnesses of her age. As soon as these tots could put two ideas together, they took part in the quarrels of their mothers and herded according to race. The sons and daughters of Circassians soon learned that their mothers, in the slave market, had brought a higher price than the black *sarari*, and in their hearts they despised their brethren born of Abyssinians. These returned hatred for hatred. They could not see, without anger, a skin white or light coloured: such children were dubbed in scorn, "sons of cats," because some among them had blue eyes. There were subdivisions among Highnesses of the same hue. It also happened that, from one camp to another, friendships sprang up. In this huge family, each one chose a family. Each brother had a favourite sister, who became his confidante and his ally, and both had their chosen stepmothers. And it came to pass that those whom one did not like in this wild gynæceum were held in suspicion, for each thought that those who were not friends might well become foes.

These details in no way shock Princess Salmé. They cast no shadow on the sweet and brilliant remembrance of the paternal household, object of her eternal regrets. It is with perfect calm that she describes the trepidation of joy with which the denizens of Bet-il-Sahel discover the symptoms of consumption in one of the inmates. This familiar guest was welcomed, for there would

be soon a free place, a choice room for the others. A mere cough, heard on the other side of the wall, was at once noted by tender-hearted friends, who trembled lest the symptom might be a false one. "These thoughts were assuredly to be deplored," adds Princess Salmé, "but really there were too many of us." Does not this peaceful and indifferent tone make one shudder?

It must be owned that family relationship is too extended in those immense harems for its bonds to be much felt. It is even strange that filial love should exist there at all. This is all the more astonishing that it is subjected to great shocks. All the princes and princesses were taught to respect their father and Bibi Azzé. At Bet-il-Mtoui, the first duty of the day, after the bath and prayers, was to salute the two great beings and to kiss their hands. Sejjid Saïd graciously received this homage, saw that the jewels of the little ones were in good order, their hair well taken care of, and distributed French bonbons to the band. Bibi Azzé, with icy coldness, held out her small, dry hand to be kissed; it is true that these girls were not of her blood, that the boys had taken the place of those she might have borne; that they were all indifferent to her, even when they did not irritate or annoy her. After the ceremony of the hand kissing, the family went to breakfast, and the *sarari's* children could compare their dignity with the humility of those who had given them birth.

The table was spread in a gallery or some large hall. It was not half a foot high, but long enough to accommodate the sons, grandsons, and their descendants, the daughters, granddaughters, and their descendants. The sultan took his place at the head, seated Eastern fashion on a rug, and his superb line of descendants, on either side, were placed according to age, the two sexes mixed together. The married princes, who lived outside, brought their sons. *Bibi Azzé* came when she chose, as did also the sister of *Sejjid Saïd*. Not one *surie*, were she mother of the heir to the throne, could ever eat at the royal table. In the immutable hierarchy of the palace they were, so to speak, the illegitimate and stigmatised mothers of the master's legitimate and glorious children.

They were equally absent from the evening festivities. After the dinner, which was the repetition of the breakfast, *Sejjid Saïd* left his apartments and sat on a European chair. His prodigious posterity stood to the right and to the left of him, the young children standing out of respect for their elders, the others seated. A little in the background, the eunuchs, in fine garb, stood against the wall. When all were settled, the evening pleasures began. Coffee and syrups were offered, and a monstrous barrel organ was brought, so immense that, in Europe, Princess *Salmé* never saw its like. A slave turned the handle, and the sultan listened solemnly. Sometimes a musical box took the place of the organ, or a blind woman

sang Arab songs. This lasted an hour and a half, then Sejjid Saïd rose and retired to his apartments. This was the signal for all to leave. The following evening was like this one, and so on from year's end to year's end; there was never the slightest change either in the order of the diversions or in the etiquette which decided those who were allowed to enjoy them.

Thus, everything contributed to make the children of the *sarari* understand that their mothers were inferior beings who, thanks to them, had a shadow of importance which must necessarily be lost in losing their offspring. They knew that the *surie*, whose child had died, could once more be sold, and "narrow-hearted" Arab husbands often made use of that right. They also knew that in widowhood their mothers would depend upon them, no law providing for them, at least in Zanzibar. The *surie*, whom her sons and daughters abandoned, was forced to beg, if no kindly person came to her rescue. A niece of Princess Salmé, called Farschu, was the daughter of a violent and passionate Abyssinian. Farschu lost her father and inherited his riches, quarrelled with her mother and abandoned her. The old *surie* tried to earn her bread by working, failed, and would have died of hunger had not one of her ex-sisters-in-law been moved to compassion and taken her in.

Such cases were very rare, and this certainly is to the credit of the Arabs. Even when they

saw their mothers treated with contumely, their filial respect did not waver. They witnessed the sensual and indolent lives of their mothers, they were mixed up in their evil intrigues, and still remained affectionate. The princes of royal blood when, at their majority, they left the roof of Sejjid Saïd, nearly always took their mothers with them to their new homes. They kept them to the end, and, thanks to loving care, gave to their old age that dignity which had been so cruelly wanting in their youth. Maternity was the compensation of marriage for the *surie*. "Her intercourse with her children," says Princess Salmé, "very amply makes up to her for the disadvantages of polygamy." These words are greatly to the honour of the nation that has deserved them. They prove a noble nature. However, Europeans have some difficulty in understanding that the feelings of respect and love inspired by a mother should not extend, in some degree, to the whole sex. They are ill at ease when they see these tender sons yet confine their own *sarari* to the secular fate of mere females.

Sejjid Saïd cared for his offspring as well as a *pater familias* so very much encumbered could be expected to do. With great curiosity, I have sought for passages of the *Memoirs* which might enlighten me as to the sentiments of a father who counted his children by the hundreds, and I have seen that the heart of the just is a very ocean of tenderness. The old sultan rejoiced

in the fabulous number of births in his harems. Smallpox, consumption, cholera, and typhus fever had done their work, however, so that at his death, he left only eighteen sons and as many daughters, a much diminished family. Toward the end, nature had not quite filled up the fast thinning ranks. So many joys and so many sorrows would have blunted shallow feelings. His sentiments remained constant, and his daughter remembers, with emotion, having seen him weep and pray at a son's deathbed, he who was so very old and still had "more than forty children."

It really seems as though he knew them all. We have already seen that he cared for their appearance. He saw that they went to school, and, in person, recommended the school mistress not to spare the rod. He took the boys out with him, and caused blows to be administered to the riding masters whose pupils were in fault. This was wise and right, since the masters were free to punish their pupils. "My father was convinced that, in spite of his orders, they were too indulgent toward the princes." When the little fellows were very naughty indeed, they were taken to their father who scolded them. A "very arrogant" brother had shot at little Salmé with an arrow and wounded her in the side. "My father said, 'Salmé, go and tell Hamdâm to come to me.' I had scarcely entered with my brother, when he had to listen to such terrible words that surely he never forgot them." Sejjid Saïd made pres-

ents to his children, gave dowries when the time came, and condemned himself to listen, in their company, for one hour and a half, to the big barrel organ and the musical boxes. How many Christian fathers do no more, without having the same excuses! How many merely act as the exterior guard of the souls intrusted to their care, without ever inquiring into the thoughts of the child, his desires, or his secret sorrows.

In education at Bet-il-Mtoui, learning had but a small part, and yet the importance of it was great. Instead of science, method was taught; and this formed a habit of mind which nothing could change. In this aristocratic land, one is struck with the fact that the studies were the same for the heir-apparent to the throne, and for a slave whom his master wished to educate. There was but one school for all, and in that school but one class, strangely mixed and still more strangely kept. It was held in one of the open galleries of the palace, where the insolent birds fluttered at their own sweet will. By way of furniture, there was only some matting. A crowd of squatting scholars, boys and girls, were cowed beneath the stick of a dismal, toothless old dame, who distributed learning and blows with strict impartiality, and without any distinction of age, sex, or rank. The same lesson served for a Highness and his black groom, and the same punishments were furiously administered by the

hag, who thus obeyed the sultan's orders. A single book was admitted into the class,—the Koran. It is not enough to say that it reigned in the school: it was the school.

The beginners learned to read in the Koran. As soon as they could spell the words, they were taught to read the verses together, very loud, and to learn them by heart. In that way they went to the end of the book, then began again, once, twice, three times, without a word of explanation, understanding what they could of the sacred text, and fearing to let their minds dwell on it, for they knew that it was “impious and forbidden to meditate on the holy book; man must believe with simplicity that which is taught him; all strictly observed this precept” at Zanzibar. The first duty of a master was to prevent his pupils from thinking about their lesson, from having an idea or putting a question, so that the habit of mechanical recitation becomes a second nature. Those blessed with a good memory knew about half the Koran by heart at the end of the first year. Others spent two or three years reciting, through the nose, the *sourates*, before they memorized a decent quantity. Now and then, but very rarely, a stripling, very bold or very holy, dared to understand and comment on the holy text: “Perhaps one out of a thousand,” says Princess Salmé.

The children acquired some slight notions of grammar and spelling, and they were taught to

count up to a thousand, never more. "What is beyond," said Mahometan wisdom, "comes from Satan." The education of the girls never went further; it was not desirable that a woman should know how to write. The boys learned writing by copying verses of the Koran, after which their studies were ended. The very words "geography," "history," were unknown at Bet-il-Mtoui. As to the natural sciences, Princess Salmé remarks that the teaching of them would wound a pious Arab to the depths of his soul, as he must never inquire into the secrets of nature. This, at any rate, has not always been the case, as, even nowadays there are pious Arabs who learn astronomy and physical sciences without imagining that, by so doing, they offend Allah; but Princess Salmé can only speak of her own people, and those whom she knew. The inhabitants of Zanzibar believe that it is blasphemy to consider any rules outside of God's will, even if those rules emanate from that will and are subject to it. They have not, like the Turks, been spoiled by European contact ("and you see," adds the princess, "if this has been to the advantage of the Turks"), and they reject with horror the very thought of natural laws. "To speak of such things to one of my countrymen would shake his whole being, and cause him very great disturbance." The orthodox classes of Bet-il-Mtoui and Bet-il-Sahel, where the children of royal blood were brought up, made perfect Mahometans according to that ideal. Their educa-

tion sealed up all the openings by which the mind might have escaped to question those mysteries to which no answer has ever been found, but the seeking after which constitutes the true dignity of man. The child left the school, his head stuffed with precepts which it was considered impious to analyse, and outside of which it would have been an abomination to look for an explanation of the world and of life. It was the pupil's duty to apply these precepts without reasoning any more than he did when he sang in a falsetto voice with his companions. As to doubting their divine origin, he would rather have disbelieved in the sun's light. Since his birth he had heard his father, his mother, his masters, and his slaves affirm that there was no God but Allah, and that Mahomet was his prophet. These two ideas, if I may so express myself, formed part and parcel of his being, of his very flesh. He no more thought of throwing them off, than of getting rid of his body. Complicated devotions completed this work of routine; in the palaces of Sejjid Said the five daily prayers of the truly faithful took up more than three hours.

Nothing equals the narrowness of the system, unless it be its power. For more than ten centuries it has fashioned human brains, which have become like impregnable fortresses, whole nations which would give up life rather than one iota of their belief. It has succeeded in confining human thought in limits so strict and so sacred that

Princess Salmé affirms that, with us, there is nothing but impious infidelity, falsehood, and utter discontent. She is convinced that our excess of education is the great misfortune of civilised nations, a greater calamity even than our terrible climate, than the health-destroying occupations of Northerners, than the dispiriting dryness of European hearts. Why do we not realise it? "You prize education and science above all things. Then you wonder that piety, respect, veneration, righteousness, and content are sacrificed to pitiless warfare, frightful atheism, contempt of all institutions, human and divine! . . . How much better it would be to teach rather the word of God and his holy commandments, and to waste less time in arguing on force and matter." In her own case she was never more deceived, more robbed, more entirely at the mercy of villains and charlatans, than since she had taken to studying and had become an "enlightened person," living in an "enlightened" society. At Zanzibar, she knew the golden age; Berlin could offer her nothing but the iron age. "O happy people of my country!" she exclaims, "you could never guess the real meaning of holy civilisation!" We are bold indeed when we talk pityingly of savages and of barbarous nations! We are really full of self-sufficiency when we start out to "enlighten by force" people who are our equals and who despise us from the bottom of their hearts.

A Mahometan is bound to despise us. The ideal held before him by his religion is not very high, and he attains to it easily. He cannot measure the height of ours, since he is incapable of rising above his own ideas. What he sees is our vain effort to reach our ideals and our repeated and shameful failures. He is bound to condemn us. This is the case with Sejjid's daughter. In her training as a civilised being, she noticed only the stones and the mud of the road, never the goal toward which it led. She could not understand that our stumblings were but the accidents inherent to a struggle upward, that the rallying cry of our suffering masses, guilty though they may often be, is yet, through all sorrow and shortcomings, *Sursum corda!* She understood only that we do evil without wishing to do it, that we do not accomplish the good after which we yearn, and she affirms, without the reserve of her pages on marriage, the moral bankruptcy of Christian civilisation. A remnant of prudence keeps her from attributing it to our religion; she accuses our education, but, in reality, to her they mean one and the same thing. It comes to this; that our churches, unlike her own, have not been able to combine the direction of the mind with the government of the soul. She attacks our vain science as the mother of nearly all the woes of our corrupt and soured society; with our miseries and our discords, she compares the smiling picture of an Arab woman's life at Zanzibar. And this is the

very creature whom we regard as one of the most degraded and ill-treated of human beings.

III

WE have seen the background of the Arab woman's happy life. It is brilliant and gay, if a little discordant. The high-ceilinged rooms of Bet-il-Mtoui and Bet-il-Sahel were uniformly whitewashed and curtainless. They had none of the exquisite soft tones and hushed intimacy of Haoua's room, Haoua, the beautiful Moorish woman, whose arms were firm and cold as marble, whom Eugène Fromentin knew and whose tragic death he described in *Une année dans le Sahel*. A sun more intense shone on cruder colours, on a richer and more barbarous scene. The walls were divided into panels by niches which ran up to the ceiling. Shelves of painted wood were placed in the niches and were laden with plates and gaily decorated porcelain, vases, glasses, and decanters of cut and engraved crystal, a favourite luxury with the inhabitants of Zanzibar, bought at any price. Between these dressers were placed low divans, above which were hung mirrors of European make, surmounted and surrounded by clocks of every conceivable form and style; this is another favourite luxury; some rich Arab houses remind one of a clockmaker's shop.

The hostess's place is marked by a *meddé*, a

sort of mattress covered with cushions; the head of this lounge is against the wall. In the corner is a large Indian bed, curiously inlaid, so high that one reaches it after the fashion of an Amazon springing to the saddle, one foot placed on the hand of a slave. Here and there small coffer of rosewood, studded with hundreds of little brass nails, contain the wardrobe, the jewels, and perfumes. Doors and windows are left open for the sake of air; violent odours, made up of all known perfumes, a great clatter of footsteps, voices, laughter, and quarrelling, arise from the courts and stairways. Showy and tumultuous, strange and picturesque, joyous and disquieting — such are those homes which certainly we should not envy, but which doubtless are not easily forgotten.

The women's garments are of barbaric splendour. They wear a robe both scanty and flowing, that does not drape the figure, and leaves the lines uncertain. It takes from a woman all that could reveal her sex; a stronger objection could scarcely be made.

There are narrow trousers, made of bright coloured silk, which, by dint of flounces and embroidery, reach the ankles; then a high-necked chemise, with narrow half-long sleeves, falls above the trousers and is of a violently different hue—emerald green on red, blue on yellow, pink on orange, gold on purple, silver on violet. This chemise is made of brilliant and costly materials,

brocades of gold and silver, heavy satins figured with flowers and arabesques of many tints, heavy Lyons velvets, soft China silks. During the excessive summer heat, painted linens, many-coloured cottons, India muslins, are preferred to silks. But of whatever fabric the garment is made, it is covered with embroideries, with ornaments of every description, trimmed with lace, tassels, bits of gold or silver, tufts of flossy silk, metal buttons, jewels, glass ornaments, in a word with numberless sparkling things that tremble, tinkle, dance, and shimmer at every movement. Several strings of necklaces fall on the bosom. The arms are heavy with bracelets that reach up to the elbow. Immense rings are on every finger. The head is covered with startling kerchiefs, much ornamented with knots of ribbon that hide the forehead to the eyebrows; heavy fringes, surrounding the face, complete the headgear; long ribbons on which are sewn sequins and pieces of gold studded with jewels, hang down the back.

Princess Salmé has placed her photograph as frontispiece to her *Memoirs*. For this occasion she chose a comparatively simple toilette, in spite of which, her little brown face seems crushed with finery. One sees, however, two piercing black eyes, a large mouth with a melancholy pout, and two pretty little bare feet, plump and well shaped. All the rest is half hidden under a mass of ornaments.

It was no easy matter to obtain all these sump-

tuous costumes. In those days there were but few shops at Zanzibar, and no native industries. The slaves made and ornamented the garments. Their mistress did not, on occasion, disdain to embroider or to make lace. Hindoo workmen, established in the island, fashioned some of the jewels. The remaining trinkets and the dress materials were brought often from afar. To Sejjid Saïd himself fell the care of providing his harems with their innumerable wants; his own families first of all, with the children and slaves; those of his sons, grandsons, of his great-grandsons; of his sons-in-law, their sons and grandsons, with their children and slaves. He also sent presents to his numerous married descendants and to shoals of poor relations in Arabia. Think of having to please a hundred or so women, and what women! women with but one occupation in the world,—their clothes. The pomatum question took the proportions of a state affair, for the discontent of a harem is not to be despised. Plots are hatched behind barred windows, elsewhere than in tragedies, as we shall see in the course of this narrative.

The old sultan would have been kept busy enough in distributing the necessaries of life to all his women, but the *sarari* and their daughters required more of him. He was expected to procure for them the newest stuffs, the fashionable colour, and many curious objects which perhaps never existed except in the Abyssinian imagina-

tion. This extraordinary man accomplished this miracle. Every year a fleet left Zanzibar loaded with African products. As soon as the vessels had sailed out to sea each took a different direction. Some went to Marseilles or England, others to the Persian Gulf, the ports of India and of China. Each captain carried with him a list of commissions, very minutely described, which he was to execute, taking the money of his products to pay for what he bought. Woe to him if he did not find what was not findable!

The return of the fleet was the great event of the year. It was a time of greed, of merciless rivalries, of bitter jealousies. As soon as the vessels were emptied, the distribution began, made by the eunuchs under the direction of the sultan's elder daughters. The princess of the fairy tale, condemned to unravel a room full of tangled skeins of thread, had not before her a more terrible task. It will be easy to judge of this by giving a single item. Every Arab woman of quality uses five hundred dollars' worth of perfumery in a year. It would be wearisome to calculate what this sum, multiplied by the *bibi*, the *sarari*, and the *kibibi* of the imperial family, represented in the way of little pots, bottles, scent bags, essences, powders, oils and pomatums, perfumed with amber, musk, benjoin, basilic, jessamine, geranium, rose, verbena, mignonette, vanilla, lavender. And this provision had to be distributed without favouring or cheating any one. Then came the stuffs, to

be given by the piece; laces, and all that a woman can manage to sew on her garments to embellish them; jewels and all sorts of ornaments that give to an Arab woman the aspect of a Neapolitan Madonna on feast days; the children's playthings, the gewgaws, the trifles so dear in Eastern eyes, useful objects which more mature persons had requested, pocket money for presents, charities, and the telling of fortunes, for the sorceress, the seer, and the magician who puts illness to flight or exorcises the possessed.

At last all is ready. That portion of the goods destined for later occasions has been carried to the chambers of the treasury. The first day of the distribution — it lasted three or four days — is announced. Impatience, joy, anguish are at their height in the harems, and the dawn shines on many a stormy face. At Bet-il-Sahel at sunrise all is bustle and confusion. The doors are besieged by the women who are quartered outside the palace. Arab etiquette forbids them to show themselves in full day, and it was still dark when they started. The rising sun showers rose and gold tints on the brilliant groups as they pass through the big door, not to recross the threshold until nightfall. They are received by the crossest of all the sultan's slaves, Saïd the Nubian. Sejjid Saïd greatly favoured this gray-bearded servant, who was to him devoted and submissive. The children hated him and their mothers shrank from him, for he received them but ill. These early

visits exasperated him. He could be heard grumbling in his beard, as he took up his big keys, "that for the last hour he had been on his poor old legs, opening the door for the ladies!" The children hid his keys, out of spite; he would have to look for them in the hundred rooms where he might have left them, and this did not improve his temper.

At last the door is opened, and the crowd gathered in the great court of the palace. In comparison, that of Bet-il-Mtoui was a temple of peace. Princess Salmé once saw in Germany a comic opera which reminded her "faintly" of Bet-il-Sahel on the day of distribution. This comparison is a glorious one for the German comic stage, for it is not easy to reproduce even "faintly" so tremendous a confusion of sounds. A corner of the court served as slaughter house. Butchers killed according to the Mahometan rites, accompanying each thrust with the formula: "In the name of God, the all-merciful." On the eve of feast days, the blood of the slaughtered animals covered the ground to the inexpressible horror of the Hindoos whose business called them to the place. A little further was the children's corner, where their nurses, negresses for the most part, told them such frightful stories that they all had the nightmare. Further still was the kitchen, in the open air at the foot of a pillar; this was the place of all others for the distributing of boxes on the ear; here there were many quarrels and

fighters. From this kitchen came repasts in comparison of which the wedding feast of Gamache was but a doll dinner. Oxen, cows, sheep, goats, gazelles, were roasted whole. "Fish were often brought so large that two powerful negroes were required to carry them. The smaller fish came by baskets full, and fowls by the dozens. Flour, rice, sugar, were brought by the wholesale, and the butter, which came melted from the North, was in large earthen jars." Long processions of carriers hurled down baskets of fruit, half of which was in consequence spoiled. One came across barbers, plying their trade in the open air, water-carriers, and busy eunuchs. The newcomers elbowed their way into the court and up the staircases as best they could, but it often took them half an hour to reach the first landing, so great was the crush.

At last the solemn hour when the year's gifts are to be divided has arrived. Quantities of eunuchs carry the parcels, and the last moments of expectation seem never-ending. But the time comes, as do all moments in this world, whether they are desired or feared. It has come. It has gone. Cries and laughter are heard; the parcels are opened and the fabrics shaken out; calls are heard, each woman rushes to the others, for now come the bartering and exchanging, each one seeking to get as many fringes, laces, and ornaments as possible for her costumes, and sacrificing whole pieces of goods for that purpose. The floor

is littered with silks and satins, or with gewgaws; the squatting women, with their great scissors, work with such a will that they often cut into their own clothes. Anger and despair are rife and find vent in no measured terms. The harem does not recover its usual aspect for two whole weeks.

The sultan disposes of the remaining treasures at the end of the great fasting time. All know that the Ramadan lasts thirty days, during which it is forbidden to swallow anything until the sun has sunk behind the horizon. "It is permitted," says the Koran, "to eat and drink until the moment when one can distinguish a white thread from a black one. From that moment strict fasting must be observed until night." In the city of Zanzibar the cannon announced the second when a white thread could be distinguished from a black one: "He who is putting a morsel to his mouth," add the *Memoirs*, "lets it drop instantly. He who has raised a glass to quench his thirst, puts it down without having tasted a drop of water." Until the evening, a faithful Mahometan "must not on purpose swallow his saliva." Under that flaming sky the privation of water during fourteen or fifteen hours is no small penance.

With the Mussulmans as with the Christians, fasting is not the same for all. The rich make arrangements with Heaven, and for the mighty of Zanzibar the Ramadan was a carnival. The slaves and other poor devils who worked hard really fasted. It would have been a public scandal

to see an unfortunate negro, sweltering and working under the whip, swallow a few drops of water. The rich and high born remembered that the prophet had said with regard to fasting: "God requires your welfare, not your fasting." They slept during the day, and feasted all night. The harems of Sejjid Saïd were by no means austere; the nights of Ramadan were a perpetual carouse.

Fasting was broken by a collation of fruits, immediately followed by a copious dinner, which was but the prelude to feasting which lasted till daybreak. Women sang their slow-dragging songs, improvisers declaimed before an over-excited audience that never ceased eating and drinking. At midnight, once more the cannon woke the army of cooks and scullery boys, fires were once more kindled in the court, and the odour of cooking filled the galleries, bright with many-hued lanterns. Between three and four o'clock was served the supper, or *suhur*. The nurses woke the little ones asleep here and there on the matting or the divans, and feasting began again until the cannon stopped the morsel on its way to the mouth. The harem, gorged and happy, slept during the heat of the day, the garments, according to the Eastern custom, not even thrown off.

In spite of this easy sort of penance, the end of the Ramadan is eagerly watched for by the rich as well as by the poor, for it brings with it the giving of presents, a distribution of alms, and

universal rejoicings. The Ramadan ends when the new moon is just discernible, a transient vision, as the delicate crescent disappears with the sun. As soon as twilight falls, all eyes in Zanzibar watch for the young moon on the dimmed horizon. Slaves are sent up to the top of cocoanut trees. The lucky possessors of marine glasses are besieged by would-be borrowers. When the Ramadan, which each year is advanced eleven days, falls in the rainy season and the sky is covered with clouds, the fasters probably take the moon on faith. However that may be, a last boom of the cannon salutes the liberating satellite, and an immense cry of joy arises from the city toward the sky, filling the air with happy shouts. Horsemen gallop about the country, announcing the good news. Passers-by stop to congratulate each other, friends exchange wishes of happiness, foes are reconciled.

The night that followed the end of the fast was always an agitated one in the harems. Every woman had prepared three new outfits for the three days of festivities, and could not wait for daylight to try the effect of this finery. At four o'clock in the morning they were ready. The soles of their feet and the palms of their hands were freshly tinted with henna, of a bright orange hue. They were so perfumed that it was enough to make one faint. "An Occidental woman," says Princess Salmé, "would have as much difficulty in realising the amount of perfumes used

during those three days, as an Eastern one of understanding the amount of beer consumed in Berlin during the feast of Pentecost." *Sarari* and *kibibi* left their rooms, running one to the other, to enjoy the surprise and admiration, or the spite, of friend and foe. One can imagine the looks exchanged. Before seven o'clock the whole palace was like "a huge ball room," where it was difficult to force one's way.

Sejjid Saïd went to perform his devotions at the mosque. On his return he allowed his hand to be kissed, and then directed his steps toward the treasure chambers, followed by his favourite daughter, the beautiful Chole, and the giant Djohar, chief of the eunuchs.

Chole, surnamed morning star, was the marvel of Zanzibar, the pearl of the imperial palaces, the apple of her father's eye. Her beauty was unequalled, her temper sweet and gay. The sultan adored her and confided to her the key of the treasure room. So much favour, such peerless grace, could not remain unpunished; innocent Chole was the object of ferocious hatred. An imprudence of her father's proved fatal to her. Sejjid Saïd, wishing to give her a proof of his tenderness, placed a diamond tiara on her head. After his death, Chole perished by poison. But this is anticipating.

All three entered the treasure rooms, followed by many an envious glance. The venerable potentate had taken the trouble to ask each *surie*

and princess what she particularly desired. Chole, incapable of petty vengeance, refreshed his memory, and Djohar wrote down the names on each parcel. Surely a Mahometan is blessed with more patience than a Christian, as he also is endowed with greater discretion and gravity. The slaves intrusted with the care of carrying the presents, often brought them back with audacious messages of refusal. Sejjid Saïd took the rejected parcels and exchanged them for others. "And so each one usually obtained what she desired." Yet, on that day, the sultan had other things to do besides contenting the inmates of his harems. He also made presents to the masculine members of his family; "to all the great Asiatic and African chiefs who happened to be at Zanzibar; to the public functionaries; to the soldiers and their officers; to the sailors and their captains; to the stewards of his forty-five plantations; and finally to all his slaves, the number of which exceeded six or eight thousand. Naturally, the presents were in proportion to the rank of those who received them; the slaves, for example, received common stuffs." Is not all this wonderful? Can one help admiring the thoughtfulness of this patriarch, the intelligence, the order, that provided varied presents for fifteen thousand persons, from the sale of elephants' teeth, spices, copal gum, and the seeds of sesame? "This proves that our father was an excellent business man," adds his daughter with legitimate pride.

From year's end to year's end, his indulgence made life in the harem easy and free enough. After the family breakfast he went down to the great hall on the ground floor, and there gave audience. The windows of the palace immediately showed innumerable women who looked at the men who entered, and watched for "signs visible only to themselves." Masks and shutters are useless when a woman wants to be seen. The following story proves it.

The crowd of men before the palace noticed a young chief of Oman, who stood in an attitude of ecstasy such as painters attribute to martyrs. His hand held a spear, the iron of which pierced his foot, and his upturned face was full of beatitude. The divinity he thus adored was of the earth; it was Chole, looking out of a window; her resplendent beauty had bereft him of his senses. The bystanders had to warn him that he was wounded. It was enough that he had seen and been seen.

Two or three hours were thus spent in making remarks about the outsiders, and that was very interesting. Princess Salmé became acquainted with many German doctors. Their conversation was a bleak desert compared to the "extraordinarily amusing and savoury conversations" at the Bet-il-Sahel windows. Western people imagine that an Eastern beauty loses her time in idleness. Their error comes from not discerning between the noble leisure of an aristocrat and the guilty lazy-

ness of the common herd. There are on earth more interesting and refined occupations than the sordid cares of a German housekeeper. Princess Salmé grows irritated at constantly hearing Berlin and Hamburg dames ask "how in her country people can exist doing nothing?" This question proves that Northern Germany, in spite of its pretensions and hobbies, has lost all real notion of aristocratic life. An Arab lady has slaves who work for her, and who must be beaten when they grow lazy. As to herself, she looks out of the window exchanging sharp reflections with her friends, and she no more calls that "doing nothing" than did Queen Eleanor of Guyenne, or beautiful Laura of Noves, when they presided over their courts of love. The tedious activity of a citizen of Bremen is an estimable thing in its way, but such work does not suit all blood or all souls. God created the European eager for gain, and the negro despicable, so that the Arab might sleep in the shade when he is not fighting.

Prudent mothers feared the harem windows, and advised their daughters not to go near them. They knew that few husbands regarded even the appearance of freedom, with the serene indulgence which old age had given to the wise Sejjid Saïd. They themselves avoided the windows, and spent the day visiting each other or embroidering. The more learned read novels. It would be interesting to know what were these novels, belonging to what period and to what

country, and how much of them the Zanzibar Highnesses understood. Of all this the *Memoirs* tell us nothing.

Toward one o'clock each one retired to a shady nook for rest. The harem ladies stretched themselves in great comfort, and spent the time delightfully, nibbling at fruit and cakes, chatting and sleeping. Then came elaborate dressing, and the *kibibi* went to dine with the sultan. They listened to the barrel organ; but the real pleasures began with the night. Many visitors came; there was more chattering, card parties were organized, sweets offered, negro music listened to. These entertainments were a good deal like ours, except that no one spoke of the weather. Princess Salmé declares that this subject of conversation was new to her when she came to Europe, and she makes great fun of us for the importance we attach to it. Those who did not receive visits made them. The *sarari* and the Highnesses went out calling, accompanied by a resplendent escort.

First came a slave bearing lanterns. One recognised the qualities of the ladies by the number and dimensions of the lanterns. The largest measured two yards in circumference, and showed five cupolas "after the style of a Russian church." A noble lady had six of these carried on long poles by six men, chosen for their great strength. After these, two by two, walked twenty slaves richly clothed, and bearing weapons inlaid with gold and silver. They pushed aside the pedes-

trians, whom etiquette forced to take refuge in the shops, in side streets, or in the houses. The Zanzibar rabble, rude as such crowds are everywhere, often rebelled and were not easily dispersed, except by the much dreaded slaves of the imperial palace. After them walked their mistress, swathed up to the eyes in a sort of long black silk cloak, bordered with gold or with some coloured trimming; this drapery was called a *schele*; the feet were incased in red leather boots much embroidered and high-heeled. An Arab woman of inferior rank accompanied her, and the procession was closed by many female slaves in their most showy accoutrements. The brilliant troop walked with dignity along the narrow and crooked streets until it met a friend's escort; the meeting is always a noisy one; the chatter and exclamations are heard above the clashing of arms; many curious faces show themselves from the doors and windows of the neighbouring houses and from the top of the terraces. The walk to the friend's abode is then resumed with much noise and confusion, the whole population becoming interested in it. "We could have been tracked," say the *Memoirs*, "long after our passage by the strong and heavy perfumes which filled the streets." At midnight each one regained her home with the conviction that the day had been well and usefully employed. "It is thus made clear," says Princess Salmé, "that it is a calumny to accuse Eastern women of doing nothing." Very clear, certainly!

From time to time the peace-loving Sejjid Saïd was teased by a portion of his harem for a holiday on one of his plantations. At last the good man yielded. Women and girls started at daybreak, mounted on big white donkeys and surrounded by crowds of runners, of parasol holders, of eunuchs on horseback, of soldiers, living panoplies, each carrying a lance, a gun, a shield, a sabre, and a dagger. As soon as the town was left behind, the runners whipped up the donkeys, and the whole band started off at a mad pace, unmindful of the shrill calls of the eunuchs. It was a tornado, a cyclone, a general scattering, so that the plantation was reached in little groups, a thing quite against the laws of etiquette. No one knows the meaning of earthly happiness who has not tasted the enchanting life of a harem in the country. The women gave themselves indigestions from morning to night. There were numberless visits. Under the trees there was perfect liberty. Games, laughter, fireworks, and concerts made the time fly. A part of the night was passed out of doors in the sweet, scent-laden air. Groups of women, whose eyes and whose jewels gleamed in the darkness, were formed under the giant trees or in some clearing, where slaves and Hindoos in white garments danced by moonlight. These divine nights are characterised by a very European and literary word, which, written by a *kibibi*, produces a singular effect: "Such evenings," she says, "are most romantic."

As she tells of these marvels, her poor little heart bleeds. Exiled by her own imprudence in a hard, false, rapacious, and hypocritical world, she can find strength to endure the present, only by remembering the past. Against the sorrows that weigh upon her, against the thorns with which civilisation has "abundantly strewn the path of her life," the poor creature has but one means of defending herself: "the sacred memory of her country and of her family." She exclaims with eloquence: "Each day I bask in that sunshine." Now it is time to relate how her great misfortune fell upon her.

IV

SEJJID SAÏD, at long intervals, journeyed to Mascat, so as to put some order in his kingdom of Oman. Salmé, nearly grown up, saw him leave for one of these expeditions. He took with him some of his daughters and two favourite *sarari*. The government of his harems, as well as that of Zanzibar, devolved, according to custom, upon one of his sons, called Chalid, an excellent Mahometan, whose first care was to reëstablish discipline in the feminine herd intrusted to his care. Farewell to indulgence and to weakness! Chalid knew the law, as had been seen during a conflagration at Bet-il-Sahel.

This happened during one of his regencies.

The fire began in the daytime, at an hour when an Arab lady should not be seen outside of her home. The immense population of Bet-il-Sahel, wild with terror, flying from the flames, struggling madly, choked up the doors. The crowd found all the issues closed and guarded by soldiers. Chalid had but one idea when the fire broke out: he respected law too thoroughly to permit his sisters and stepmothers to be seen outside in broad daylight. The fire was extinguished, luckily for them. If it had not, it would have gone hard with the poor creatures. Perish the harem rather than a principle! Chalid was ill-rewarded for his fidelity to the precepts of the Koran. His two daughters became the leaders of the movement for female emancipation in Zanzibar.

The week preceding the departure of the old sultan was a strenuous one for his womenfolk. These ladies took advantage of the opportunity to send news to their families of Oman, and in a harem nothing equals the difficulty of letter-writing, even for those who know how to write. Those who need an amanuensis and who are not allowed to see him, employ a negro as interpreter. It was necessary to teach the words to the negro, who repeated them to the scribe. This scribe was already struggling with about a dozen other letters. The negro fuddled; the scribe likewise fuddled, and the result was not at all what was first intended. The negro's mistress, in despair, would send him for another writer, then again

for a third and a fourth ; but the result was always the same. When the fleet was ready to sail, the only thing left to do was to choose among the different versions that which was least foreign to the author's purpose.

A heavy weariness followed these efforts. Three years passed without bringing back the fleet. It returned at last, carrying a corpse. Sejjid Saïd had died during the homeward voyage. His sons and daughters divided the plantations and the treasures among themselves. The *sarari* without children received enough to live upon, according to the testament, and each went his or her way, leaving the place free for the harem of the new sultan, Madjid.

What now happened does not argue in favour of polygamy, despite all Princess Salmé can say for it. As soon as the head of the family had disappeared, his children turned against each other with the same fury that had characterised their mothers, the *sarari*. Brothers became odious to their brothers, sisters to their sisters. A mania of suspicion and spying took possession of them, even of gentle Salmé. This impious hatred engendered very ugly acts and ill usages without end. The only one who escaped the contagion was Madjid, the successor of Sejjid Saïd. All that he gained by his moderation was a plot, of which one of his sisters was the leading spirit. Princess Salmé allowed herself to become entangled in it, and these two cloistered young girls prepared a

revolution which was to dethrone the sultan in favour of one of his brothers. The conspiracy was discovered, and the pretender besieged in his palace, taken and banished. The sultan pardoned the two women, but he could not give them back the slaves armed against his soldiers, and killed in the fight. They were thereby greatly impoverished; it was a loss of capital, a financial catastrophe. On the other hand, public opinion was against them, and the two sisters were sent to Coventry. There were no more visits, no more joyous entertainments, no more invitations; the very bric-à-brac merchants no longer crossed their threshold. Life became intolerable. Disgusted and repentant, Princess Salmé went into the country. On her return, Herr Ruete made his appearance.

He was young, and he came at the right moment. His house was built against that of the princess. From terrace to terrace, they saw each other, became interested in each other, loved each other. We have said that Herr Ruete represented a Hamburg firm. It was scarcely to be expected that the sultan would look upon this brother-in-law with a favourable eye. The lovers resorted to the classical elopement. A first attempt failed. England most opportunely favoured a second. British politics are full of mysteries. It suited Great Britain that a German merchant should scandalise the nation by marrying a Mahometan princess, daughter of the vener-

ated Sejjid Saïd. English agents were mixed up in the affair: a captain of the royal navy, transformed for the occasion into a Figaro, carried off this brown Rosina by night. She was taken on board, and the vessel at once sailed for Aden, where Princess Salmé, duly baptised and married, became, for the rest of her days, Frau Ruete.

She had no fault to find with her husband, — far from it; but Herr Ruete was crushed by a tramway after three years of matrimony. She remained alone, terrified and dazed by a life too complicated and too difficult for her. Habit keeps us from feeling the weight of civilisation. It cheats us as to the veritable effects of intricate organizations, of ingenious inventions accumulated about us during centuries. We fancy that progress lightens our life and breaks, one by one, the chains with which our ignorance and our simplicity had weighted us at the beginning. The truth is very different. Each new discovery adds to our needs; each new idea augments the worry and the fatigue of our mind; each step forward contributes to the weight of our burden. We have no right to complain of this; the labour is in proportion with the good obtained. But we can easily imagine the terror of a primitive creature for whom our aspirations are a sealed letter, feeling herself suddenly caught among the wheels and clogs of that powerful machine — a civilised nation. Ex-princess Salmé had the impression that she was being crushed. In her suffering she

asked herself whether she had concluded a good bargain in exchanging her semi-barbarous nation for glorious Germany. She balanced the two kinds of life, compared the social arrangements, the material comforts, the two moralities, then compared herself with the ignorant *kibibi* of other days. The result of this meditation we have given little by little, and it amounted practically to this: In Zanzibar, there is happiness because neither the institutions nor the sentiments deceive; in Europe, there are shams everywhere, and one is surrounded by a crowd of despairing beings, who complain that they have been tricked by false promises of justice, virtue, and happiness.

We must take into account, — and this is to her honour, — that she might have attempted to deceive us. She might have painted her youthful companions with conventional colours and have proposed them to our admiration. We should not have believed her, but our judgment might have hesitated. This she did not do. Frau Ruete veiled the unpleasant aspects of her subject like a delicate and refined lady; her *Memoirs* do not once allude to vice, and Heaven knows that vice exists in harems. She has been frank enough as to the rest, to make us consider this boasted Eden as a veritable hell, and she knows perfectly what our opinion is; only she endeavours to persuade us that we are wrong, and that in Zanzibar lies perfect happiness. This little Arab woman is very brave. For instance, she knows that, in Europe,

slavery is condemned. She insinuates that philanthropy has less to do with all this virtuous indignation than politics, which is very possible. However that may be, she takes the defence of slavery, with reasonings that are in no way hypocritical and are all the stronger for that; hers are excellent reasons, practical and frankly egotistical.

Since the Arab does not work, it is necessary that some one should work for him, and who could do this, if not the negro? He is very happy with his Mahometan master, very superior to the Christian slave-holder. He is beaten, that is true, but through his own fault, his grievous fault. Why is he lazy? A negro has no right to the aristocratic privilege of doing nothing, and the only reasoning which he is capable of understanding is the reasoning of the lash. It is necessary to whip him — and after all, what is that to make such a fuss about? Europeans, living in the East, imagine great tragedies because they hear much howling. The truth is that “negroes are cowards who do not know how to endure physical pain quietly.” They make “a horrible noise” for a few blows; foreign consuls interfere, and the true victims are the Arabs, who are being ruined, and who “regret with all their might the happy days when they were free from subversive European ideas.” In reality, the Zanzibar slaves are very happy. The foreign consuls take good care not to speak of the look of happy content on the

slaves' faces when they are not punished, of the kindness with which they are encouraged to increase and multiply, of the touching care taken of the infants, those "perquisites of the master." The consuls and the European merchants also only speak of the evil. Yet they themselves buy yellow and black women by whom they have little ones, and sell off the whole lot when they leave the country. A Mahometan would never be guilty of such a thing.

The sufferings of slaves driven in herds from their land are great, and many die on the road. Frau Ruete understands the pity with which they inspire us; she shares it, says so, and then suddenly amazes the reader by a perfectly new point of view. She asks the good ladies who belong to anti-slavery societies and knit woollen stockings for people who go about quite naked, to reserve a little of their compassion — for whom do you think? I give you a hundred guesses, a thousand . . . for the drivers of those herds! These are honest traders who, perhaps, have put all their fortune in this venture, who share the fatigues of the slaves, are thirsty and weary with them, who are ruined when the negroes die on the way — and of whom no one thinks, except to curse them. A Christian really has no sense of justice, and he has, furthermore, lost all sense of shame about work; it is therefore useless to expect of him an equitable judgment on the slave question. Let slavery, at least, be suppressed little by little,

leaving the Arab leisure to seek for some new expedient. As to the grotesque fancy that the kings of creation could ever themselves be subjected to the law of work, let that be abandoned. For her part, Princess Salmé would never advise her equals to bow their heads to so degrading a law. She has too grievously suffered from it herself: German business men have ruined her, and she has been condemned to a mean and mortifying sort of life.

At one time she thought of returning to her own country, but that she did not dare to do. In the spring of 1875, she had a gleam of hope. She saw by the papers that her brother Sejjid Bargasch, Sultan of Zanzibar, was preparing to visit England. It was for him that she had conspired, sending her best slaves to their death and incurring disgrace for herself; were she to implore his help, he could not turn from her. Then, the English government that, so kindly, had lent a war-ship to further her little romance, could not now turn against her. She hastened to London, and saw that she had not been forgotten. But British diplomacy now found it expedient to efface the remembrance of an incident, painful to the self-love of a friendly power. There was not the slightest necessity to treat Frau Ruete with consideration. She was given somewhat brutally to understand that the English government by no means wished "to annoy a royal guest with unpleasant private affairs." He, how-

ever, promised many fine things for her children, if she would only quietly return to Germany without attempting to see her brother. She believed in his good-will, went back, received nothing, and lost "all faith and confidence in men." Deprived henceforth of hope, reduced to "a situation that the most cruel person would not wish to inflict on his enemy," the poor *kibibi*, born to look vaguely out of the window and to eat sweetmeats, took up her chain with dumb despair. "I was," says she, "more like an automaton than a living being." It was at this time that, for her children, she wrote her *Memoirs*. These poor little creatures were probably destined likewise to suffer, and it was well that they should not imagine that the whole world was ugly and dull, for fear they might become like those impious beings, known in civilised lands as pessimists, who rebel against God and blaspheme his work. Their mother's duty was to speak to them of the warm and generous country of her happy youth, of its good and just inhabitants, and of the happiness which they enjoyed.

When her task was completed she once more took up her pen to relate a last event which had filled her with joy, but the result of which was most lamentable. In 1885 she heard that the German government, acquainted with her ardent desire to revisit her native land, had ordered a ship to take her on board, and give a last joy to a sentimental widow. Naturally, politics were at

the bottom of this kindness. Germany was turning its attention to Eastern Africa, and was glad to show the natives that it possessed a sultan's daughter, while England had none to offer. The minister of foreign affairs sent Princess Salmé to the Zanzibar squadron, making use of her as of an advertisement. The officers exhibited her to the natives, who received her with noisy enthusiasm. The English consul, furious at such tactics, complained to Sejjid Bargasch. The sultan treated the popular enthusiasm with many lashes and succeeded only in augmenting it. Frau Ruete saw neither relatives nor friends; she received not a penny of the sixteen inheritances which she claimed; but she was treated to many hurrahs! and the Germans took her back, half crazed with acclamations and sunshine, her heart overflowing with gratitude toward her Teutonic benefactors.

By Christmas she was at home again, and hastened to add a glowing postscript to her *Memoirs*. Yet, behold! in the midst of her hymn of joy, a bitter feeling reveals itself. In beholding her country with her Christianised eyes, she no longer saw it as perfect; things which, in olden times, she had not even noticed, now shocked her; others excited her indignation, because she was no longer accustomed to them. What is more natural than that an Eastern potentate should attribute to himself property which is to his taste? Sejjid Bargasch acted according to this right, and his sister considers him as a mere robber. What can

be more desirable than to maintain discipline in one's family? Sejjid Bargasch, with his own hand, administered fifty blows to a sister whom he suspected of loving without his permission, and Frau Ruete calls him a brutal tyrant. What more imperious duty than for a worthy disciple of the Prophet to enforce the laws of decency in his harem? Sejjid Bargasch, having discovered his favourite at the window, exchanging signs with a European, lashed her to such good purpose that she died of it. Frau Ruete cries out with horror: "Afterwards he caused prayers to be said on the grave of his victim." No doubt this conduct on the part of the sultan is worthy of praise; having rendered justice, he sought to save the soul.

Frau Ruete, having lost her sense of the Mahometan world, had not acquired that of ours. This is what she understands after her triumphant voyage of 1885: "I had left my native land," she writes, "Arab from head to foot and a good Mahometan. What am I now? A bad Christian, and only half a German."

All this proves and confirms what we already knew: there is incompatibility of nature between us and the Arab. Neither time, nor politics, nor missionaries will ever change this. Whether we accuse the race or the religion, it matters little. Antipathy exists, and will exist throughout future generations, for it cannot disappear. Princess Salmé, during twenty years, puzzled over the fact that she did not love us; she is still seeking to

solve the problem, whereas every page of her *Memoirs* gives us that solution. We are irreconcilable because we attribute different meanings to such expressions as human dignity and moral sense; because our conceptions of the task and destiny of humanity clash too violently; because our watchwords are in direct opposition one to the other. The Arab's watchword is *Inertia*; ours is *Forward*. The two races have nothing in common.

THE DUCHESS OF MAINE

THE Duchess of Maine died not a century and a half ago.¹ Our great-grandfathers may have known her, may have capped verses with her, and danced ballet steps on her private stage at Sceaux. Yet, as we study her life, it seems as though we were separated from it by hundreds of years. Her world differed in every particular from ours. The princes and princesses of her day were singularly unlike those of our time, not only in the opinion of the public, but in their own as well. They were very proud of being what they were; very well satisfied with themselves. The Duchess of Maine is apart even from her peers by the excess of her pride of birth and of her self-complacency. For this reason she deserves to be chosen as an example of a princess who enjoyed a semi-royal state during the eighteenth century. Moreover, we are fully informed as to all that concerns her. She was much in the thought of her contemporaries; there are no *Memoirs* and few letters of the day in which she is not mentioned.

I

ANNE LOUISE BENEDICTE DE BOURBON, born in 1676, was the granddaughter of "Monsieur le

¹ This essay was written in 1890.

Prince, the hero," as it was then the custom to call the Great Condé. Her father, simply Monsieur le Prince, was a very thin little man with eyes of fire which lighted up his face. He had all the wit that a man could possess, much natural valour, and a great desire to distinguish himself, vast learning, exquisite politeness, and infinite charm of manner when he was in society and was forced to control himself. A grain of eccentricity rendered all these precious gifts useless. He was a man full of caprice and passion. He changed his ideas from minute to minute, and all his household was bound to follow his lead. He willed a thing, then willed the reverse; a voyage was decided upon, then countermanded; all were ordered to receive communion, and no one did; it was supposed that supper would be served at Ecouen, and it was eaten in Paris; every day four dinners were prepared in four different towns, and no one knew, in the morning, which would be eaten. It happened once that Monsieur le Prince, fifteen consecutive days, started with his wife for Fontainebleau, and fifteen consecutive times changed his mind before he reached the end of the street. On the other hand, he would put the princess in a coach when she least expected it, and take her travelling without a word of explanation.

His avarice has become a tradition, and yet no man could be more lavish when the fit was on him. He dined off half a chicken, the other half of which was served the next day, but he spent

millions in fancies and gallantries to embellish Chantilly and to dazzle beautiful ladies. When he was in love — and that often happened — he was a theatrical hero and showered gold on the object of his passion. Nothing was too expensive, and he outdid Scapin in the fertility of his imagination. He would disguise himself as a lackey or as a female dealer in cast-off garments. He would hire and fit up all the houses on one side of a street, so as to pierce the walls and thus reach, without being seen, the house which, at that moment, interested him. At home, where he was not amorously inclined, he was insupportable, a fantastic and avaricious tyrant. Saint-Simon affirms that he used to beat his wife. At any rate, he was brutal to her in words and cruelly oppressed her.

We have spoken at some length of Monsieur le Prince, because his daughter Anne Louise was a good deal like him, whereas she in no way resembled her mother. Monsieur le Prince had married a daughter of Edward of Bavaria, Prince Palatine of the Rhine, and of that Anne of Gouzagne-Cleves who played a part in the Fronde. Madame la Princesse was a poor, defenceless creature, small and ugly, somewhat hump-backed and misshapen, with the gentleness and patience of an angel, not clever, but most pious and virtuous. Her husband made of her a sort of puppet; he pulled a string and she came or went, got up or sat down, looked gay or sad, without



DUCHESS DU MAINE
After the portrait by Staal

knowing why; without daring to ask for any explanation.

This small couple had ten children, most of whom died in childhood. Of the five that remained, one alone consented to grow a little; this was Marie Thérèse who became Princess of Conti. All the others remained so tiny, so very tiny, that they seemed a family of pygmies. The Great Condé said that if his family went on dwindling, there would soon be nothing left of it. In point of fact, a little more and the Condé palace might have been mistaken for the kingdom of Lilliput — a dismal Lilliput, governed by an ogre. The terrible Monsieur le Prince was the ogre. He always seemed in search of fresh meat, and his children's one desire was to escape from him. The daughters most ardently desired husbands, all the more that their father seemed in no hurry to provide them with that commodity. The eldest, the one who had consented to grow a little, was already two and twenty when she married her cousin the Prince of Conti. The three younger girls fluttered with hope and fear when they learned that the Duke of Maine thought of them, and that their father desired his alliance.

The bridegroom so eagerly expected was, however, not a very glorious one for the granddaughter of the Great Condé. He was the second of the nine children whom Madame de Montespan had presented to Louis XIV; children hidden in the beginning, by degrees shown at Court, then

recognised, finally allowed in 1680 to bear the name of Bourbon. Their rapid fortune, which promised yet greater advancement, had scandalised France even at a time when all the king did was looked upon as admirable and sacred. Monsieur le Prince chose to shut his eyes to all except the solid advantages which unions with the "legitimated" children could not fail to offer. He had already married his son, Monsieur le Duc, to a sister of the Duke of Maine. When he heard that the duke was seeking for a wife, he offered his daughters.

It is well known that the Duke of Maine had a club-foot, and that his childhood had been sickly. His eldest brother had died at three years of age. He himself was saved by the tender care of Madame de Maintenon, then simple governess in Madame de Montespan's household. Madame de Maintenon loved this child all the more for the trouble he had given her. According to Saint-Simon, she felt for Monsieur du Maine "a nurse's foible." She used to say, speaking of him, "my heart's tenderness." She consulted numberless doctors about him, even going incognito to Antwerp to show her nursling to a celebrated physician. This happened in 1674. The child, four years old, had one leg longer than the other. If we can believe Madame de Caylus, niece of Madame de Maintenon, the Antwerp treatment resulted in making the short leg longer than the other one, so that, in any event, the little

prince must have limped had he walked; but he could not walk. The baths of Barèges at last put him on his feet, but did not prevent the halting. This and his puny appearance made him extraordinarily timid, both physically and mentally.

As a child, he was full of malice, wit, and intelligence. Later he was studious; his mind was active and bright. At seven years of age he was looked upon as a little prodigy, and his compositions and letters were published under the title: *Various Works of a Seven-year-old Author*. This volume has by way of preface an epistle in honour of the king and of Madame de Montespan, composed by Racine. At the death of the great Corneille, Monsieur du Maine — he was then fourteen — would have liked to replace him at the French Academy. The king refused his consent, not that he considered the *Various Works* an insufficient literary title to glory, but that the author seemed to him rather young. As time went on, Monsieur du Maine grew yet fonder of literature. He would have been perfectly happy as a bookworm, had not the accident of his birth condemned him to attempt great and heroic deeds.

He was by no means fitted for such deeds. His timidity remained insurmountable. He was quite incapable of being a great warrior or of reducing an antagonist to silence. The king and Madame de Maintenon, in vain, seized every opportunity of making their favourite shine. They could do nothing against his nature, which had

destined the young prince to pacific occupations; they only succeeded in making him sly. Monsieur du Maine's enemies publicly accused him of hypocrisy. A friend of the family said, in gentler terms, something which smacks of the same judgment: "His heart remained impenetrable; distrust watched at its threshold, and but few sentiments struggled through."¹

His immense wealth made up for many defects. As a consequence of events which it is needless to recall, he had become heir to the Grande Mademoiselle. Apart from his birth, Monsieur du Maine was one of the most brilliant "catches" in France.

When he first thought of marrying, Louis XIV tried to dissuade him. Though this son was very dear to him, he was not blind to his physical defects. Besides, he saw the disadvantages of prolonging bastard branches of the royal house. He said rather brutally to the young prince "that it was not for such as he to seek for heirs." Madame de Maintenon, now all powerful, pleaded for her pupil. "He is one of those," answered Louis XIV, "who ought never to marry." She insisted, carried her point, and looked about her for a princess. The daughters of Monsieur le Prince struck her as really too small. The tallest was about the height of a ten-year-old child, and her three sisters seemed mere toys. Their sister-in-law, the Duchess of Bourbon, had nicknamed them "dolls

¹ Memoirs of Madame de Staal-Delaunay.

of the blood," and this name fitted them admirably. Madame de Maintenon wrote to her friend the Abbess of Fontevrault: "The Duke of Maine wishes to marry, and one does not know whom to give him. The king would prefer a French girl, even if she were not of very high birth, to a foreign princess. . . . The daughters of Monsieur le Prince are mere dwarfs; do you know of any others?"¹

It was quite useless for Madame de Maintenon to look about her, for Monsieur du Maine had made up his mind. The idea of entering the house of Condé was too tempting for him to seek elsewhere. Then came the question of choice.

Of the three unmarried daughters of Monsieur le Prince, the eldest, Mademoiselle de Condé, was pretty and intelligent. A fraction more height caused the duke to prefer the second, Anne Louise. Mademoiselle de Condé was in such despair at having to remain under her father's roof, that she fell into a decline, dragged on for a few years, then died.

The bride elect walked on clouds. She was but fifteen and a half, the bridegroom twenty-two. Louis XIV gave them a royal wedding. Tuesday, March the 18th, 1692, there was a reception called an "appartement" at Trianon. This "appartement" was a great evening entertainment, without dancing; it began at seven o'clock and ended at ten. In one of the drawing-rooms, there was

¹ Letter of September the 27th, 1691.

music, refreshments in another. In the other rooms, tables were prepared for every sort of game. Entire liberty was allowed in these gatherings, which we are apt to think stiff. Etiquette was banished. Each one was free to do what he or she desired, played with no matter whom, gave orders to the lackeys if a table was missing or a chair wanted. The king appeared only for a few minutes, and under the reign of Madame de Maintenon even abstained entirely from showing himself at the "appartements." Long before 1692 he appeared only on great occasions. His presence, this time, was all the more appreciated.

He remained a long time at the Trianon reception, and presided at one of the supper tables. The following day, March the 19th, the wedding party waited on him in his study at Versailles. The procession was then formed and proceeded to the chapel, where the marriage ceremony took place. A banquet followed immediately, then came a grand concert, games, supper, and the conducting of the newly married couple to the nuptial chamber, where the young people were at last left to themselves, after twelve hours of ceremony, of bowing, of compliments.

On Thursday, the 20th, the new duchess put on fine clothes and lay on her bed. In this way, she received the whole court. Friday and the next days were spent in festivities and rejoicings. Madame de Maintenon took fright, seeing



DUC DU MAINE
From an old copper print

how frail seemed the "little doll." On Tuesday the 25th she wrote to Madame de Brinon, an Ursuline nun, who had had a hand in this marriage:

" . . . Now to speak of . . . Madame du Maine, with whom the king is much pleased, as he is with her husband. This is the marriage which you considered so desirable: so did I. May God grant that they be always as content as I now am! They say that she is to spend Holy Week at Montbuisson; give her a good rest. Here she is being half killed with the court fatigues and constraints. She is weighed down with gold and jewels, and her head-dress is heavier than all her little person. Among them they will keep her from growing in height and health. She is prettier without a cap than with all sorts of ornaments. She scarcely eats at all, I fear sleeps but little, and I am terribly afraid that she is over young to be married. I should like to have her at Saint-Cyr, dressed like one of the 'green ribbons'¹ and running merrily in the gardens. There are no austerities comparable to those of society."

The first week was one of enchantment for everybody. Madame de Maintenon rejoiced over the honeymoon of her dear pupil, and expected great things from the new duchess, whom she thought to govern at her will. As to this, she soon saw that she had counted without her host. Scarcely had Madame du Maine understood what court life really

¹ The "green ribbons" were the pupils of a class for young pupils.

was, what the king required of all the women who surrounded him, than she took a great resolution, and determined to revolt against such abominable slavery.

A great court lady was bound to be always in attendance, always ready to be pleased by what pleased the king. She must be hungry and thirsty, warm and cold, according to His Majesty's good pleasure. Ill or well, even with child, or just after child-birth, she must be superbly dressed, low-necked and bare-headed; she must travel in this guise and endure, smilingly, sun, wind, and dust; she must dance, sit up late, sup with hearty appetite, be gay, and look in good health, all this on the days and hours prescribed by the king, and at a moment's notice. The journeys were the greatest trial of all. Louis XIV loved to fill his immense carriage with women in fine clothes. Quantities of provisions were stowed away in it. No matter what might be the season, or the weather, all the windows were open, and the curtains raised, because he liked plenty of air. Scarcely started, he forced the ladies to eat "until they nearly exploded," says Saint-Simon. It lasted the whole day long, and none but the king had a right to leave the coach; at the end of the journey, supper had to be eaten as though nothing had disturbed the appetites. Some of the women came near dying on the road, and nothing but the supernatural strength imparted by monarchical faith kept them alive. Several fainted and thereby

incurred lasting disgrace: it was an unpardonable offence.

Madame du Maine swore that nothing would induce her to submit to such tyranny, and she kept her oath. For fifteen years she had endured the cruel constraint of her father's palace, and she had had enough of it. She made up her mind never to put herself out for any one, and she threw aside etiquette, official evening receptions, moral conversations with Madame de Maintenon, journeys in court dress and luncheons in the king's coach. She did worse still, she freed herself from the long religious ceremonies and pious exercises in fashion since Louis XIV had become austere. August 13, 1693, Madame de Maintenon wrote to Madame de Brinon, this time in a somewhat sour strain: "There is a chapter which I must discuss with you; that of Madame du Maine. You deceived me as to a most important item; that of piety. She has no tendency toward it, and means to do like others. I dare say nothing to a young princess brought up by virtue itself, and I have no wish to make of her a professional devotee, but I confess that I should like to see her more regular in her duties, and I should like her to adopt a kind of life more pleasing to God, to the king, and to the Duke of Maine, who is sensible enough to wish his wife better behaved than some others."

Madame de Maintenon then complained of the duchess's want of submission, and added so as to

take the sting out of her reproaches: "On the other hand, she is such as you represented, pretty, amiable, gay, witty, and, above all, much in love with her husband, who, for his part, is passionately fond of her, and would spoil her rather than cause her the slightest pain. If she escapes from me, I shall know what to expect, and, be persuaded that the king will not, in all his family, find a single member of it who will turn out well."

Madame de Maintenon very soon "knew what to expect." Madame du Maine was already out of her power, and it was through a mere, fleeting illusion, that Madame de Maintenon fancied she could still hold her. This young woman submitted to no one's influence, to her husband's least of all. He was quite dumfounded at the way in which she turned his remonstrances into ridicule. She warned her sisters-in-law not to meddle with her affairs, taking a "bee" as an emblem with these words as motto: "*Piccola si, ma fa pur gravi le ferite.*" ("She is small, but she stings smartly.") As to Monsieur du Maine, she terrorized him, and held him prisoner. He dared neither breathe nor move in his wife's presence. She was so thoroughly convinced of the honour she had done him by this marriage, that the poor young man's timidity grew apace. Then she flew into a passion on the least provocation, and of that he had a mortal terror. He made up his mind never to say her nay, and to obey her in all things. The only one who might have turned her, was the king, whose

glance sufficed to crush all the other princesses. Louis XIV probably feared to compromise his dignity by attacking this impetuous little person. He prudently made his remarks to the Duke of Maine, who answered that he was quite powerless. "Thus," said Madame de Caylus, "as she had become incorrigible, she was left at liberty to do whatsoever she chose." That was all she asked.

The doll turned out to be a little she-devil. No one ever imagined such a thing, on account of the excellent discipline in Monsieur le Prince's household, and all were astonished to discover in this Hop o' my Thumb of a princess, the most enterprising of women, the boldest, the wittiest, the most vivacious that ever existed. And what a temper! "Her nature is impetuous and unequal," wrote Madame de Staal; "she grows angry, she is afflicted, flies into a rage and is appeased twenty times in a quarter of an hour. Often, she shakes off melancholy, for a fit of gaiety during which she is most amiable." She conversed with eloquence, vehemence, and volubility; the only thing to do in her presence was to keep silence; as a matter of fact, she never listened to any one else. She was passionate to the verge of madness, and, above all, she was a little monster of selfishness and a prodigy of vanity. "She believes in herself as she believes in God and Descartes, without discernment and without discussion."

She believed this, because she was herself, and

also because she was persuaded that God chose a particular sort of clay wherewith to fashion princes. They appear to be like other mortals, but that is merely an appearance. They are demigods, and Madame du Maine by a special dispensation of Providence was a little more than a demigoddess. Therefore, she had a right to do whatever she pleased, and she made use of that right. She owed it to herself, on the other hand, to conquer a position worthy of her divinity, and she undertook to push on her halting husband, since he had not the courage to push himself.

By a singular freak of nature, Madame du Maine, with all her pride and haughtiness, was born a comic-opera shepherdess. One is not, with impunity, the daughter of a prince who took the garb of a "*marchande à la toilette*." The little duchess adored finery and conceits, those of the mind, as well as those of her gowns, gallant feasts and small verses. She felt the need of romantic pleasures, a mythological life, a Parnassus of gilt card-board, where, disguised as a nymph, she could reign over choice spirits, decked out as Arcadian shepherds. This brilliant and dangerous heroine was, at times, supremely ridiculous.

We have seen that Madame de Maintenon considered her pretty. For her own part, Madame du Maine was perfectly satisfied with her face. The public was less so, and Madame de Staal, in a malicious paragraph, has noted this difference of

opinion. "Her mirror could not give her the slightest doubt as to the charm of her visage, but she put less faith in the verdict of her own eyes than in the judgment of those who proclaimed that she was beautiful and well proportioned." According to the portraits of the day, the public was right; Madame du Maine was no beauty. In her first youth she is represented with fine eyes, heavy cheeks, a baby face, made heavier still by an immense edifice of hair. It is easy to see how she deceived others with this goody-goody countenance, which gave no hint of the volcano which she really was.

Later, her features took shape and hardened. There is, in the palace of Versailles, a portrait of Madame du Maine on the verge of old age, which is cruelly realistic. It is by Nattier. The duchess has a dwarf's face, massive and without any grace. Her nose is clumsy, her mouth vulgar; she has a double chin and coarse skin. No vestige of the goddess remains. But that was in the future. Just now, we have to do with a tiny person, fresh and graceful, who hides her vast ambition under childish ways.

The nuptial torches were not yet extinguished when already Madame du Maine meditated as to the advantage that she might secure by her unequal marriage. The French court was then a fair field for intrigue. At that time so many things changed, that an ambitious spirit might aspire to almost any position. The old aristo-

cratic society was falling to pieces. The thing was to pick up the fragments and with them build up a pedestal.

II

ACCORDING to appearances, the reign of Louis XIV was the apotheosis of the French aristocracy. One is deceived by the glamour and splendour of the court; by the brilliant jests of its denizens; by their resounding quarrels about questions of etiquette which are important only in very high circles; by the showers of favours and gifts, of purses of gold, of pensions and sinecures, that the king let fall on his courtiers; lastly, by the majestic air which the costumes and the grace of the day gave to the most insignificant viscount, as we see by the portraits and the pictures. When we evoke the gilded galleries and drawing-rooms of the Versailles palace, filled with these resplendent gentlemen, with their voluminous wigs, clothed in silk and velvet, glittering with gold and jewels, who are absolutely sure of their own importance, one is tempted to believe in it likewise and to bow down before them to the very earth.

Those among them, however, who were wise, knew what was hidden beneath all this splendour. Men like the Duke of Chevreuse, or of Beauvilliers, or Saint-Simon, were not deceived by the shimmer of vain honours and embroidered coats. They saw that the high classes were ruined by

stupid luxury, and reduced "for the sake of bread" to unworthy marriages and to still more unworthy speculations. They saw these men useless and idle, kept out of the ministry and public offices, given up to all the vices bred of laziness. They saw the first dignitaries of the kingdom, the peers, humbled on every occasion; the majesty of the royal blood compromised by the privileges granted to the recognised bastards; the public places, even the court offices, snatched by men of letters or magistrates, who treated the nobles as though they were their equals. Colbert, at first, when he wrote to the dukes, called them *Monsieur*, and they replied *Monsieur*; the reverse took place under Louvois. They, in a word, saw about them so radical a change, at their expense, that they were aghast and yet were quite incapable of turning the tide.

Madame du Maine was one of those who had their eyes open. She saw all the perturbation caused by the progress of the middle classes, and she did not regret it; disorder, in the equivocal situation which resulted from her husband's birth, was favourable to her. On the very day of her engagement, her plan was already formed. In life, she had two objects, equally dear to her: one was to get out of it as much enjoyment as possible; the other, to become, wife of a bastard though she was to be, "one of the kingdom's greatest ladies."

It seemed as though the second of these aims

was likely to be the more difficult of the two to obtain. The duchess was not of that opinion. She counted upon the trampling down of barriers, and the all-powerful protection of Madame de Maintenon. It was likely that the timorous nature of Monsieur du Maine would prove an obstacle. The duke was of little use at the hour of battle. On the other hand, he was invaluable in small manœuvres and intrigues, to push his way an inch at a time, noiselessly, so humbly that no one heeded him. Eternally on the watch, he allowed no chance to escape. Now, it was one seat at court, instead of another, the fashion of a cloak, one bow less to make, and all these trifles brought him slowly but surely nearer the longed-for rank. In his way he was ambitious, and his wife reasoned that, by pushing him in, she could get some help out of him. Therefore she had faith in their common future. The important thing to be accomplished at once, was enjoyment; the rest would come of itself all in good time.

Unfortunately, this important thing was not easy to obtain. As to the pleasures of the court, they were not even to be considered. The king, decidedly, was turning virtuous and wished for solemn faces about him. It was enough to make one die of *ennui*. It is true that Madame du Maine could go for amusement to the castle of Clagny, built by Louis XIV, in less austere days, for Madame de Montespan, and given by her to her son. Clagny was a wide, low construction,



NICOLAS DE MALEZIEU
From an old copper print

built in a noble style and surrounded by a great symmetrical garden, ornamented with yews cut in conical shapes. It was then looked upon as a marvel. "It is a splendid castle," said Saint-Simon, "with its fountains, its gardens, its park; on all sides are aqueducts worthy of the Romans; neither Asia nor any ancient power ever offered anything so vast, so complicated, so artistic, so magnificent, so filled with the rarest monuments of every age, of exquisite marbles, of bronzes, of pictures, of statues, nothing so complete." So much splendour did not save Clagny from one radical defect: Clagny was in Versailles, too near the king. Its inhabitants formed a part of the court, they were still satellites.

The little duchess tried Châtenay, a modest country-seat in the environs of Sceaux. Châtenay belonged to Monsieur de Malézieu, ex-tutor of Monsieur du Maine and the perfect model of those cultivated men whom the great in those days attached to their persons so as to have at hand, some one to concoct their witticisms, their society verses, and their love-letters. Malézieu had the reputation of being very learned, and, in Madame du Maine's household, he was looked upon as an oracle. "His decisions," says Madame de Staal, "were as infallible as those of Pythagoras to his disciples; the hottest disputes came to an end if some one exclaimed, '*He said it.*'" He gave the duchess lessons in Latin, in philosophy according to Descartes, in astronomy. For her benefit he

declaimed the tragedies of Sophocles and organised her festivities. He showed a fertile imagination for verse or prose trifles, for the arranging of fireworks and ballets. He was obsequious with the great, disdainful toward the humble, not bad at heart, but of a rather low nature. He was a man both universal and indispensable. He was also untiring. Fontenelle speaks of his "fiery and robust temperament." His portraits show him with a pleasant and open countenance, resplendent with health.

In 1699, when the court was at Fontainebleau, Madame du Maine conferred upon him the honour of staying at his country house. In her character of goddess she revived the golden age. Nothing was thought of but innocence and simplicity, — princely simplicity, of course. "Rustic Life" was led, in the midst of

"Ces plaisirs doux et purs, que la raison désire."¹

There one was shielded from "the tumult and disorder of the passions;" one enjoyed "the beauties of the country;" one played at little games; all day long pretty nothings were said. The bad habits of luxury showed themselves, however, at meals: "The table is abundantly and delicately served and the company gay; music mixes with the talk, and follows the repast. There are flutes, hautboys, violins, spinets, and even trumpets, the sound of which is softened so as better to mingle with that of the other instruments." Those last

¹ Letter of Abbé Genest to Mademoiselle de Scudery.

two lines are delightful; only a born courtier could imagine trumpets that understood their duty of being pastoral and giving the illusion of a reed-pipe. The evenings were enlivened by complicated fireworks. Sometimes these represented "a besieged city," taken by storm, or again, "two great ships that seemed anchored in a field," bombarding a fort which ends by "bursting into the air like a girandole;" or else, "two flaming globes," which open and give one "the image of all that has been taught us about the conflagration of the universe." Such fine doings attracted all the villagers of the neighbourhood, and the festivities became almost too rustic for the pleasure of the guests. Luckily, night threw its veil over faces and costumes too coarse for a royal idyl. Thanks to it, "all seemed beautiful and clean." Monsieur du Maine "rejoiced with great tenderness to see the rabble tasting the fruits of peace."

Châtenay was voted "enchanting." On the 20th of December of that same year (1699), Monsieur du Maine bought the castle of Sceaux which Colbert and his son, Marquess of Seignelay, had made one of the most beautiful and agreeable residences near Paris. Little remains of it nowadays, but the Bièvre still flows through the valley, the hills still show their gentle and intricate curves, the lovely French sky still sheds its tranquil light on the spot that once was Sceaux. Imagination easily places in their setting the ancient castle and gardens, each as old engravings show them to us.

The castle had been built for Colbert by Perreault. It enclosed three sides of a vast, square court. The symmetry was perfect, the decoration severe, the style noble and graceful. Straight avenues, great regularly placed iron gates, out-houses built on a line uniting pavilions, each like the other, geometrical flower beds, well-cut bowers, groves, with trees planted at regular intervals; a majestic assemblage of straight lines and acute angles, of circles, half circles, quarter circles; treasures of sculpture, of paintings, of furniture, scattered in the castle, in the Aurora Pavilion,¹ and in the avenues and shrubberies; a prodigious quantity of running and gushing water, brought by the aqueducts; a fabulous number of fountains, cascades, and canals; an inimitable look of grandeur, of order and harmony; for horizon, one of the prettiest landscapes of the environs of Paris, one of the gentlest, the softest, the most discreet, one of those veritable French scenes which penetrate through the eyes to the heart of those born and bred among them; such was the magnificent and charming dwelling chosen by Madame du Maine to be her Parnassus and her Olympus.

Transported with delight, the little duchess took possession of her new domain, so happily encircled by hills and slopes as to seem a tiny universe,

¹ The celebrated Aurora Pavilion, situated in the Park, contained a great ceiling by Lebrun, the Waking of Aurora and two lesser ones by Delobel.

enclosed, shut in on every side. The Bièvre, with a great loop, embraced this Lilliputian kingdom. Madame du Maine felt here entirely at home, quite a sovereign, between her chosen courtiers, eager to please her, and the peasants of the neighbourhood who depended on the castle. There she somewhat forgot the rest of the world and grew accustomed to mistake the life at Sceaux for the life of humanity. This error was doomed to be fatal to her; Madame du Maine's ideas were unhinged.

She hastened to organise an existence according to her heart, where pleasure became a duty and a labour. She amused herself by day, she amused herself by night, and ordered that all should do likewise. So much the worse for those who did not enjoy such a life. She surrounded herself with paid amusers, bound to be witty at a given moment. Malézieu examined the candidates. He suggested the subjects on which they had to speak, and they were accepted or refused according to his report. She had poets whose duty it was to flatter her, to compare her to Venus, and to call her "Heaven's masterpiece." During dessert, a signal was given, and they tossed back and forth songs in honour of the "Nymph of Sceaux." Abbé Genest preserved a whole volume of these rapid productions.¹ It is diverting reading. Even the embarrassment of the men who found nothing to say was utilised as incense: the ingenious

¹ Les Divertissements de Sceaux (Paris, 1712, Etienne Ganeau).

Malézieu hastened to extemporise some verses like these:

“ Lorsque Minerve nous ordonne,
On a toujours assez d'esprit ;
Si l'on n'en a pas, elle en donne.”

No one had the right to be dull, or useless, or grave. Philosophy did not save one from improvising rhymes, or age from concocting madrigals. No one could free himself from the poetical lotteries,¹ which to-day would put even Academicians to flight. All the letters of the alphabet were thrown into a bag and drawn. The winner of S. owed a sonnet, A. an apotheosis or an aria, O. allowed a choice between an ode or an opera, and so forth. There was no escape, under the penalty of exile from Sceaux. High-born guests bought the verses of some poor devil of a poet; but men like Malézieu, Chaulieu, Fontenelle, and later Madame de Staal, and Voltaire, were not allowed to cheat and were bound to pay the forfeit. Malézieu called Sceaux “the galleys of wits.”

No one had a free hour to be dull in peace. Enigmas and anagrams were in ambush along the passages. Puzzles whizzed at one, like an arrow, in the duchess's circle, given rhymes had to be instantly filled up, and there were verses, gallant or stinging, which had to be answered offhand. There were numberless games where forfeits had

¹ See the *Comédie à la Cour* by Adolphe Jullien.

to be redeemed with roundelays, fables, triolets, or virelays. One received poetical invitations to dinner, anonymous letters, sentimental or sprightly, free couplets, and one was condemned to answer after the same fashion. What a relief one must have experienced, what delightful repose, what healthy enjoyment, when, on leaving Sceaux, one fell upon honest folk who took their soup with simplicity, protected from all logogriphs, acrostics, and songs, where one could warm one's feet without describing this comforting act in verse!

It is needless to say that among so many agreeable nothings some were said which became classic. One evening some one said to Fontenelle: "What is the difference between our hostess and a clock?" — "One tells the hours, the other makes us forget them," answered Fontenelle. It was also at Sceaux that, to redeem a forfeit, Voltaire made this well-known riddle:

" Cinq voyelles, une consonne,
En Français composent mon nom,
Et je porte sur ma personne
De quoi l'écrire sans crayon."

To Madame du Maine was left the honour of guessing *oiseau*.

The little duchess took all this childishness most seriously. She applied herself with all her might and main to compose a letter from the Great Mogul to a lady at Sceaux, or an indecent epistle ad-

dressed to her brother, Monsieur le Duc. She founded the order of the Bee, with the motto already quoted, and in so doing displayed as much solemnity as the King of France may have shown when he instituted the order of the Holy Ghost. The Bee had statutes, officers; an oath, of which this is the formula, was taken without a smile: "I swear, by the bees of Mount Hymettus, fidelity and obedience to the perpetual directress of the order, to wear all my life the model of the Bee, to accomplish, as long as I live, the statutes of the order; and, if I am false to my vows, I consent that, for me, the honey shall be changed to gall, the wax to tallow, the flowers to thistles, and that all bees and wasps shall prick me with their darts."

Never was amusement more laborious, and we are not at the end of the pleasure list. Madame du Maine had a passion for theatricals. She had the patience to learn most of the longest parts in the repertory of her day. The kind mattered little; a princess is sure to be always excellent; and the quality of the plays was a matter of indifference, for, passing between her lips, everything became equally beautiful. She played, therefore, with the same success, tragedy and comedy, comedy ballets, farce, allegory, and pastoral pieces. She went from the part of Athalie to that of Pénélope, in the tragedy of the Abbé Genest, from Céli-mène to Finemouche in the *Tarentole* of Malézieu. Plautus succeeded Quinault on the play-bill, Euripides came after Lamotte.

She gave herself incredible trouble. She condemned herself to take lessons, to rehearse, to try on costumes. During whole months, she led the terrible life of a provincial actress, forced to learn, every day, a new part. She went to Clagny so as to invite the court to a series of performances. The courtiers came in crowds, went into ecstasies, and made fun of her behind her back. "One could not understand," said Saint-Simon, "this folly which consisted in dressing like an actress, of learning and declaiming long parts and making a spectacle of oneself on a stage." Monsieur du Maine felt that his wife was supremely ridiculous, but he "did not dare to interfere, for fear that her head might be completely turned, as he once very clearly told Madame la Princesse in the presence of Madame de Saint-Simon."

Monsieur du Maine, had he been perfectly frank, might have added that he held his peace for fear of scenes. His gentleness did not avert them, and he became more timid after each "outburst," whence the pretty definition of Madame de Caylus: "Monsieur du Maine's marriage put the finishing touch to his unfortunate disposition." He was not even admitted to his wife's entertainments. She sent him away, and, obedient, he shut himself up in a turret, where he spent whole days drawing plans for his gardeners. The Paris song-makers knew all this and did not spare him; but what could he do?

“ De sa femme et de sa fortune
 Esclave soumis et rampant,
 Du Maine ne se livre a l'une
 Que quand de l'autre il est content.

“ Sa femme joue en comédienne,
 Recoit toutes sortes de gens,
 Et sa maison est toujours pleine
 De coquettes et de galants.

“ A Malézieu cette princesse
 Prodigue ses plus doux appas;
 Il lui montre de la tendresse,
 Mais on dit qu'il, ne l'aime pas.”¹

Madame du Maine was scarcely rewarded for all her trouble. She was bored. The harder she worked for amusement's sake, the more bored was she. The nights particularly weighed on her, for she scarcely slept. She often spent them in gambling, and this was the origin of the *Great Nights of Sceaux*. An abbé was the inventor of these nights, and Madame de Staal organised the first.

This witty Staal-Delaunay² was a most unfortunate creature. Nature had made her sensitive and proud. Thanks to her education, she knew her own worth. Fate threw her into a servile situation where pride is a misfortune, and sensitiveness ridiculous. She began by being maid to Madame du Maine, obtained her advancement by dint of intelligence, and could never

¹ Recueil Maurepas (1710).

² Mademoiselle Delaunay became Madame de Staal by her marriage with an officer of the Swiss Guards.

console herself for having been in contact with servants. She was attracted by marquesses and knights, who treated her cavalierly, as an inferior; she was in despair and could not help making other advances. Chained rather than attached to Sceaux, she there grew old and died, without any other consolation than that of having, secretly, written *Memoirs* that avenged her, for in this most agreeable narrative the egotism of the great is shown in all its nakedness.

She was no longer quite a lady's maid, she was not yet anything else, when the Abbé de Vau-
brun conceived the idea of varying by some "diversion" a night that the duchess was to spend at the card table. He imagined an "apparition of some one who should personify Night swathed in her black veil; the apparition was to thank the princess for the preference granted to her over day; the goddess was to have a follower who would sing a fine air on the same subject." The abbé begged Madame de Staal to compose and recite Night's speech. The speech was somewhat flat, and the author got mixed up in her recitation, but the idea pleased. The *Great Nights* were inaugurated.

In their day they made much stir in the world; now, they seem rather insipid. Allegories and comic scenes, mixed with dances and songs, were composed in honour of Madame du Maine. An embassy from Greenland came to offer her the crown, and the chief addressed her thus: "Fame . . . has

instructed us of the virtues, the charms, the tastes, of your Royal Highness. We have heard that you hate the sun. . . . Many affirm that your enmity comes from a discussion as to the nobility, the origin, the beauty, the excellence of your respective lights, etc." . . . Or else learned men came to consult Malézieu as to a star newly discovered, the which star was no other than the duchess, presiding over the *Great Nights*. Or, again, the enchanter Merlin indicated Sceaux to the seekers after treasures, and there they found Madame du Maine. Another time, Venus lamented the loss of her girdle which made her mistress of all hearts, and through Apollo she heard that the girdle had been appropriated by Madame du Maine.¹ Providence has kindly granted to the great ones of this earth the grace to enjoy incense. These fine discourses delighted the duchess by their truthfulness, the public by the splendour of their setting, and morning found the whole castle still on foot. The entertainment ended by a magnificent breakfast, at which the wits were bidden to shine. There was no holiday for them, even after a sleepless night.

The indefatigable little duchess still found time for serious studies. She neglected neither Latin nor astronomy, and to Malézieu she added another professor of philosophy, the handsome, amiable, fascinating, insinuating, and compromising Cardinal of Polignac, author of a long poem,

¹ Adolphe Jullien, *loc. cit.*

since forgotten, and of a witticism justly celebrated. The poem was entitled *l'Anti Lucrèce*, and was in Latin. In it, the cardinal undertook the defence of healthy morality and good theology. The *mot* was pronounced in the gardens of Marly, during a downpour: "It is nothing, Sire," said this flower of all courtiers, "Marly rain wets no one." Madame du Maine greatly admired the *Anti Lucrèce*. She caused its author to explain it to her, and evil tongues wagged with regard to these lessons. But when did not evil tongues wag? Simple-minded folk greatly admired the little duchess. "One can say of her," writes the Duke of Luynes in his *Memoirs*, "that she has a superior and universal mind, strong lungs, and admirable eloquence. She had studied the most abstract sciences; philosophy, physics, astronomy. She could talk on any subject like a well-informed person and in well-chosen language; her voice was loud and strong, and she could converse in the same high tone for three or four hours without fatigue. Novels and light literature likewise greatly interested her."

It was not without cause that she was admired, for the childish pleasures, the little nothings, the foolishness, which seemed to absorb her attention, masked very bold political plots, directed by her with great perseverance. Madame du Maine never forgot that, on the day of her engagement, she had vowed to herself that she would become one of the kingdom's most important personages. She never

for one moment flagged, she never rested after a success, never permitted her husband to rest. The duke could not make it out. Seeing her so frivolous, so determined to ruin herself in fireworks and masquerades, he fancied she had given up more serious matters, and allowed himself a little respite. Triumphantly, one fine day, he brought her a translation, in verse, of that *Anti Lucrèce*, which she so admired. The duchess flew into a rage. It was all very well for her to go into ecstasies over the *Anti Lucrèce* and its gallant author. "You will see," cried she, "that some morning you will wake up member of the French Academy, while Monsieur d'Orléans gets the regency!" The duke was quite abashed.

The duchess was unjust, for her husband, like herself, had not been idle. While she reigned at Sceaux, he was assiduous at Versailles, and followed the king to Trianon, to Marly, to Fontainebleau. He was the good son, the tender son, who, lovingly, contemplated a glorious father, who could not live without seeing him, who gave up his passion for solitude, so as to breathe the same air, who was attentive, thoughtful, devotion itself. Besides, he was truly amiable, and ever willing to amuse the king with some clever anecdote. No less assiduous with regard to Madame de Maintenon, he confided to her his plans and his dreams, and she guided and counselled him, interceding for him. With the help of this faithful ally, Monsieur du Maine's good luck increased day by day.

Not a year went by that did not bring him some privilege, a sinecure for himself or his children, a patent letter bringing him a little nearer the throne. Recognised, he became a peer of the realm; from peer, officially, prince of the blood, enjoying the same honours as the legitimate princes. This was already very fine for a bastard; Monsieur du Maine obtained still more. After the death of the Dukes of Burgundy and Berry, a decree (July, 1714) called to the succession of the crown the Duke of Maine, the Count of Toulouse, his brother, and their descendants. The little lame man touched the crown with the tips of his fingers! And he obtained more, ever more. Louis XIV, carefully schooled, suspected the Duke of Orleans, first prince of the blood, of having poisoned the Dauphin and his brother; and in his will he took from his nephew the principal prerogatives of the regency to transfer them to the Duke of Maine. The latter thus grasped the crown with both hands, for the future Louis XV was so sickly that he was not expected to live.

Such is the position attained by the Duke and Duchess of Maine at the end of 1714. Such is the dignity bestowed upon them by the tenderness of an ex-governess and the weakness of an old man. The duchess was in the seventh heaven. She "triumphed at Sceaux," said Saint-Simon, "and plunged into feasts and rejoicings." Her spouse was divided between content and terror. He reflected perpetually on what his father had said to

him in public, in a loud and angry voice, after signing his will, "You have your wish, but remember that, however great I may make you, after me, you are nothing; it behoves you to profit by what I have done for you — if you can." Remembering these words, Monsieur du Maine trembled. What indeed would become of all this grandeur when Louis XIV had disappeared?

Thus, while joy alone possessed the soul of Madame du Maine, her husband was agitated as much by fear as by hope, and thought less of his happiness than of being forgiven for it.

III

DURING the summer of 1714 the health of Louis XIV began to decline. The different parties which would be rivals at his death had a year wherein to plan their tactics. The situation was at any rate simple enough. The heir was barely out of swaddling clothes, and only two men, the Duke of Orleans and the Duke of Maine, could aspire to govern in his name. The Duke of Orleans was regent by right of birth; he was the natural chief of the high nobility, but he was in deepest disgrace, and kept in absolute inaction. Calumnies were spread abroad, and he was even accused of poisoning the princes, his cousins. At the funeral of the Duke of Burgundy, the rabble tried to massacre him. Monsieur du Maine was

neither respected nor liked, except by some old courtiers, devoted to his father; but, in his favour, he had the King's testament, the King's favour, the King's love. This was much, this was all — while the King lived. What would it be after his death? Would it still be something?

Monsieur and Madame du Maine thought it would be, and that was a great error, the origin of their misfortunes. They knew that, by the loss of the King, their position would be greatly weakened; they did not foresee that it would totter and disappear completely. They fancied that it would be possible for them to grasp the power, and leave merely its shadow to the Duke of Orleans. Their plans were laid in accordance. Madame du Maine directed everything from her castle at Sceaux where, more than ever, pleasures seemed to occupy all her attention. Monsieur du Maine executed her orders with his habitual dexterity. He scarcely left the King, whose bed-chamber singularly resembled, during the last months of his life, that of Regnard's G éront é in the *Légataire Universal*. Monsieur du Maine and Madame de Maintenon were the Crispin and Lisette of the royal puppet.

The plan of Monsieur and Madame du Maine consisted in arousing the passions of all their enemies, in exciting warfare among them, so that, in the noise of this strife, they themselves might be forgotten. Monsieur du Maine revived old quarrels and started new ones. The peers were

at daggers drawn with the Parliament; the remaining nobles with the peers. He, however, seemingly detached from all mundane things, feigned astonishment and ignorance, was very gentle, very humble, and spent much time in the churches. He showed himself at high mass, at vespers, at complines, at prayers. Nowhere was a litany recited, an anthem sung, but Monsieur du Maine was among the faithful, with eyes devoutly fixed on the ground, modest and contrite. Who could have suspected so pious a man?

The little duchess, on her side, did her very best. She alarmed her husband by the audacity of her conceptions; irritated and rendered furious by his objections, she reproached him with his cowardice. Storm succeeded storm. At last, Madame du Maine thought it wise to step upon the stage. She wished to begin by a master stroke and tried to gain the dukes and peers to her cause. She spoke to them, failed, flew into a passion, cried out that "she would set fire to the centre and to the four corners of the kingdom," rather than give up her hope of winning the crown; she went so far that she brought upon her husband a scene from Saint-Simon. "Enjoy," said that terrible man, in a voice worthy of an ogre, "enjoy your power and all you have obtained. But there always comes a time when one repents having gone beyond the mark." Poor Monsieur du Maine grew pale and remained speechless.

Among all these intrigues, the spring of 1715



MADAME DE MAINTENON
From the engraving by P. Giffart

passed. Louis XIV grew weaker and weaker, and his daughter-in-law tormented Monsieur du Maine that he might yet obtain still greater favours; but, seeing the end near at hand, he showed himself nervous and awkward. He allowed several important graces to slip between his fingers.

On the 23d of August, Louis XIV, already dying, sent his beloved son to review the troops in his stead, so as to accustom the soldiers "to look upon him as on himself." Monsieur du Maine appeared in all his glory as the favourite of the day and the dictator of the morrow, smiling, bowing, prancing, beaming, triumphant, when he grew white with anguish at seeing the Duke of Orleans at the head of a regiment. In an instant, by one of those fine instinctive movements of the crowd, which in the twinkling of an eye put things in their rightful places, Monsieur du Maine's brilliant escort left him and hastened to meet the Duke of Orleans. This move was as sudden as it was unpremeditated. It was the protestation of the public conscience, cured of its absurd suspicions, in favour of right and justice. This, Monsieur du Maine did not understand. He only thought that it was one more mortification that had to be swallowed, and he swallowed it. For some time back he had deceived himself strangely. The poor man, frightened at his shadow, chose this moment to be foolhardy.

On the 25th of August, he obtained a codicil from his dying father. On the 26th, Madame du

Maine interrupted her receptions and went to Versailles. It was but time. Louis XIV died on the first of September.

The following day, the 2d, there was a solemn assembly of the Parliament for the opening of the King's will. Monsieur du Maine, who knew its contents and already saw himself the master of France, entered with a radiant air. "He was bursting with joy," said Saint-Simon. He left with a convulsed face, half fainting. The will and codicil had been annulled, as by one voice, in favour of his rival, and the air was filled with the acclamations of the same people who, three years before, had tried to stone the Duke of Orleans. Half king in the morning, Monsieur du Maine in the evening was nothing but a schoolmaster; the supervision of a five-year-old king's education had been left to him.

Needless to say how he was received by his tender wife. The duchess, beside herself with anger and contempt, determined henceforth to trust no one and to act for herself. Soon she showed what she was capable of doing. Monsieur du Maine had lost the supreme power, but he was still prince of the blood, thanks to his father's edicts. The real princes of the blood, and many honest people, could not swallow this. They considered it as an outrage to religion, to morality, to themselves, that the children of a double and public adultery should be placed above all, in a sort of apotheosis. This called for vengeance, and the attack came from

Madame du Maine's own family. Her father, Monsieur le Prince, was dead. Her brother was dead. It was her nephew, Monsieur le Duc, who started the warfare and first spoke of abolishing the edicts in favour of the recognised bastards. On learning of this menace, the little duchess exclaimed proudly, "If they sleep, we shall sleep; if they wake, we shall wake."

They woke. War was declared between the legitimate princes and the royal bastards. Law suits were instituted; the weapons were memoirs, answers, protestations, and requests; Madame du Maine took the direction of the affair, and was indefatigable. She left her beloved valley for the Tuileries, where the regent had installed little Louis XV, and she blossomed out into a sort of lawyer. Day and night she pored over briefs, took notes out of law books, drew up memoirs, accumulated papers, wrote, combined, invented. "The immense volumes piled up on her bed, like mountains, under which her little figure almost disappeared, made her look like Enceladus crushed beneath Mount Etna."¹ She could have given points to Chicaneau; she went even to the Chaldeans for precedents.

All her court had to submit to this legal régime. Her attendant poets were transformed into law clerks. Farewell to Latin verses! Farewell to enigmas and madrigals! Farewell to the Graces and to Apollo! Handsome Polignac, amiable

¹ Staal, Memoirs.

Malézieu, worked under the eyes of the duchess to prove in the jargon of the court room that she was in the right, and that Monsieur du Maine was no longer a bastard since such was the King's good pleasure. They also learned to reason on law, and discuss on questions of competence. During the night it was Madame de Staal's turn, and she would greatly have preferred going to sleep. Installed by her mistress's bedside, she "looked over old chronicles, ancient and modern jurists." There were female discussions as to the prerogatives of Parliaments, and the value of royal testaments, until dizziness put an end to the talk. Then a maid servant was called in, whose duty it was to tell stories until her mistress fell asleep. This woman, almost every night, began with the fate of the *Cockscomb of an Indian Chanticleer*, which one can read to-day in the *Divertissements de Sceaux* and which, very certainly, is fitted to put any one to sleep.

The rumour of Madame du Maine's labour was soon noised about in Paris, and the Tuileries saw a singular procession. The duchess was besieged by old scholars in spectacles, needy adventurers, and equivocal countesses, who came to offer her infallible receipts for the winning of her law suit. One brought historical examples, borrowed from the court of Semiramis. Another promised important revelations, on condition of dining first of all. An ex-monk tried to sell documents. Women of doubtful appearance and fallacious titles asked for

mysterious meetings in order to reveal secrets. Madame du Maine listened to everything, sent everywhere, tried all things.

On the other hand, she neglected no means of increasing her party, and in this she succeeded; but the credit of it went to Monsieur du Maine, that misunderstood husband. His wife saw in him nothing but a craven and took the credit of every triumph. And this was a great error as well as a gross injustice. Monsieur du Maine rendered immense services to the common cause, whereas the duchess jeopardised it constantly by her childishness and her fits of temper.

Monsieur du Maine, among other arts, had mastered that of making malcontents and drawing them to himself. At this period, during the law suit between the princes of the blood and the recognised princes, malcontents were wanting neither at court, in the city, nor in its environs. Many were dissatisfied with the regency, that had not been able to put all things in order by a touch of the wand. The nobles had imagined that, now that they were once more powerful, they could, with a frown, force the arrogant bourgeois, grown to such importance under Louis XIV, to sink once more into nothingness; the "arrogant bourgeois" fought with a will, and for this the nobles held the weak Duke of Orleans responsible. They were divided among themselves; the minor nobles had signed a petition against the privileges of the dukes. The Parliament complained that it was

not consulted. The people, exasperated, saw the money of the treasury lavished on the courtiers. Add to this that the nation was in the midst of the law system, that Alberoni was working to excite dissensions in France for the benefit of the King of Spain, his master, and that Providence had just let loose upon the world the young Voltaire, who had already found the time to get himself exiled for verses "most satirical and very impudent," and to be put in the Bastille for other verses "most insolent."

Such a ferment of discord was most useful to the Duke of Maine. He outdid himself. He cleverly swam between two waters, kept himself out of the way, was caressing and insidious, and secured many partisans in Paris, in the provinces, in the Parliament, among members of the old court, the small and lesser nobles, among the magistrates and men of letters. Barbier writes in his *Memoirs*, "Monsieur du Maine is a very wise prince, and much esteemed." Saint-Simon asserts with sorrow that "all smiled on his plans."

In spite of caresses and intrigues, nothing could counterbalance the hatred of Monsieur le Duc for his aunt, Madame du Maine. It is well known that Monsieur le Duc was a veritable brute, a hideous one-eyed, ferocious being. He led the suit against the bastard princes with his usual violence, and obtained from the council of the regency, July, 1717, a decree which took from them all right to the royal successions and also the quality

of princes of the blood. When, nowadays, we read the papers relating to this great suit, we are struck by the novelty of the language employed by both parties, just after the death of Louis XIV, in speaking of the sovereign power.¹ Royal authority is here represented as a trust and a mandate. There is no more talk of divine right or inviolability. The right of a nation to dispose of itself is recognised, and the monarchy is now no more than a simple civil contract, revocable by the will of the contracting parties. What a revolution in the space of two years!

The decree of 1717 was the prologue of the drama which precipitated Monsieur and Madame du Maine in the abyss. Seeing them vanquished their enemies grew bold. The duchess, incapable of bowing before the storm, imprudently burst into imprecations and menaces. Her violence was the pretext for the second thunderbolt, that of the bed of justice, August the 26th, 1718.

In order to judge of the little duchess's feelings at this second catastrophe, it must be remembered that the bed of justice of the 26th of August was a surprise to all. Nobody in Paris knew anything about it. Madame du Maine had gone to sup and to spend the night at the Arsenal, where she gave herself an entertainment. Monsieur du Maine had accompanied her and had returned only a little before daybreak, to his apartment in the Tuileries, situated on the ground floor. He

¹ See Lemontey, *Histoire de la Regence*.

had just fallen asleep when the upholsterers invaded the throne room, where the ceremony was to take place. It was just above him, but he heard nothing. An officer woke him, saying that some great event was preparing. Monsieur du Maine dressed hastily and went to the little King's room, where soon after the Duke of Orleans arrived. It was about eight o'clock.

"I know," said the regent graciously to Monsieur du Maine, "that since the last edict, you prefer not to take part in public ceremonies. There is to be a bed of justice; you can absent yourself from it, if you choose." "When the King is present, I suffer no annoyance," replied the Duke. "At any rate, at your bed of justice, it is not likely that I shall be mentioned."

"— Perhaps," said the regent, and he left the room.¹

Monsieur du Maine, much upset, went out seeking for news. His unfortunate timidity gave him a wild look, and the countenance of a criminal. He learned that the education of the King was to be taken from him and that the legitimatised princes were to be reduced to their simple rank of peers. In a state of great anguish he went to his wife's apartments; she had been sent for at the Arsenal, and her state of mind was indescribable. She could not understand that Monsieur du Maine should let himself be driven out without resisting. She implored him, she reviled him, she

¹ Manuscript Memoirs of the Duke d'Antin.

had nervous spasms. By her orders, young lackeys clambered up the walls, as high as the windows of the throne room. Hanging by their hands, they peered through the window panes, reporting to the ground floor what was then taking place. Madame du Maine trusted that some one would take her husband's part, that there might be some incident. She screamed and cried when it became evident that the bed of justice had taken place quietly and that she must immediately leave the palace. Two strokes of a pen had sufficed to take from the dearly loved son of the most absolute of monarchs all the favours heaped upon his head during forty years, favours strengthened by all the prudence, all the forethought, all the zeal that the most tender affection could inspire.

Madame du Maine had to be carried from the Tuileries in the most pitiable condition. "She was," said Madame de Staal, "so overcome that she seemed almost deprived of life; she was in a sort of lethargy from which convulsive movements alone could shake her." Two days later, she was taken to Sceaux. Sorrow had well-nigh bereft her of reason. Now, motionless and dumb, her eyes staring, she seemed the very statue of grief. At other times, "yelling with rage" and causing all about her to tremble, she showered on her husband the most outrageous reproaches, throwing at him his birth, his cowardice, their marriage. The poor man "all day long, wept like a calf."¹

¹ Saint-Simon.

Madame du Maine ought to have acknowledged her defeat, given up public affairs, and, once more, taken to card-board crowns. Such was her husband's opinion. But she was obstinate; she was like those brave little terriers that let themselves be killed rather than give up their prey. For some time past, she had been intriguing with Alberoni through Cellamare, Spanish ambassador to Paris. After the catastrophe of August 26th, she became really a conspirator.

Into this new part she carried too many souvenirs of the numerous romances she had read. She devised an amusing plot in which such extraordinary things were done, that the police at once were on the scent. Her headquarters were in a house in rue St. Honoré, hired on purpose. From it, she would go in the middle of the night, driven by a nobleman disguised as coachman, to odd places where she met other conspirators. She would send Madame de Staal at midnight to preside over a council held under the *Pont Royal*. She disguised two of her lackeys as Flemish lords, and these rivals of Mascarille were presented in society under the names of Prince of Listenai and Chevalier de la Roche. As at the time of her law suit, she received crowds of adventurers, of intriguers, and imbeciles who brought plans and offered advice. She kept up a most useless correspondence in invisible ink, and had all sorts of partisans more or less trustworthy, two of whom, at least, were spies in the service of Abbé Dubois.



LOUIS XV.
After the painting by Hyacinthe Rigaud

She forced Polignac and Malézieu, who refused as long as they dared, to conspire with her. She joked gaily as to the time she might spend in prison. Especially she forbade any one to speak of these matters to her very timid spouse. When he appeared, conversation stopped.

It is not our purpose to relate the Cellamare plot, of which Madame du Maine's little intrigue was but an episode. All that is necessary to recall is that Alberoni wished to secure the throne of France for his master, Philip V, in case little Louis XV should die. Alberoni, especially, wished to push aside the Duke of Orleans, who also had claims to the crown, and he had given orders to Cellamare to make friends with all malcontents, so as to overthrow the regent; afterwards, it would be time to see who should take his place. A Spanish army was to land in Brittany to support the conspirators.

Naturally, when she offered her aid, the Duchess of Maine was received with open arms. Cellamare showered praises on her, promised very fine things in the name of his King, and made use of her zeal. Under her high direction two committees of conspirators were placed. One was composed of a certain Abbé Brigault and two lords, the Count of Laval and the Marquess of Pompadour. The other comprised the duchess herself, de Malézieu and de Polignac. These six persons divided the work among themselves and covered many sheets of paper with their writing. These

compositions were submitted to the judgment of all, and each committee despised the productions of the other one. The lords found the "work" of the poets very pale and flat. The poets looked upon the lordly scribbling as meaningless twaddle. Thus were drawn up a manifesto from the King of Spain to France, a petition from the French to the King of Spain, and various other documents, several of which were duly sent to Madrid. When Alberoni received the petition of the French to the King of Spain, he wrote to ask by whom it was to be signed; but he received no answer. These conspirators did not wish to give their names, the lords no more than the poets. In very truth, Madame du Maine's intrigue was but a continuation of the little games of Sceaux.

Meanwhile, Alberoni urged Cellamare to act. He, who had prepared nothing serious, tried to gain time. He learned that a young abbé, named Porto Carrero, was to leave Paris for Madrid; to him he confided a mass of documents, rough sketches for manifestoes, letters, petitions, and other fancies, composed by Madame du Maine, Polignac, Pompadour, Abbé Brigault, Malézieu, and others. Cellamare added a letter for Alberoni with a list of French officers who, according to him, desired to serve Spain. Abbé Dubois, who had his eyes open, judged that the moment had come to get rid of all these clumsy conspirators. Porto Carrero was followed and stopped at Poitiers. His papers were delivered to the regent, Decem-

ber 8, 1718, without awakening any suspicion in Paris. The following day, the 9th, in the afternoon, a gentleman entered Madame de Staal's apartments in the house of rue St. Honoré, saying: "Here is a great piece of news. The palace of the Spanish ambassador is surrounded, and troops have entered it. No one, as yet, knows what it is all about." At the same moment, Madame du Maine, whose drawing-room was full, was told of this event. "All who entered related the news, added some new circumstance, and spoke of nothing else. She did not dare to free herself from her unfortunate visitors, for fear they might notice her terror." Soon it was known that Porto Carrero had been arrested and his papers seized. This time, Madame du Maine and her accomplices "saw themselves plunged in the abyss." The duchess comforted herself with the thought that Abbé Brigault, to whom many papers had been intrusted, had taken flight.

On the tenth more arrests were made. Monsieur de Pompadour was sent to the Bastille. But the abbé was safe, and Madame du Maine began to breathe more easily.

On the twelfth, while she was having a game of *Biribi*, a certain Monsieur de Chatillon, who was the banker, "a man of cold manners, who rarely spoké," said all of a sudden: "Really, there has been an amusing event to-day. An abbé, Bri— Bri—" (he could not find the name) "has been arrested and sent to the Bastille . . ." Those

who knew the name had no wish to help his memory. At last, he continued: "The funniest part of all is that he has confessed everything; there will be some people in a pretty pickle." Then he burst out laughing for the first time in his life.

Madame du Maine, who had no wish to laugh, said: "Yes — a funny story. . . ." "Oh! It is enough to make one die of laughing," he went on. "Just fancy! all those people thought themselves so very safe; and the fellow answers every question, and names every one."¹

It was true. Abbé Brigault was indeed a conspirator for fine ladies. He had travelled without haste, enjoying the journey, still more, the good inns. He had taken over a day to cross Paris on horseback and had slept the first night "at the inn of the Great Saint Jacques in the Faubourg Saint Jacques."² After three days, he was only at Nemours, twenty leagues from Paris. Those sent in search found him easily and brought him back to the Bastille much more quickly than he had gone out. Before he had crossed the threshold, he had divulged everything. Others after him also gave evidence, and the number of the arrests multiplied. From several sources Madame du Maine heard that it would soon be her turn. No one slept in her house; the nights were spent quite gaily, waiting for the musketeers. Monsieur du Maine kept very quiet at Sceaux.

¹ Memoirs of Madame de Staal.

² First declaration of Abbé Brigault.

In spite of watching and putting oneself on the defensive, the musketeers arrived when they were least expected. Monsieur and Madame du Maine were arrested, one at Sceaux, the other in the rue St. Honoré. Their conduct, at this critical juncture, was as different as were their two natures, which then stood fully revealed.

Monsieur du Maine was leaving the chapel when he was most respectfully requested by a lieutenant of the bodyguards to enter a waiting coach. He obeyed, "death painted on his face," but with a submission, a humility, a sort of eagerness, well fitted to excite compassion. He did not allow himself to complain, or to ask anything, even with regard to his wife and children, but he sighed deeply and clasped his hands. He was the living image of misunderstood and persecuted innocence.

He was taken to the Fortress of Doullens, in Picardy, and his attitude remained the same during the whole journey. He sighed and sighed again, gently moaned, wrung his hands, murmured prayers, accompanied by many signs of the cross, saluted with a "dip" all the churches and crosses on the road, and kept that silence which befits the oppressed. At Doullens, his behaviour did not change. He was eternally praying, kneeling, prostrating himself. No one was touched; his contemporaries, rightfully or wrongfully, did not take Monsieur du Maine's piety very seriously, but it helped to pass the time which hung heavily on his hands. He had a few books, but neither paper nor

pens; when he wished for these, he was forced to apply to the officer who mounted guard over him and to show him all he wrote. His only relaxation was to play cards with his valets.

When he was questioned he burst into protestations of innocence and ignorance. What was it all about? What harm had he done? He was profoundly attached to the Duke of Orleans, who some day would acknowledge it, and yet the Duke of Orleans believed the atrocious calumnies of his foes! In very truth, he was most unfortunate!

Facts were shown him, the confessions of the duchess communicated to him. Then he grew angry. This man, gentle thus far, exclaimed in horror and indignation at having such a wife, a woman capable of conspiracy and bold enough to implicate him — him, to whom nothing had ever been confided, for he knew nothing, had guessed nothing; all had been hidden from him, because it was well known that he would never have tolerated such doings. He had often enough forbidden the duchess to see the “cabal makers.” If he had had wind of anything he would at once have revealed it to the Duke of Orleans. What was certain was that, when he recovered his liberty, he would never again see Madame du Maine. Let no one dare to speak to him of her. He conspire against the Duke of Orleans! . . . What an abominable calumny!

He never could be driven from this position. He remained mournful and impenetrable. The truth of the matter has never really been sifted.



PHILIPPE DUC D'ORLÉANS
From an old copper print

It is impossible to tell what Monsieur du Maine knew or what he did not know. It seems certain that he never took an active part in the plot; on the other hand, it is difficult to admit that a man as wide awake as he had never guessed, in his own home, a secret so carelessly hidden. However that may be, it must be admitted in his favour, that he never uttered a word that could in the least compromise others. Monsieur du Maine had all the more merit in this that he was horribly frightened. At the least disturbance in the citadel, his face would become livid; he already saw himself on the scaffold.

Madame du Maine's arrest made more noise. Her high birth gave her the right to be apprehended by a duke, Monsieur d'Ancenis, who presented himself at rue St. Honoré at seven o'clock in the morning before daylight. The duchess had just fallen asleep, after having spent the night writing a memoir in her own defence. She and her women had to be routed out of bed. No man ever had so disagreeable a duty to perform. The little duchess, unlike her husband, did not belong to the tribe of lambs. She received Monsieur d'Ancenis and his compliments very sourly, flew out violently as to the indignity of thus treating a person of her rank, railed against the Duke of Orleans and his government, and refused to make the least haste. She was trying to gain time, trusting that her family would come to her aid, and she resisted, discussed, scolded, chattered,

claiming first one thing, then another. There was a long scene, violent on her side, about a casket containing jewels, worth a million, and which she insisted on taking with her. The Duke of An-cenis, who had his orders, energetically opposed this. She appeared to yield, and the casket was discovered two days later in her luggage.

All this lasted four hours, — four hours of resistance and of outcries. Finally Monsieur d'An-cenis took her by the hand, declaring that he had had enough of it all. He led her to the door, when she had another fit of rage in perceiving two simple hackney coaches. He pretended to force her into such a vehicle! And she was a Condé! Yet, she had to enter the vile coach. During the drive, the comedy changed to tragedy. She took on the airs of a great queen, persecuted and indignant. The duke had confided her to a lieutenant named La Billarderie. Madame du Maine, calling to her aid her theatrical reminiscences, overwhelmed La Billarderie with tirades on her misfortunes, on the hard cushions of the carriage, on the barbarity of her enemies. She mingled very energetic and familiar epithets with the most literary apostrophes, changing the tone of imprecations for that of suppressed sorrow; she pretended illness, appealed to La Billarderie's good heart to drive less rapidly, to rest longer, to obtain a better carriage.

La Billarderie was no monster. He was not, on the other hand, a high personage, and the sup-

plications of a princess moved him greatly. He was full of attentions toward his prisoner, and endeavoured to procure for her all the comforts he could command. He could not, however, escape a scene when, on the third day, he was forced to tell her that she was being taken to the Fortress of Dijon. The duchess was crushed by the blow. It had never occurred to her that she was to be put in a real prison. She fancied that she would be given a beautiful "royal castle," where she would be surrounded by a court and play at the captive as she had played at being a conspirator. The idea of being shut in between four walls, with her women, revolted her; it was sheer treason! The idea of falling into the power of her hated nephew, Monsieur le Duc, convulsed her with fury. She exclaimed, addressing herself to La Billarderie:

"Aux fureurs de Junon Jupiter m'abandonne!"

then, in prose, she stormed against her detested nephew, and poured out against him a thousand amusing invectives — even in her anger she was witty; this completed the conquest of La Billarderie and brought him to her feet. He did his best to console her. He ordered frequent halts, and lingered where she chose. The coach was changed. Yet, in spite of all, Dijon was at last reached, and Madame du Maine with two maids was incarcerated in the citadel.

Later, she liked to say that she had been sub-

jected to all "the horrors of captivity." The regent, however, who was good-natured, softened those horrors. He allowed her to have a lady in waiting, a companion, a doctor, a chaplain, five maids, to go from Dijon to Châlons and from Châlons to a country house, to communicate with the outer world, and, before long, to receive visits. In spite of all this, Madame du Maine sank into deep despair. All her courage left her, and she thought herself the most unfortunate of women. In vain those about her tried to entertain her. She sometimes allowed herself to be persuaded and would even play cards, but with the air of a martyr, saying, in a sad and dolorous voice: "Let the Duke of Orleans judge of my sorrows by my pleasures." She had lost all her insolence; all her pride even. The little duchess, grown affrighted, wept copiously, begged and supplicated. The commander of the Châlons citadel, a "gentle and compassionate soul," wrote, June 30, 1719, to Monsieur le Blanc, secretary of state:

" . . . Then Madame du Maine, falling into a sort of despair and weeping bitterly, swore in the strongest and most sacred terms that she was innocent, saying that evidently she was doomed to die here; that her enemies were waiting for her death in order to accuse her with impunity, but that at her last hour she would instruct her confessor to proclaim to the whole of France that she died innocent of all the charges brought against her, that she would swear to all this on the Host as she

received it, and that several times she had already thought of doing this. I endeavoured to calm her. . . .”

The heroine had disappeared, leaving in her place an old child, in fear of a whipping, and crying because its playthings had been taken away. If our own weaknesses could only make us less severe for those of others, Madame du Maine would have accumulated a full store of indulgence for her timid husband, during the five months of Dijon and the three at Châlons.

Her abbés and court poets whom she had enrolled, much against their will, among her accomplices, did not on their side cut a better figure. The Cardinal of Polignac had been exiled in his abbey of Anchin in Flanders, where his handsome face and his graces were quite lost, and he was consumed with sorrow and fear. He was even more terrified than the Duke of Maine, and he deplored the loss of his *Anti Lucrèce*, seized with the documents of the plot. Abbé Dubois sent him back his manuscript, saw that he had plenty of money, and allowed him to receive what visits he chose. These delicate attentions did not reassure the cardinal, who could not get over his fright. He was furiously angry with the Duchess of Maine for having used her authority to bring him to this pretty pass.

Abbé Brigault continued to reveal all he knew; more still. He betrayed even the valets under pretext that the salvation of his soul required him

to tell the whole truth. Tartuffe would not have disclaimed the letter which he wrote to the wife of one of the conspirators whom he had denounced:

“MADAM: It is with the liveliest sorrow that I write to-day in order to warn you that I have determined to reveal to His Royal Highness all that has come to my knowledge. God is my witness that, had I with my life's blood been able to save Monsieur de Pompadour I would have shed it willingly. But, Madam, you know the claims of religion. . . . Convicted of having been the soul of this unfortunate intrigue, I could only hope to obtain the absolution of my sins by rendering a faithful account of the truth. I was forced either to die in despair or to make the revelations required of me. I remembered the advice which you yourself gave me, and I do not think I could make a mistake in following the mandates of religion.”

The holy man!

Monsieur de Pompadour, a great swaggerer in words, cut a rather mean figure in danger. He made what he was pleased to call an “ingenuous confession.” We have the document under our eyes. Monsieur de Pompadour denounces everybody, and deplores most piteously the bad state of his fortune.

Malézieu had been arrested at Sceaux, at the same time as the Duke of Maine. After an honourable resistance he, like the others, ended by telling everything. One person alone remained

as firm as a rock: Madame de Staal. She was brave and she was quite happy in the Bastille. She had two admirers there; she had never had so much liberty, and she was in no hurry to leave.

The regent wanted to wind up the affair, but he wished to do so with honour and so that no one should accuse him of persecuting the innocent. He promised free pardon to all who would confess their wrongs. Madame du Maine was forced to drink the chalice and make a public confession. Her *Declaration* is very amusing. Her great fear is lest she might be made responsible for the abominable style used by the committee of lords. She trembles that her reputation of superior mind shall be compromised, and she insists upon the sorrow which the twaddle of Monsieur de Pompadour and the "sheer gibberish" of Monsieur de Laval had caused her. On several occasions she protests that she never in the slightest degree "corrected" these writings. Having thus at once cleared the most important point and saved her literary honour, Madame du Maine deigns to remember her husband: "He never knew anything of these intrigues. I hid them from him more than from any other living being, . . . and when Monsieur du Maine entered my room, while I was speaking to my confidants on these matters, we immediately changed the conversation." Unfortunately for Monsieur du Maine, she added while speaking of him, that she would never have said a word to so timid a man, for he would have been capable, in his fright,

of denouncing all. These words were repeated; the *Declaration* of Madame du Maine was read in the council of regency; and the Duke of Orleans considered that he was sufficiently avenged on both husband and wife. The doors of the prisons were opened. Poets and nobles, abbés and valets, each returned to his avocations.

Monsieur de Pompadour, with his pardon, received an alms of 40,000 francs which he pocketed.

Madame du Maine returned to Sceaux (January, 1720) with a great explosion of joy. She soon obtained leave to go to Paris and to make her courtesy to her enemy, the regent. She threw her arms about his neck and kissed him on both cheeks.

Monsieur du Maine took advantage of the circumstances to get rid of his wife. He could not forgive her for the terrors he had endured in prison and he feared her reckless extravagance. He retired to Clagny, refused to see the duchess, and declared that henceforth she must content herself with a pension. She did so well that, six months later, she brought him back to Sceaux, when he took on his yoke once more and endeavoured to put some sort of order in the accounts.

The Cardinal of Polignac did not forgive Madame du Maine. He was much laughed at by the public for his terror of her. The duchess had sent him a copy of her *Declaration*. He feared to throw a glance on that paper, and gave it to a trustworthy man who assured him that he could "read it with-

out danger." He sulked and avoided Sceaux to the end.

The best pleased of all was an old marquess, Monsieur de Bonrepos, who had been forgotten in the Bastille. He was very poor, and was delighted to have board and lodging for nothing. After five years, a lieutenant of police discovered him and wanted to set him free. He protested. At last it was decided that he should be sent to the Invalides. He went, grumbling. He greatly disliked this change in his habits.

Madame de Staal also was set free, and thus ended this terrible conspiracy. For the other intrigues of Alberoni which brought on war between France and Spain, historians should be consulted.

IV

ALL these ugly stories of law suits, of plots, and prisons, are so out of keeping with the ribbons and rattles of this princess Hop o' My Thumb, that it is difficult to take them seriously. They make one think of the tragic interludes introduced by Molière in his *Psyche*. The first of these might well represent the road to Dijon, where the poor little duchess was to be left at the tender mercies of her wicked one-eyed nephew. "The stage is encumbered with horrible rocks, and in the distance is seen a frightful desert. In this desert, Psyche is to be exposed so that the oracle may be fulfilled. . . . *Sorrowful women, afflicted men,*

singing and dancing. . . .” How well this ballet of “*sorrowing women*” and “*afflicted men*” represents the court of Sceaux in time of trouble! Another interlude, that of *Hades*, reminds one of the “frightful” citadel of Châlons, when Madame du Maine thought to die and wept so copiously. At the most tragic moment “sprites *performing acrobatic feats* mingle with the furies.” These sprites never failed to show themselves in the midst of the most dramatic scenes of the little duchess’s life. By their capers they somewhat marred the gravity of the scene.

At last, the nightmare being over, the culprits breathed once more. The lugubrious visions that had haunted their sleep vanished; they no longer fancied that they heard the scaffold being raised, or listened for the steps of the executioners. Their eyes rested with delight on the smiling sky of Sceaux, their souls opened voluptuously to the joys of court verses and innocent games. The lovely valley greeted the return of its sovereign. Smiling Graces peopled once more the bowers, not in crowds or giddily, but little by little, hesitatingly, like prudent divinities, feeling their way, anxious to offend no one. Faithful Malézieu threw in the air his joyous songs. He improvised the following verses on the day of his mistress’s return:

Oui, oui, j’oublie et ma captivité,
Et mes soucis, mes ans et ma colique
Songer convient à soulas et gaieté,
Quand je revois votre face angélique.

All things fell back into the accustomed order, and Madame du Maine found herself exactly the same as before her departure for Versailles, when Louis XIV was dying; only she was five years older.

No one was ever more incorrigible. After this severe lesson, and in spite of her real intelligence, she had not lost one jot of her pride, nor given up a single childish habit, nor learnt anything about the real world, nor unlearnt a word or a gesture of her character of a painted, powdered, be-ribboned shepherdess. She was one of those persons whose stock of ideas is all made in advance, and who refuse to accept self-evident facts, when these are unpleasant. It was said of Madame du Maine "that she never left home; she had never even looked out of the window." The only trace left in her mind by the bed of justice and all that followed was a wholesome fear of the police. She was forever cured of politics. We possess a list of her entertainments during a whole year. No one could find any fault with it.

This list forms a little manuscript volume entitled, *Almanach de l'Année 1712*,¹ and divided into months. It contains certain passages not to be quoted here; the old-time aristocracy did not object to dedicating its jokes to Monsieur Purgon; but what can be culled from the Almanac certainly offered no danger to the state.

January began by a quatrain where Madame du Maine is personified by Venus. Venus was

¹ See the *Comédie à la cour* by Adolphe Jullien.

forty-five years of age; that is a mere detail, since goddesses never grow old.

Vénus, par son aspect attirant nos hommages,
Tient sa cour à Situle et déserte Paphos.
On quittera du Loing les tranquilles rivages
Pour visiter les mers du Lakanostrophos.

This is somewhat pedantic. It is well to warn the reader that the fine name of Lakanostrophos designates a brook that crossed the park of Sceaux.

In May, one reads:

“Full moon, the 11th, at 6 hours and 29 minutes of the evening. Frequent games of ninepins in the Chestnut tree enclosure.

“Last quarter, the 18th, at 9 hours and 24 minutes in the morning. Donkey cavalcade in the forest of Verrières.

“New moon, the 26th, at 5 hours and 8 minutes in the morning. Grand feast in the Small Apartment.”

The pleasures of July are more intellectual:

“Full moon, the 9th, at 8 hours and 47 minutes in the morning. Explanations of Homer, of Sophocles, of Euripides, of Terence, of Virgil, etc., improvised by Master Nicholas.”

Nicholas was Malézieu's nickname.

“Last quarter, the 16th, at 5 hours and 52 minutes in the morning.

“Great discussion on the immortality of the Soul and on Descartes' sentiment with regard to the souls of animals.”



RENÉ DESCARTES
From an engraving by J. Chapman

It is to be noticed that the word "soul" is written with a capital S when men are in question, and that a small one is deemed sufficient for the souls of animals. This inequality marks the official philosophy of the court at Sceaux. To her last breath Madame du Maine remained a faithful disciple of Descartes.

The year 1721 was thus profitably spent from beginning to end, and those which followed were equally well filled. Each season there was some new gallant invention. Madame du Maine surrounded herself with shepherds, whose duty it was to celebrate her charms after a bucolic fashion; there was a "head shepherd," Monsieur de Saint Aulaire, celebrated for his little verses. Monsieur de Saint Aulaire was then nearly ninety years of age, and Sainte-Beuve maliciously remarks that "it made Madame du Maine seem much younger to have chosen so old a shepherd; by his side, she was a mere child." The old gentleman acquitted himself most wittily of his delicate function of chief flatterer. It was for Madame du Maine that he improvised his celebrated quatrain at a ball where she pressed him to unmask:

La divinité qui s'amuse
A me demander mon secret,
Si j'étais Apollon ne serait pas ma Muse;
Elle serait Thétis et le jour finirait.

She had an avowed lover, La Motte, author of *Inès de Castro*, with whom she played the *ingénue*.

She wrote letters to him, intended to delight Paris drawing-rooms, and he answered that he had "worn out" her signature by dint of kissing it. La Motte was blind and crippled. He was but the better suited for his part of lover; he was less compromising than the handsome Polignac, cardinal though he was.

The duchess hid Voltaire, at a time when he had quarrelled with the powers (1746). He was shut up in a distant room, the blinds of which were closed. He lived there two months. During the day he wrote, by the light of candles, *Zadig* and other tales. At nightfall, he mysteriously slipped into the duchess's apartments and read her what he had written. Those were red-letter nights.

She gave numberless comedies, tragedies, operas, farces, and ballets. Voltaire furnished her with many plays, and as at that time whoever received Voltaire received Madame du Châtelet, the learned translator of Newton often took the part of the heroine in those plays. Madame de Staal gaily relates in her letters to Madame du Deffand the visit of this celebrated but somewhat embarrassing couple during the summer of 1747. The duchess was then at the castle of Anet which had fallen to her by inheritance and where, toward the end of her life, she often sojourned.

"(August 15, 1747) Madame du Châtelet and Voltaire, who had announced their arrival for



MARCHIONESS DU CHÂTELET
From an old copper print

to-day, and whose whereabouts nobody knew, arrived yesterday, at about midnight, like two ghosts, with an odour of embalmed bodies which they seemed to have brought from their graves. We had just left the supper table. They were, at all events, famished ghosts. Supper had to be prepared for them, and, besides, beds had to be improvised. The *Concierge*, fast asleep, had to be routed out. Gaya, who had offered his lodgings in case of need, was forced to give them up, and moved with as much haste and displeasure as an army taken by surprise, leaving a part of his baggage in the hands of the enemy. Voltaire was well pleased with his quarters, but this by no means consoled Gaya. As to the lady, she found her bed ill-made; she had to be moved elsewhere to-day. Be it known that she had made that bed herself, for lack of servants."

This letter will rather upset the preconceived ideas of more than one reader. It is not generally known that, when on a visit to princes, one was exposed to the necessity of making one's own bed.

The following day, Madame de Staal added this postscript:

"Our ghosts do not put in an appearance during the day; yesterday they showed themselves at ten o'clock in the evening. I doubt whether we shall see more of them to-day, one of them is so occupied in setting down heroic deeds, and the other in explaining Newton. They neither play nor

drive out, in society they are of no value; their learned writings are of small help to us."

Madame de Staal slandered the "ghosts." They were of some value to society after all, for they were zealously rehearsing Voltaire's *Comte de Boursoufle* for the delectation of their hostess. On the 20th, a new letter was written to Madame du Deffand:

"Yesterday, Madame du Châtelet took possession of her third apartment. She could not stand the one that had been given her; it was noisy, there was smoke without fire (this, it seems to me, might pass for her emblem). It is not at night, she told me, that the noise disturbs her; but in the daytime during her work, it puts her ideas to flight. Just now she is reviewing her *principles*; this is a yearly exercise with her; otherwise, they might escape her, and perhaps fly away so far that she would be left without a single one. I shrewdly suspect that her head is their prison, and not at all their birth-place. They have to be severely watched. She prefers the attitude which this occupation bestows on her to any amusement, and insists on showing herself only after nightfall. Voltaire has composed gallant verses which make up somewhat for the bad effect produced by their peculiar conduct."

The *Comte de Boursoufle* was acted on the 25th of August. Madame du Châtelet took the part of Mademoiselle de la Cochonnière. Physically she was not suited to it. Mademoiselle de la Cochonnière should be "short and stout." Madame du Châtelet was a tall, thin woman, flat-breasted, and

with a long, bony face. She achieved, however, a very brilliant success. Madame de Staal herself confesses as much: "Mademoiselle de la Cochonnière entered so admirably into the extravagance of the part that she gave me a great deal of pleasure."

The ghosts left the day after the representation, and Madame du Deffand was invited to fill their place. Her friend writes to her on that occasion:

"(August 30th). A good apartment is reserved for you; it is the one of which Madame du Châtelet, after a careful study of the house, took possession. There will be fewer pieces of furniture than she put in it; for she had devastated her former lodgings to furnish this one. Six or seven tables were discovered in her room; she requires them of different sizes, some immense, on which to spread her papers, others solid for her toilet articles, light ones for her ribbons and her jewels. All this care did not preserve her from the same accident which happened to Philip II, who had spent the whole night writing despatches, and then had them ruined by the upsetting of a bottle of ink. Our fine lady did not imitate the patience of that prince; but it is true that he had only busied himself with state affairs, while what the ink effaced in her case was algebra, much more difficult to reconstruct.

"The day following their departure, I received a four-page letter and with it a note, announcing a great disaster. Monsieur de Voltaire had lost his play, forgotten to claim the different parts, and mislaid the prologue. I am ordered to gather

all this together, and to shut it up *behind a hundred locks*. I should have considered a latch sufficient to keep such a treasure, but the orders have been well and duly executed."

It was no sinecure to entertain so great a man and his brilliant companion. Three months later they returned, to Sceaux this time, and their visit was the signal for extraordinary and most inexplicable disorder. Operas were sung. Madame du Châtelet, who possessed a "divine voice," appeared twice in *Issé*, a great heroic opera by La Motte and Destouches. At the first representation, there were so many guests that Madame du Maine was exasperated. At the second, an intolerable crowd filled the house. The duchess suppressed the opera and declared that only plays, which attracted fewer people, should be given. On the 15th of December a new piece by Voltaire, *La Prude*, adapted from the English,¹ was acted. "The crush was so excessive," relates the Duke of Luynes in his *Memoirs*, "that Madame du Maine was disgusted. She insisted on seeing all the tickets which had been sent."

That is what she ought to have done at first. The mystery was soon cleared. Voltaire and Madame du Châtelet had sent out at least five hundred invitations thus worded:

"New actors will represent, Friday, December 15th, on the stage of Sceaux, a new comedy of five acts in verse.

¹ From the Plain Dealer by Wycherly.



VOLTAIRE

From an engraving by James Mollison of the picture by Largillier in the
Institute of France

“Come who will, quite without ceremony; at six o'clock sharp. . . . After six o'clock the doors will open for no one. . . .”

The public rushed to the entertainment, and “without any ceremony” invaded the castle. Madame du Maine was very angry, and her guests left earlier than had been expected.

It was, however, beyond the power of Voltaire to remain on bad terms with a princess who kept people from being sent to the Bastille. On her part, the little duchess regretted her great man, the star of her circle. Voltaire made up his mind to take her as his literary *Ægeria*; such was the price of their reconciliation. She gave him the plot of a tragedy and corrected the play. He thanked her by calling her, in his letters, “my protectress . . . my genius . . . soul of Cornelia . . . soul of the Great Condé!” He wrote to her, November, 1794:

“My Protectress: . . .

“Your protégé must tell Your Highness that I have followed the advice with which you honoured me. You can scarcely imagine how much Cicero and Cæsar have gained by it. Those gentlemen would have agreed with you, had they lived at the same time. I have just read ¹ *Rome Sauvée*. Those parts which Your Serene Highness embellished produced a stupendous effect.”

The compliment was a flattering one. The next

¹ To the actors. *Rome Sauvée* was the tragedy due to Madame du Maine's collaboration.

day, Voltaire went further. *Rome Sauvée* had become "your tragedy."

"We rehearsed to-day the play remodelled, and before whom, Madam, do you think? Before Franciscans, Jesuits, fathers from the oratory, academicians, magistrates, who knew their *Catilinaires* by heart! You can scarcely imagine what success *your tragedy* obtained before that grave assembly. . . . Soul of Cornelia! we shall bring the Roman senate to the feet of Your Highness, on Monday."

Another letter, to d'Argental this time, explains with great frankness his enthusiasm for Madame du Maine: "I need her protection and cannot neglect her."

Rome Sauvée was given at Sceaux June 21, 1750. Peace was signed. But Ægeria had not forgotten the past and had taken her precautions, as we can see by this note from Voltaire to the Marchioness of Malause, written at Sceaux itself, from one room to the other:

"Amiable Colette, beg Her Serene Highness to accept our homage and our desire to please her. There will not be in all more than fifty persons, besides the usual guests of Sceaux."

Voltaire took the part of Cicero, in which he triumphed. The celebrated actor Lekain, who represented Lentulus Sura, says in his *Memoirs*: "It was life itself, Cicero in person thundering from the tribune. . . ." Madame du Maine was charmed with her actor.

Years flowed on, and Madame du Maine continued to divert herself. Between two games of ninepins she had found time to become very religious, and watched over the souls of her guests, but even piety at Sceaux took on a gallant air. One day when she was pressing old St. Aulaire to go to confession he answered:

“ Ma bergère, j’ai beau chercher,
Je n’ai rien sur ma conscience.
De grâce, faites-moi pécher :
Après, je ferai pénitence.”

The little duchess retorted with a well-known quatrain, which, however, is so very free that it cannot be repeated here.

From time to time, death indiscreetly reminded the “nymph of Sceaux” that it was on the watch by taking off one of her courtiers. Malézieu was among the first to disappear. Then came the turn of the Duke of Maine, who died of a cancer on the face (1736); his wife had taken excellent care of him. St. Aulaire followed him at the age of ninety-nine, according to some, at a hundred according to others. Madame d’Estrées, Madame du Maine’s great friend, died in 1747, Madame de Staal three years later.

These departures for the other world were troublesome. They disturbed the rehearsals, broke up the donkey rides. But it was all quickly over; the dead were speedily done with. “This afternoon,” wrote Madame de Staal, “we are to

bury Madame d'Estrées; then the curtain will fall, and she will be forgotten." A few days later she adds, "It must be confessed that we go a little beyond human nature. Already I see my own funeral pomp; if the sorrow is greater, the ornaments will be in proportion." After all, why should Madame du Maine have taken these things to heart? The dead could no longer amuse her, they were quite useless, and she was eager to get rid of their "funeral pomp" as quickly as possible. She said with ingenuousness that she was "unfortunate enough not to be able to get along without certain people for whom she really cared nothing." Thus is explained the fact that she was observed "to learn with indifference of the death of those who, when they had been a quarter of an hour late for cards, or for a drive, had caused her to shed tears."

At seventy-seven, Madame du Maine continued to divert herself. Voltaire, from Berlin, December 18th, 1752, wrote to one of the wits at Sceaux: "Put me, as ever, at Madame du Maine's feet. She is a predestined soul and will love the theatre up to her last moments, and, if she falls ill, I advise you instead of Extreme Unction to administer a fine comedy. One dies as one has lived; I die, I who write these words, scribbling more verses than La Motte Houdard."

She remained violent and capricious, which, as time went on, grew less and less becoming; a young princess may stamp her foot and cry for

the moon not without grace; an old female dwarf in a rage is ugly to look upon and amuses no one. She remained also tyrannical and unreasonable; she reduced her guests to so hard a slavery that Destouches one day made up his mind to run away from Sceaux as though it had been the Bastille. She still had sleepless nights during which she had to be amused by reading aloud or the telling of stories. She continued to put on "a prodigious quantity of rouge,"¹ and would remain two hours before her mirror during which time she insisted on having a circle of admirers about her. She was very fond of good things to eat, but as she found it better for her health to eat alone, it was only at her table that delicate viands were served; she had grown thrifty with regard to the guests' table. She still kept her caustic and vivacious wit, and was to the end eloquent and original. She lived for pleasure alone. She was delighted with herself and persuaded that, if she was not a goddess, she was next door to one.

This goddess, like a simple mortal, took cold, and from this cold resulted a little accident, January the 23d, 1753. We leave the Duke of Luynes to describe it: "She was eternally complaining, now of a cold, now of her eyes, and yet, in reality, enjoyed very good health, which her physical conformation scarcely warranted. During a year or two, however, she had been often

¹ Memoirs of Luynes.

indisposed, and at the end died of a cold which she could not spit up." To die of a cold which she could not "spit up" was not very poetical for a nymph; but one dies as one can. Madame du Maine left two sons, the Prince of Dombes and the Count of Eu, who made but little noise in the world.

Thus ended this strange little creature. In the midst of her extravagances, of her peculiarities, of her unequal moods and tempers, one thing, at least, remained in her immovable and firmly fixed, her faith in the divinity of her rank. This is what explains her superb indifference to others, which, had she not been so very high a lady, we should call her egotism. And that, also, is what makes her, as a study, so curious and so interesting, just as, in a museum, the skeletons of an obsolete race of animals interest us. It has been said, and about her, too, "that princes are, morally, what monsters are, physically; in them one sees, spread out, most of the vices hidden in other men." In the time when she lived, nothing was more true. In our day, we can scarcely imagine what princes and princesses were two centuries ago — beings set apart, marked on the forehead with a divine seal, freed by their birthright from all regard for other men, and subjected to special moral laws, made for them and for them only. Modern princes and princesses are of another type. They constantly forget that they are not made on the same pattern as the rest of us, and thus they make us forget it

too. How can we believe in them, if they do not believe in themselves?

Respect for royal domains has disappeared with the respect for royal persons. Sceaux, confiscated by the Convention, was sold in 1798 to a man of low birth, who demolished the castle and the cascade, cut down the trees, and transformed the park into fields. He left nothing standing but the Aurora Pavilion and a fragment of the park, which was bought from him and still exists, with its trimmed bowers, its lawns, and broken columns. This is where the menagerie used to be. Public balls are now given here, and, on Sundays, Parisian grisettes dance in the avenues where Madame du Maine played with her small monkeys as she was making out a puzzle. Chance sometimes shows a humourous sense of fitness. This pretty nook of the menagerie has not changed its character. It has remained a place of trifles and capers, as in the days of the little duchess.

THE MARGRAVINE OF BAYREUTH

THE Margravine of Bayreuth, sister to the great Frederick, left *Memoirs* written in French, which were printed first in Paris, in 1810, and often republished in a German translation. About thirty years ago, her correspondence with her brother was given to the public. Sainte-Beuve seized the opportunity of drawing the portrait of this amiable princess. It is a singular fact, that he studied her only through her correspondence commenced when she was over twenty, and which at the beginning, at least, is not particularly interesting. Not without some show of irritation, he refused to speak of the *Memoirs*, which picture the curiously interesting childhood and early youth of the Margravine of Bayreuth and of her brother Frederick II.

The truth was that Sainte-Beuve had just found his political road to Damascus. He was sincerely shocked by the levity with which this king's daughter treated the courts of her day; he even took her severely to task for her ill-sounding sarcasms and for furnishing weapons to the enemies of "an order of things which was her own and which she ought not to wish to debase or to see destroyed."

Sainte-Beuve's critical instinct, usually so keen,

was here at fault through the ardour of his newly hatched, and consequently intolerant, reverence for the great. This work, in which he sees nothing but a tissue of frivolous sarcasms directed against princes, the "error" of a clever woman, gives us, on the contrary, a vivid picture of German manners at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and therefore is most precious to history. If the society described by the Margravine is coarse, the more shocking is the contrast between this coarseness and what is known of the flowering of German civilisation a hundred years earlier, and the better one understands the disastrous extent of the Thirty Years' War, which had plunged Germany backward into barbarism. The Margravine was born just when the convalescent nation was once more setting forth on the road toward those high destinies which we have witnessed, and so her *Memoirs* show us, at the same time, the triumph of savage brutality under her father, Frederick William I, and the latent workings which prepared for the reign of the great Frederick. The princess is pitiless toward the world in which she grew up, and yet one feels in these artless pages the truth of what Frederick II said about his father: "It is by his care that I have been enabled to do what I have done."

It will not perhaps be without interest to examine the society which the Margravine has graciously presented to posterity with such boundless frankness, and to learn what was the life of a

king's daughter in the good old kingly times, when princes were envied by all.

I

FREDERICK WILLIAM I, second king of Prussia, and his queen Sophia Dorothea, daughter of George I, King of England and Elector of Hanover, had four sons and six daughters, without counting the children who died in infancy. Princess Wilhelmina, who in due time married the Margrave of Bayreuth, and was the author of the *Memoirs*, was the eldest of the surviving children. She came into the world at Potsdam, July 3, 1709, and was but ill received because a prince had been expected. Her first years were sad, her youth most unhappy. Her father was a terrible man; her mother was very weak, unable to defend either herself or those belonging to her.

Queen Sophia Dorothea was naturally kind and generous. Married to Frederick William, however, his violent outbursts alarmed her, and fear made her peevish and unreliable. She was clever enough, and yet made endless silly mistakes; she was devoted to the least agreeable of husbands, but spent her life in irritating him. She loved her children, and yet when Frederick was being persecuted, all she could find to do for him was, very regularly, to send him twelve new shirts every year. Her maternal grandmother was the beautiful Eleanore



THE MARGRAVINE OF BAYREUTH
From a steel engraving

of Olbreuse, in whom the royal house of Prussia has as an ancestress, the daughter of a simple nobleman of Poitou. In spite of this blemish the Queen concentrated in her person all the haughtiness of the Hanoverian House. Her head was turned by her greatness and she threw herself in her pride of rank, into a sea of chimerical adventures, which often proved too deep for her. She would then become vindictive, for this same pride of blood never allowed her to forgive those who had offended her. A word from her husband would make her crouch and quake, but she avenged herself by tyrannizing over others. Had she been happy she would have flowered into goodness and charm. Oppressed and crushed, she added to the gloom of the palace, and one could only pity her. She was portly and fair-skinned, with well-cut, rather large features, majestic in deportment, and appearing to great advantage in her part as queen.

Of Frederick William we have very striking portraits. Stout and heavy, the lower part of the face massive, with round, staring, unquiet eyes, he looks the brute that he was, the obstinate and tyrannical brute that well-nigh strangled his son, Frederick II, with a curtain cord. His expression shows him capable of those fits of anger verging on madness which could be heard from afar, and caused the people to crowd about his windows. He always carried a stick, and in his perpetual outbursts of rage, he struck wildly right and left, adding kicks and cuffs to the beat-

ing. He would run after people, and drag them by the hair, so as to flog them more easily, or else, if gout kept him in his chair, he would throw anything that he could reach at their heads. It was necessary to watch him carefully so as to dodge in time. Jealous, avaricious, drunken, full of manias, and hating books and the arts with a sort of passion, he made his wife and children pitifully unhappy. Yet, he was not a bad king. His manias answered exactly to the wants of the country. They were a boon after the tribulations through which Germany had passed and which had made it go backward several centuries.

In the pictures of the old German school, examine the towns with their pointed gables, their great high roofs with rows of small windows one above the other, their little airy turrets placed at the edge of the roofs like swallows' nests, their heavy, well kept ramparts, which might serve as a background even to biblical scenes. This is ancient Germany, flourishing, industrious, softened by long peace, having borrowed from the Reformation much vivacity, and curiosity of mind, and the love of liberty. Order and activity reigned in the streets, well-being and comfort in the houses. German artisans were celebrated and sent their handicraft "even to the most distant lands, situated at the four winds of the world."¹ The prosperous middle class directed the affairs of the towns with great wisdom. Nuremberg had three

¹ Sebastian Munster, *Cosmographia Universalis* (1544).

hundred cannons on her fortifications, wheat for two years in her stores, a treasure of fifteen millions of florins, a greater sum than Frederick William, King of Prussia, left after twenty-seven years of stringent economy. Augsbourg was still richer, more refined as to manners, with a more lively taste for luxury and artistic objects; the gardens of her bankers could rival those of the King of France, and their houses were full of treasures. The country was well cultivated. The mines have perhaps never yielded so much; according to Ranke, the quantity of silver thrown upon the market by Germany, during the sixteenth century, almost equals the value of the American gold.¹ The traffic in men which provided foreign countries with troopers, rid the land of adventurous and turbulent spirits. The institution of mercenary armies secured the quiet of the country till the day came when that same institution brought ruin with it.

The Thirty Years' War swept over this happy land and left it waste, depopulated, crushed, a terrifying proof of the ease with which a great civilisation, even in modern times, can be annihilated. The mercenary troops of Wallenstein and Tilly left a desert behind them; the plague and famine completed their work. There was a de-

¹ Ranke, *Zur Deutschen Geschichte*. It must be remembered that Ranke always maintained that the revenues Spain got from America, during the sixteenth century, were far less considerable than is usually supposed. (See his *Spain Under Charles V, Philip II, and Philip III.*)

struction of towns, "the like of which had not been seen since Jerusalem," in some five provinces, four villages only remained standing. Thirty thousand people were killed at a time, vast plains were left uncultivated and became forests once more. When peace returned, Berlin had only six thousand inhabitants, huddled in houses roofed with wood and straw.

In Bohemia, the country was a desert. "Armed men who ventured to cross it sometimes met a group of peasants around a fire, preparing their supper, human remains in the pot."¹ Fearful moral ruin accompanied material ruin: "We had forgotten how to laugh," said a contemporary. The people became as ferocious as the soldiery; the middle classes seemed reduced to idiocy by excess of misfortune; the nobility, abominably ignorant, resorted to drunkenness. In all classes, coarseness and unheard of harshness reigned, and when learning revived it took on the character of prodigious pedantry. The dregs of the German nature, stirred during a whole generation, had come to the surface. The country's wounds were so deep that thirty years ago one questioned whether they were quite healed, and whether the Germany of the nineteenth century was not, in some respect, still inferior to that of the sixteenth.

It was in the midst of this barbarism and misery

¹ Hormayr, *Taschenbuch für die Vaterländische Geschichte*, quoted by Michelet.

that Prussia came upon the world's stage. Frederick William was not one to restore it to politeness and gentleness, but he was the very man to prepare it for the great part it was to play under his successor. His avarice brought order in the kitchen as well as in public affairs. He fashioned Prussian administration on his own pattern; hard, methodical, precise. His journeys through the provinces, cane in hand, accustomed public officers to a discipline, the tradition of which still exists. It is true that, beyond his frontiers, he did not know how to make himself respected. Diplomacy was not among his natural accomplishments. He was abusive with ambassadors as with the rest of humanity. One day he lifted his foot to kick an English envoy, and a negotiation fell to the ground in consequence. Nothing could keep him from giving a piece of his mind, no matter to whom, or under what circumstances, and always getting into some kind of petty broil. The other sovereigns knew him well and in no way trusted him.

His great pride was his army. He originated the idea that a Prussian must be born with a helmet on his head, and he made the nation believe it. One of the Margravine of Bayreuth's first reminiscences was that of seeing the court and the town at the death of her grandfather, Frederick I, suddenly in uniform. "All was changed at Berlin," she writes. "Those who wished to curry favour with the new king put on helmets and breastplates, everything became military." At

four o'clock in the morning, Frederick William was in the square before the palace commanding the manœuvres. The Prussian army, in his hands, became the perfect machine which has served as model up to our days. He, himself, for very love of his army, was a peaceable king. He would have hated to send his regiments to the war for fear of spoiling them. There was one in particular, composed of men well above six feet in height, the joy of his eyes, his pride, his love, which he could never bear to have out of his sight. For this great regiment, Frederick William showed himself prodigal and patient. In order to secure all the giants in Germany, and to see them resplendent at the parade, he became extravagant and endured insults. He sent out of the country to enroll giants at high prices; if they refused he had them carried off by force, at the risk of serious complications with his brother sovereigns; was it not all for the great regiment, that regiment for which he was ready to make any sacrifice, except that of giving up a fine soldier? He made up for all this self-control in his treatment of his family.

II

LITTLE Princess Wilhelmina was bright and intelligent. Nature made her gay, and trouble never entirely saddened her. At the first gleam of sunshine, her good temper rose anew and she

was once more herself, mischievous, fond of dancing, and bold at playing pranks. When she was six years old she found that her father intended to plight her to a prince of fifteen, whom she despised. She discovered that this suitor was a coward and she took delight in frightening him out of his wits. When her governess found her out she punished her severely, and the governess had a heavy hand. In the old days princes were brought up roughly, and Frederick William was not likely to introduce a gentler régime. His principle was that "the passions of youth needed to be calmed,"¹ and Mademoiselle Léti, the governess, "calmed" the little princess to such good purpose that the Margravine later wondered that she had not broken her arms and legs, rolling down the staircase.

Léti, however, was dismissed for fear her pupil might be lamed for life. Princess Wilhelmina then had to get along with her father, who undertook to break her in, as well as her brother and playfellow, Frederick. Thanks to their father, the fear of blows remained one of their liveliest impressions of childhood. Frederick especially often came out of the paternal hands with his face covered with blood and a handful of hair missing. The Margravine relates their emotions when Frederick William surprised them with the Queen, in spite of the many stratagems which were employed to get them out of the way at the first alarm.

¹ Memoirs de Catt.

Once, unexpectedly, the King entered. Prince Frederick had barely time to shut himself up in a closet, his sister to creep under the Queen's bedstead, which was so low that she had the greatest trouble in squeezing under it. The King threw himself on the bed and fell asleep. The children could hardly breathe and did not dare to move. It is quite the story of Hop-o'-My-Thumb and his brothers hidden under the ogre's bed. Princess Wilhelmina was then twenty, her brother seventeen. The Prussian ogre, after two hours, left the room without having smelt fresh meat, but such adventures are not easily forgotten. The Queen did not dare to say a word. The King had taught her to hold her peace before him. "It is necessary," said he, "to keep a woman in fear of the stick; otherwise, she will dance on her husband's head."

Another lively reminiscence of their youth to Princess Wilhelmina and her brother, was that of hunger, that of having been famished not once, nor twice, nor twenty times, but during weeks and months. Frederick William ordered all household details, carved and served himself, at table. Every day he invited a quantity of generals to dinner, all in uniform, stiff and smart. He used to condescend to get tipsy with them, but outside of drink these dinners were nothing more than a course of lessons in frugality. The allowance of food at the royal table was rigidly fixed; six very small dishes for twenty-four people, and, in serving, the King

saw that enough was left over for supper.¹ When he came to his children . . . But here we must listen to the Margravine. There are certain things that princesses alone have the right to say: "When, by chance, anything was left in the dish, he spat upon it, to keep us from eating." The description of the stew made of old bones, which was served to her when she was punished and dined in her room, cannot be quoted even from a princess's diary. During the long incarcerations inflicted upon her in the winter of 1730-1731, while her brother was under sentence, she well nigh died of hunger. She had reached the limit of endurance, when the French colony of Berlin, moved to pity, managed to send her some food. The depth of her gratitude shows what the cravings of her appetite must have been. She confesses ingenuously that she conceived "a high esteem" for the French people whom she always made it "a rule to succour and protect" on every occasion. Frederick William, without a pang of remorse, saw his children reduced to skin and bones. His one thought was to increase his treasury.

What a poet a miser is! What an idealist! He deprives himself of everything, he is cold, he is famished, his life is a miserable one and round him he spreads sadness. But there, in his coffers, he possesses potentially, luxury, power, flattery,

¹ Another eye-witness affirms that the six dishes were well-filled. At any rate, his children did not profit by the abundance.

love, friends, all that wealth can give to man. No dream is too beautiful, no caprice too costly. He buys castles, provinces, the whole world, according to his fancy; in his hand he holds all these things when he grasps his gold. With what logic he despises the so-called wise man who buys a field, or a house, and who rejoices, saying: "It is mine." With the miser everything is his, since he can procure all things; and, as long as his treasure is in the house, no one can take anything from him, since his joys are within himself. The rough Frederick William was a poet when he gave his heir but a bone to gnaw, so that, later, he might buy all the giants on earth and have a whole army of men six feet and a half high, instead of a single regiment. The old King would have risen from his grave to see a hundred thousand giants on parade.

It would scarcely have been wise to tell Frederick William that, in his way, he was a poet. And yet he was, without knowing it, and against his own will, for there was nothing he despised as much as poetry. The mere word "*verses*" put him in a rage. One day he noticed an inscription above one of the gates of his palace. "He asked," relates Frederick II, "what those characters were: 'Latin verses by Wachter.' At the word verses he sent at once for poor Wachter. He appeared. My father said to him angrily: 'I order you to leave, instantly, my city and my states.' He did not require a second command."



M. Ponce Peint.

G. F. Schmidt Sculp.

FREDERIC GUILLAUME
Roy de Prusse
Me à Berlin le 7 Janvier 1688.

Paris chez l'Auteur M. d'Estampes quai de l'École vis-à-vis la Samaritaine la belle Image. CRR.

FREDERICK WILLIAM KING OF PRUSSIA
From an engraving by G. F. Schmidt

The chief grievance of Frederick William against his son Frederick, for which he really hated him, was that the youth was fond of music and poetry; he called him in public, with contumely, "Fife-player! Poet!" His great anger against his daughter Wilhelmina arose from the fact that she encouraged the "effeminate" tastes of her brother and his love of literature.

He himself did not like prose much better than verse. Any kind of book was to him like a red rag to a bull. It was the enemy. He pounced upon it and without even glancing at it sent it flying into the fire. The education of his sons was conducted according to these principles. As to the girls, he left them to the Queen, their bringing up being of no importance. So it happened that Princess Wilhelmina became, without opposition, a highly educated woman, a good linguist and an excellent musician. Over the boys, however, especially the heir apparent, he kept good watch; they were not to be poisoned with literature. Forty years later, Frederick II trembled as he remembered the scene that took place in his room when his father discovered that a master, a traitor, was teaching him Latin. "What are you doing there?" called out the King. "Papa, I am declining *mensa, ae*." "Ah! You wretch! Teaching Latin to my son! Out of my sight." The master rushed away but not before receiving a shower of blows and kicks. The pupil hid himself under the table, but he was dragged

by the hair out into the middle of the room and violently cuffed. "Let us have no more of your *mensa*," said the King, hitting harder still, "or that is the way I shall reward you." Frederick was then a mere child. He was timid and did not learn easily. His father might have disgusted him of books for ever and made him a savage according to his own image, a savage full of genius, yet a savage, but for Princess Wilhelmina.

Of all the varieties of affection, the most perfect, the most exquisite, is that between sister and brother. It usually develops in early youth, that age of chivalrous friendships and disinterested devotion. It has the liberty which can never exist in maternal and filial affections, and at the same time the strong bond of close relationship. The reminiscences and impressions shared in infancy, the partaking of the same joys and sorrows at the same hearth, be the home gay or sombre, sweet or cruel, give it incomparable power to devise and heal the heart's secret wounds. It has all the delicacy of a friendship between man and woman, without danger of yielding to those feelings which remind, even the most virtuous, that a man is a man in a woman's eyes, and the converse. It is the salvation of unhappy childhood; its sweetness and purity keep away despair and the demoralising effects of grief. Princess Wilhelmina felt for her brother Frederick an elder sister's sweet and deep affection. The sickly temperament of her brother, his per-

petual terrors, had made of him a poor child, sad and taciturn. She knew the secret of consoling him and reconciling him with life. As he grew up she pleaded unceasingly with him for letters and arts, for politeness, for human and modern ideas, and she triumphed, in spite of her father and his rough soldiers. In her, Frederick II had a trustworthy confidante, a heroic ally, a perfect friend.

III

IN their tastes and ideas, both were in advance of the surroundings in which fate had placed them, and they suffered in consequence, diversely, according to their natures. As soon as Prince Frederick had conquered his awful childish terrors and ceased to tremble at the very sound of his father's name, his only thought was to escape from him, and to this end he plunged giddily into intrigues which culminated in the Kustrin tragedy. His sister, on the contrary, became prudent, and learned diplomacy at an age when little girls usually play with their dolls. "I always," said she, "had the misfortune to meditate over much; I say the misfortune, for, in very deed, by dint of going too deeply into things, one discovers how sad they often are." She adds that too many reflections at times "weary her" but that she had found them "useful for the direction of one's conduct." She was thirteen

when experience reduced her to this sorry philosophy; she then resolved to understand all things, even were it to cost her nights of weeping, as often happened.

Perfect wisdom would have consisted in not asking of the things and people meditated upon more than they could give. Unfortunately, Princess Wilhelmina harboured many ideas most preposterous in a king's daughter. She believed that she had the right to despise ambition. She insisted on counting her own happiness as of some weight in the arrangements made for her future. "I have always been something of a philosopher," she wrote in her blindness, "ambition is not one of my faults. I prefer happiness and peace to honours; constraint and uneasiness I have always hated." Queen Sophia Dorothea, in whom a just pride of birth was the only sentiment which Frederick William's stick had not altered or debased, accused her daughter of having a low nature, and reproached her with it in the energetic language the King had introduced into the Court. She remained speechless with indignation when Princess Wilhelmina dared to show her intention of seeking happiness in marriage, and, in point of fact, it was the Queen who was right; she felt that the monarchical tradition was being frittered away by the middle-class ideas which under cover of philosophy found their way through the palace walls.

Princess Wilhelmina was a bit sentimental. She



SOPHIA DOROTHEA QUEEN OF PRUSSIA
From an old copper print

was born so, and, most incredibly, she had received from her father a sentimental education. Frederick William himself did not, with impunity, belong to the eighteenth century. He considered it as necessary, now and again, to give proofs, and, as it were, representations of sensibility. By the bedside of a sick child he would shed torrents of tears, but this would not keep him the next day from refusing a cup of broth to the little invalid. He used to beat Frederick until he was stunned, and yet he sent him "with compunction" to visit the hospitals "so that he might have an idea of human miseries, and learn to be tender-hearted."¹ With such examples before their eyes, given by so exalted a person, his children studied "to be tender-hearted" since even their father did not consider that he could altogether ignore this quality. In the case of Frederick II this trait did not become very deep-rooted; he was sentimental and shed tears only at certain times, outside of business hours; but the Margravine of Bayreuth ended by indulging in this mood in season and out of season; the result was, as we shall see, that great imaginary sorrows were added to the very real miseries of her youth.

A German print shows her to us at about thirty, in the languishing and somewhat artificial attitude, which, in painting, is the distinctive mark of a poetical and sensitive soul. She is seated, a little dog on her lap, her cheek leaning on one

¹ Memoirs of Catt.

hand, holding an open book in the other. She cannot be said to be pretty. Her face, however, is interesting. Her large eyes are too round, like her father's, but the expression is sweet and deep. Her powdered hair, worn low, gives her a graceful little head after the Watteau style. Under the mantle which envelops her, one guesses at the thinness of her figure. Privations — however strange the word may seem, it is here rightly used — had ruined her health. Several serious illnesses in fireless rooms, with convalescence aided only by cold water, had reduced her to a shadow; she never really recovered.

This frail creature, so amiable and so unfortunate, moves one to pity; poor princess, dreaming of a love marriage like those in novels, and thinking of the husband who would bring her happiness, forgetful that she was born to be merely a political tool. What has a king's daughter, the daughter of Frederick William I, to do with such dreams! It was misfortune enough that she should have a delicate mind, eternally wounded and shocked by all she saw and heard. What business had she, besides, to possess a heart yearning for tenderness! In olden times, the people touched by sufferings like hers had imagined, for princesses pining from the need of love, good fairies who gave casks full of diamonds, and kingdoms to boot, to the Prince Charming so that he might marry his lady-love. We have become much more cruel to the great ones of this world. No longer pitying them, we

even fancy that they do not suffer as we do, and that the heart of a princess, because it had been taught silence, is scarcely a woman's heart. It seems to me that the story of Princess Wilhelmina might move the most hardened.

She was scarcely out of the cradle, when it became her fate to be tossed from one proposed marriage to another; these were made and unmade by her parents, and everything was considered except her own tastes and possible happiness. It would be unjust to blame Frederick William and Sophia Dorothea. They fulfilled their duties as sovereigns, as indeed they had no choice. But the accomplishment of these duties was made unnecessarily cruel by the fantastic temper of the King and the Queen's indiscretion. Their daughter's settlement in life was for both of them, if I may use the expression, the list in which they tilted against each other. Each fought for his or her candidate, the Queen by underhand intrigues, the King by violent blows, and there was no possible chance of agreement. They entered the tournament with ideas too completely different. The Queen, haughty and ambitious, demanded a great alliance. The King, though he was not insensible to the advantages of a political marriage, wished especially to get husbands for his six daughters as economically as possible. Princess Wilhelmina, threatened by each with the most terrible fate if she obeyed the other, sure of hard treatment whichever way she turned, seeing her hand pro-

mised now here, now there, when it was not offered in several places at once, North or South, East or West, bowed her head and lamented her hard fate. She knew that it was inevitable, and yet she could not resign herself to it.

IV

SHE was first engaged to her cousin, the Prince of Wales.¹ She was four, and he six. He sent her presents, and Queen Sophia Dorothea beamed with happiness, for this English alliance was her own special dream and work. She had arranged it, and she clung to it with all the strength of her pride; during eighteen years she propped it up with an obstinacy that nothing conquered, each time that Frederick William broke it down. It was Penelope's embroidery. The King unravelled; the Queen repaired.

Frederick William was not at all times averse to the alliance with his nephew. Now and then he was as eager for it as his wife, and then he himself knotted the broken threads, but again the ferment of semi-madness in his brain caused him to upset everything and once more things had to be begun anew. Sometimes, in a mad rage, he would treat the foreign ambassadors like mere German generals. The English diplomatist sulked, his

¹ Or rather, to be quite exact, the Duke of Gloucester, who became Prince of Wales in 1727, at the death of his grandfather, George I.



FREDERICK, DUKE OF GLOUCESTER
From the painting by I. Simon

master stormed, and there was no more talk of the Prince of Wales until the Queen arduously brought about a reconciliation. At other times, the trouble came from the irresistible temptation of a few giants discovered in Hanover by the Prussian Pressgang. Frederick William had them kidnapped, though he well knew that George, Elector of Hanover, was much more sensitive about his prerogatives than was George I, King of Great Britain. The Elector claimed his subjects, the King refused to give them up — that would have been too much — the misunderstanding grew into hatred, and the Queen was reduced to the last extremities in her attempt to mollify her husband; finally she found him some other giants, and the heart of Frederick William melted at the sight. On one occasion, the Austrian envoy, Seckendorf, maliciously played upon the King's weaknesses to make him quarrel with England, and bind him to Austria. The audience at which he presented a quantity of immense Hungarians, destined to pay for the treaty of Wusterhausen (1727), was worthy of the comic stage. The King's face beamed with childish glee, which became ecstatic when he heard that the Emperor had "given orders that all the biggest men of his states should be hunted out and presented to Frederick William." That day, the Prince of Wales fell into such discredit that the Queen had much ado to bring back her husband to the starting point.

Princess Wilhelmina felt great indifference towards this intermittent fiancé. She had never seen him and she had not the gift of falling in love by royal decree. The Prince of Wales, less open to modern ideas, pretended that this precious gift had been vouchsafed to him. As soon as the wind blew toward England, he sent word to the princess that he was madly in love with her. She only laughed. Her cousin was associated in her mind with so many scoldings from her mother, so many blows from her father, so many ill reports spread by the Seckendorf faction, and so many annoyances, great and small, that she could not think of him without irritation. One day, the English court, having been secretly informed that she was humpbacked, sent women to examine her. She was undressed; "I was forced," she said, "to pass before them, and to show them my back to prove that there was no hump on it. I was beside myself with anger." Another time, the worry of this affair, combined with too much hard drinking, drove the King into a fit of hypochondria and religious mania. "The King preached us a sermon every afternoon; his valet began a hymn in which we all joined; we were forced to listen to the sermon as though it had been preached by an Apostle. My brother and I were shaken with laughter which we could not always repress. Then all the anathema of the Church were heaped upon us and we were forced to listen with a contrite and penitent air, which we had great difficulty in assuming."

The melancholy into which Frederick William had fallen was such that he thought of abdicating. He wanted to take up his residence at the country place of Wusterhausen, where, in all seasons, dinner was served in the courtyard, one's feet in the water if it happened to rain, and where each royal family had but one room for all its members and its followers, male and female; screens served as walls. The King informed his wife and daughters that he meant to take them to this rustic home. "There," said he, "I shall pray God, and watch over the field labours, while my wife and daughters attend to the household. You have clever fingers (to Princess Wilhelmina), I shall therefore give the linen into your charge, you will sew and do the washing. Frederick, who is avaricious, will be the provision manager. Charlotte will go to market, and my wife will take care of the small children and do the cooking."

Another time, still furious with regard to the Prince of Wales, the King vowed he would shut up his eldest daughter in a convent. He wrote to an abbess who, as one can easily imagine, made no difficulty, and answered with enthusiasm. When the letter reached him, Frederick William had changed his mind, and threatened Wilhelmina with a fortress prison if she obeyed her mother and married her cousin. The Queen, on the other hand, vowed eternal hatred to her daughter if she did not marry him, adding, by way of encouragement. "He is a good-hearted prince, but rather

stupid; he is ugly rather than handsome and even a little deformed. Provided you let him have his debauchery in peace, you will govern him completely." The Queen often repeated this speech, and each time her daughter felt less inclined to risk a dungeon for such a prize.

Frederick William always had a son-in-law ready to play against the Prince of Wales. We have spoken of the youth whom little Wilhelmina frightened to death so as to get rid of him. His name was the Margrave of Schwedt and he was prince of blood royal. The King had chosen him in a fit of drunkenness, and had kept him as a scarecrow to frighten the Queen when he had no one else at hand. When he no longer needed his scarecrow he forgot all about him. Princess Wilhelmina paints a cruel portrait of the Margrave; of all her admirers, none excited in her a greater aversion, perhaps because she knew him best of all.

Charles XII, King of Sweden, figured for a short time in the gallery of Frederick William's possible sons-in-law. He could not greatly have troubled Wilhelmina's imagination as she was nine years of age when he died. The *Memoirs* also mention a Russian prince. Then came, unless I have forgotten some others, Augustus, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland. We must stop and consider him because the affair was pushed pretty far and also because he was the most singular of all the suitors to whom Frederick William was favourably inclined.



AUGUSTUS THE STRONG, KING OF POLAND
From an old print

It was in 1727, during the fit of melancholy and piety, when the King was inspired with the idea of utilising his wife and daughters in the kitchen and laundry. His favourites, who saw their own ruin in his abdication, had tried to rouse him in vain. Not knowing what else to propose, they persuaded him to pay a visit to King Augustus at Dresden, and this idea brought about another; they suggested that their master might profit by his visit to arrange a marriage between his host and Princess Wilhelmina. Frederick William yielded, and started for Dresden in January, 1728. He was dazzled. The Polish court was then the most brilliant in Germany. Its luxury seemed overpowering to a man who had come from Wusterhausen. One could eat one's fill and more too, and one could drink perpetually. The two kings got royally drunk together and, in a maudlin mood, made all the arrangements for the marriage. It is true that King Augustus was then fifty-eight¹ and that he was old for his age, but "his presence and his countenance" were "majestic"; what more could a princess of eighteen desire? It is true that King Augustus had three hundred and fifty-four bastards and that he still kept a harem which accorded with so considerable a family. Had he been sober, Frederick William would have been severe in his appreciation of such conduct; drunk, he forgot all about it. It is true that Augustus had had "an

¹ The Memoirs of the Margravine say forty-nine; this is a mistake: Augustus was born in 1670.

accident which kept him from walking or standing for any length of time. Gangrene had set in and the foot was only saved by cutting off two toes. The wound was still open and caused him abominable suffering." But this rendered him interesting, for he continued bravely to do his duty as King, and stood, smiling, when etiquette required him to do so.

It is true that King Augustus finished giving the full measure of his morality by offering Frederick William and his young son Frederick an exhibition of so peculiar a nature that the King jumped toward his son, turned him around, and pushed him out of the room; but this was an error, a mistaken politeness which was not to happen again. It is true, also, that King Augustus did many other things which may not be related here, but he had such an excellent cellar!

King Augustus was accepted and authorised to pay his court. Four months later he reached Berlin (May 29, 1728), and Princess Wilhelmina had to receive this charming bridegroom whom decay had impatiently attacked before his burial. With great affability he showed her a few of her three hundred and fifty-four future step-children, and all went on right merrily. In his joy at having found so suitable a son-in-law, Frederick William gave a dinner which lasted nine hours; the Queen and her daughters were not invited; no useless mouths were wanted. Two hours after leaving

the table, still intoxicated, the sovereigns began to drink again. There were grand doings at the palace, Berlin was illuminated, and the betrothed King returned to his states to prepare for the wedding.

Political dissensions very opportunely threw down this card house, but Princess Wilhelmina had had a narrow escape. Oddly enough, King Augustus had excited no aversion in her. She had felt a slight flush of vanity on finding herself suddenly of some importance in the world, courted by a king and his followers. For a poor Cinderella, the change was as agreeable as it was complete, and she was grateful to King Augustus though, for a young girl, she was singularly well informed as to his debauchery and diseases. He said to her "many charming things," and then he was a king and, in those days that meant something.

Immediately after the King of Poland, Frederick William took a fancy to a younger son called the Duke of Weissenfels, young and gallant, but of so little importance in the world that Queen Sophia Dorothea was out of her mind with anger at the mere thought of such an alliance. We shall have occasion to revert once more to this duke. We have now come to a pass when the fate of Princess Wilhelmina was so involved with that of her brother, that it is necessary to recall, as rapidly as possible, the prosecution of Katt, in order to understand the part she played in the tragedy and

the causes which redoubled the King's aversion toward her.

V

THE streak of madness in Frederick William increased with the years. His anger turned to delirium; in 1729, he tied a cord around his throat and would have strangled to death had not the Queen saved him. His avarice also grew on him, and little was served at his table except cabbage, carrots, and turnips. His irritation against the "fife player" who, according to him, was destined "to ruin all his good work" had changed into a maniac's savage hatred, and a large share of this hatred fell to Princess Wilhelmina. He was greatly struck by the fact that these two children were so different from himself. He felt that he had good reasons for finding fault with their looks, and even with their silence, for he believed them both to be quite given over to French ideas, French philosophy, and French fashion, whereas he wanted all things in Germany to be thoroughly German. In this he was quite right. Each race has its own genius, which guides it in its proper path, and a nation rarely achieves success in following its neighbour's lead. Nearly always it is forced to retrace its steps; in thinking to take a short cut, it has merely lost its way. Frederick William's great fault was not that he wished for a German Germany, but that he insisted on having a motionless Germany; that he tried to stop

the nation in the prodigious bound that was to carry it to the clouds; above all he had utterly failed to perceive the genius of a son, who, if he did amuse himself with writing French verses, was destined to inaugurate a government immeasurably more national than his own, a son who, on reaching the throne, finding Germany a mere satellite of Austria, would leave it on the sure road to reverse the situation.

It would have been impossible to have been more blind than was his father towards Frederick II, and his reasons were most trivial. Other monarchs and more illustrious, had foreseen with bitterness that their heirs would destroy their work. Philip II and Peter the Great understood that fate had placed them between two monstrous alternatives; to deliver up millions of men into the hands of a madman like Don Carlos, or an idiot like Alexis, or to commit an execrable crime. Don Carlos and Alexis disappeared from the face of the earth. If the crimes were great, they were inspired by motives equally great. With Frederick William everything was petty and mean; ideas, sentiments, acts. He judged his son to be worthless and dangerous to the state because he was wanting in the qualities of a good drill-sergeant. Nothing could take from the King these low considerations. He hated Frederick, as a model non-commissioned officer hates a soldier who shames his company by not keeping the line. He would have liked to decapitate him because

he foresaw that Frederick would not, like himself, pass six or seven hours a day commanding manœuvres: what was the use of him then? It did not dawn upon him that Frederick II would spoil his beautiful army by leading it to battle, and that was lucky for Frederick; had the thought crossed the King's mind he might not have hesitated about the execution; but he was certain that his son, by carelessness and incapacity, would spoil his beautiful plaything, the regiment of giants.

The sight of Frederick was odious to him, and he hated Princess Wilhelmina almost as much, for she shared her brother's shameful taste for poetry and music, and was the confidante of his sorrows. Their lives became a perfect martyrdom after 1729, when an attack of gout in both feet reduced the King to an invalid's rolling chair. Frederick William had trained the servants who pushed this chair to pursue those whom he wished to beat. One can picture to one's self these strange races through the royal palace of Berlin, the scampering of princes and princesses running away from threatening crutches. Princess Wilhelmina once came near being killed; the servants saved her by letting her gain on them. The King was haunted by the fear that his children might profit by his illness to return to their hateful books. He kept them within sight. "We were forced," relates his daughter, "to be in his room at nine o'clock, we dined there and did not

dare to leave it on any pretext whatever. The whole time was spent by the King in heaping curses on my brother and on me.' What follows is of such a nature that it is scarcely possible even to allude to it. The King forced them to eat what disagreed with them, and never allowed them to move from the room; when he was wheeled about the castle, they followed behind his chair. "The torments of purgatory," writes the Margravine, "could not equal ours." At the beginning of 1730, Frederick crept one evening into his sister's room and vowed that he could stand it no longer and that he meant to leave the country.

The Princess was terror-stricken. Her common sense showed her the dreadful consequences of so rash an act. She reasoned, implored, wept, and at last obtained her brother's promise to give up this plan. The King's persecution quickly brought him back to it, and several months were spent in this struggle, during which the Princess felt that she must inevitably be vanquished. "His mind was so soured," says she, "that he no longer listened to my exhortations and his anger even turned against me." Frederick was in that state of exasperation when prudence is forgotten and even despised. He had divulged his project to his friend, young Katt, whose name, thanks to this dangerous honour, has been recorded in history; he was a giddy and garrulous youth, who confided his secret to every one. One evening he was speak-

ing of it to Princess Wilhelmina, in the Queen's apartments, in the midst of many curious lookers-on. The Princess said to him, "I already see your head unsteady on your shoulders, and if you do not soon change your conduct, I may one day see it at your feet." "I could not lose it," answered he, "in a better cause." "I did not give him time to say more," continues the Margravine, "and I left him. . . . I did not think that my sad predictions would, so soon, be realised."

A few days later, the Queen took advantage of the King's absence, to amuse her daughter. She gave a ball (August 16th, 1730). "I had not danced for six years," say the *Memoirs*, "it was a new pleasure for me and I gave myself up to it joyfully." In the midst of the merry doings, it was noticed that the Queen had grown suddenly very pale, and conversed apart with her ladies. Frederick, who had accompanied his father, had been arrested just as he was on the point of running away. The King would have killed him then and there if his generals had not snatched him away; but no one knew what might follow. In spite of her anguish, the Queen controlled herself. She did not weep, did not interrupt the dances, and waited a certain time before taking leave and retiring with her daughter. When they were alone in their apartments, both shed many tears and both fainted; after which they agreed on what had better be done.

The only service they could render the prisoner



FREDERICK THE GREAT
From an old copper print

was to destroy his papers. It is true that this service was a most important one. One is astonished that the members of the royal family were able to indulge their passion for scribbling to such an extent, for the King was most suspicious and never scrupled to open letters. They continually wrote to each other, criticising the King and his advisers, so that their correspondence might have sent them all before the judgment seat, had it been discovered. Frederick kept all his letters. The box containing this correspondence, hidden outside of the palace, had to be discovered, the seals broken, the lock forced, the compromising epistles, among them about fifteen hundred from the Queen and her eldest daughter, burnt, other letters written to fill up the gaps, and a new seal procured so as to replace everything as it had been. Princess Wilhelmina showed wonderful presence of mind and activity. Her mother impeded the work with her agitation, her terror, her absurd chattering. She however completed her task, except that the Queen insisted on closing the casket before enough false letters had been written to fill it. The fear of being surprised by the King was too strong. The Queen thought herself very clever because she filled up the empty spaces with rags, and when the seals were put on again she breathed more easily. According to the *Memoirs*, this must have been on the 22d or 23d of August, and no news had come from Frederick since his arrest.

On the 27th at five o'clock in the evening, the King returned. As soon as he caught a glimpse of the Queen, he called out to her: "Your unworthy son is no more; he is dead." "What, you were barbarous enough to kill him?" "Yes, I tell you; but now I must have his strong box." The Queen, beside herself, only called out without stopping, "My God! my son — O my son!" Her children rushed about terrified. Frederick William catching a glimpse of his eldest daughter seemed to go raving mad. "He became quite black, his eyes blazed, he frothed at the mouth. 'You abominable wretch,' he said, 'How dare you to show yourself to me? Go and keep your detestable brother company!' As he uttered those words, he seized me with one hand, hitting me on the face with his fist, one blow struck me so heavily on the temple that I fell back, and I should certainly have broken my head against a sharp corner of the wainscoting had not Madame de Sonnsfeld caught hold of me by the hair. While I was still unconscious, the King, quite out of his mind, wanted to finish me with more blows and kicks."

The young princes, princesses, and court ladies all threw themselves before Princess Wilhelmina. The young children cried, the Queen uttered piercing cries, running hither and thither, wringing her hands, a crowd gathered, for the windows were open and the room, on the ground floor, was on a level with the public square. In the midst of this

scene, worthy of Bedlam, a procession passed before the windows. Guards were leading Katt, Frederick's confidant; others carried his coffers and those of the prince which had been seized and sealed. Katt saw Princess Wilhelmina and noticed that her face was swollen and bleeding. "Pale and overwhelmed as he was," said she, "he still lifted his hat and saluted me." On his side, Frederick William also saw Katt. He ran out, wanted to fall upon him, calling out, "Now I shall have proofs enough against that abominable Fritz and that hussy of a Wilhelmina. I shall have law on my side and their heads shall fall!" A court lady was brave enough to stop the madman and to speak firmly to him. He looked at her and was silenced. She threatened him with divine vengeance; he listened and remained dumb, awed by the calmness and firmness of a woman. When she had finished, he thanked her and turned away, almost quieted. It is true that his fit of madness came upon him five minutes later when he again saw Katt and he beat him till the blood came. Princess Wilhelmina, that very evening, was double-locked in her room and a sentinel placed at her door. She was carried to her apartment in a sedan chair in the midst of a great crowd of peasants and common folk, who had rushed to the palace on the rumour that the King had killed two of his children.

It is well known that Frederick was taken to the citadel of Kustrin. Beforehand, Frederick

William had made him undergo a cross-examination which gives the key to the trial which followed. His first question, uttered in a furious tone, was: "Why did you wish to be a deserter?" This is characteristic of the man and of the situation; the outraged person was neither the sovereign nor the father; it was a recruiting officer. "Are you nothing but a cowardly deserter?" he repeated, threatening him with his sword. The prince was saved once more, and that by one of the generals, but the King was not to be gainsaid, and Frederick was treated as a soldier who had deserted his colours. He was kept in prison, without linen, and at first without any furniture. He was fed on six pence and a half a day, menaced with torture, and held for court-martial. Meanwhile, he was pressed to confess his crime, and the Queen's trick turned against him. He let it be seen that he did not recognise the rags stuffed into his casket. The King guessed the real culprits and his fury redoubled against both sister and brother.

The story of Princess Wilhelmina's marriage came once more to the front and mingled, after an almost ludicrous fashion, with this family tragedy. The King was determined to rid himself of his odious daughter. He only hesitated as to the means of doing so. He often spoke of cutting off her head and took care that she should hear of it, but he knew that it was not so easily done as said; and, after all, he had a sense of justice; if his daughter was hateful, she was not a deserter. He once

more thought of a convent. But at last he decided to marry her off, with or without her consent, to one of the suitors set aside by the Queen. He suspected his wife of being mixed up with the affair of the casket and wished, more than ever, to be disagreeable to her. He, therefore, ordered his creatures to persecute Wilhelmina, in her prison, with perpetual allusions to her future marriage. Messengers from the King appeared at every hour of the day, sometimes so early in the morning that, on awakening, Wilhelmina could see at the foot of her bed a minister or an officer, whose mission was to order her to choose between the Margrave of Schwedt and death, or else, in the balance there was a horrible convent, or a cell in a fortress, or a life like her brother's; the King would pardon Frederick if she was submissive and obedient, otherwise his execution would be the inevitable result of her obstinacy. If her repugnance toward the Margrave of Schwedt was too great, she might accept the Duke of Weissenfels, or she might even take the affianced husband of one of her younger sisters, the Margrave of Bayreuth; this the King would permit and the young couple would surely not be so low-minded as to repine at what would ensure the peace of the royal family. Probably the young people could have but few regrets one way or the other, as they had never met.

The prisoner did not yield. She no longer entertained happy dreams of a loved and loving hus-

band; experience had opened her eyes with regard to royal marriages. She resisted because her mother implored and ordered her to do so, and she saw that the poor woman's hope of the English marriage alone gave her strength to endure her cruel tribulations; this union was to be the Queen's one triumph, hoped for during twenty years, and which would vanish into thin air did her daughter yield. Had it not been for her brother, the Princess would have resisted to the end. Death had but few terrors for her; the King had taken good care that she should be indifferent to life, she clung to it only with the heroic, instinctive hope of youth which cannot altogether despair at twenty. The cloister was not a serious threat and the thought of a prison attracted, rather than frightened, her. That which she was then enduring was a shelter, in spite of the tormentors sent by her father, in spite also of the hunger from which she suffered cruelly. She had some books, her music, her needle, and, now and then, some quiet hours of solitude and rest. Later, she counted these days of bondage with sentinels at her door and messengers of the King's wrath perpetually harassing her, as among the best of her youth. She only weakened when her brother's fate was invoked against her. The wonder is that, considering her great love for him, she should so long have held out, simply to please a mother who, it would seem, scarcely deserved so great a sacrifice.

Meanwhile the prosecution against Prince Fred-

erick and Katt was going on. The council of war was assembled at Potsdam. The deliberations of these soldiers took rather a singular form. Each quoted a paragraph of the Bible which expressed his thought, that is, ten claiming blood and two speaking of clemency; according to the *Memoirs* of the Margravine of Bayreuth such was the proportion of the votes. Others have given a different account of the affair.¹ However that may be Frederick himself has told us the end of the tragedy. His captivity was beginning to be less rigorous. "I thought that all would soon be over, when, one morning, an old officer entered my room with several grenadiers, all of them in tears. 'Ah! Prince, my dear, my poor Prince!' exclaimed the officer, between his sobs. I certainly thought my head was coming off. 'Well, speak! Am I to die? I am ready; let the barbarous judges do their work quickly.' 'No, dear Prince, you are not to die, but you must allow these grenadiers to take you to the window and keep you there.' And they did, in very deed, hold my head so that I should see all that happened. Great God! What a terrible scene! My dear, my faithful Katt, who was to be executed just below my window. I tried

¹ David Müller's History of Germany used in the schools, says that "the council of war energetically refused to condemn the prince to death." Other German works follow the version here given. The *Memoirs* of Katt leave the question of the majority of votes undecided. As Frederick II, on coming to the throne, destroyed the pages which might have compromised the members of the council, it is impossible to get at the truth of the matter.

to give him my hand, but it was pulled back. 'Ah! Katt!' I exclaimed, and then I fainted." When he came to himself, the bloody body of his friend was placed so that he could not help seeing it.

Princess Wilhelmina had been a prisoner for eight months and a half when the minister Grumkow, followed by three other exalted personages, entered her room. They gave her to understand that her resistance entailed great misery on her family and on her country; that the King and the Queen were on the eve of a complete break; that Prince Frederick was still in prison, under threat of a second trial; that his friends, his servants, were exiled, beaten, thrown into prison, that discord reigned in the King's family. She alone could put an end to this deplorable situation; the King promised that, on her wedding day, her brother should be set at liberty, that her mother should be restored to his good grace and the past be forgotten. "Great princesses," added Grumkow, "are born to be sacrificed to the weal of the state. Therefore, Madam, submit to the decrees of Providence and give us that answer which alone can bring peace to your family."

Reason, weariness, great tenderness toward her brother, indifference as to her own fate, all pleaded in favour of her father's wishes. She succumbed. The Margrave of Bayreuth was offered to her and she accepted him. On hearing of her submission, Frederick William wrote: "The good God will bless you, and I will never abandon you. I will

care for you all my life, and, on every occasion, prove to you that I am

Your faithful father."

On her side, the Queen wrote: "I no longer acknowledge you for my daughter and henceforth I shall look upon you as my most cruel enemy, for it is you who give me up to my persecutors, who triumph over me. Count no longer upon me; I swear to hate you always and never to forgive you."

The Queen alone kept her promise.

Thus, at last, Princess Wilhelmina was married, November 20, 1731, to a prince whom his father-in-law greatly despised and whom he had chosen merely to punish his wife and his daughter, whom his mother-in-law hated because he represented the ruin of all her dreams, whom his wife had long hesitated to accept instead of a prison, and whom no one, in fact, had ever consulted in the matter. The newly married pair must have looked one at the other with considerable curiosity; they had to become acquainted, as they were absolute strangers.

During the ceremony, the King wept and was liberal in promises which he had no intention of keeping; he put off the settlements until after the marriage. The Queen was in the worst of tempers. She had been informed, rightly or not, that the English would decide upon the marriage that day, and while Wilhelmina's hair was being put up on one side she pulled it down on the other, so

as to gain time for the English messenger to arrive. The bridegroom was tipsy. His father-in-law, ashamed of a prince who was not given to wine, had forced him at dinner to drink so much that he was no longer quite himself. At night the King forced the bride to kneel down in her nightdress and say her prayers aloud. The Queen took that opportunity for abusing her still more, and thus ended this lovely wedding day.

VI

FOR the first time since she had come into the world, Princess Wilhelmina had been lucky. The husband she had drawn at the lottery, without being a great prize, was yet such as exactly suited a romantic princess. His purse was very flat and Bayreuth was but an insignificant principality. But he was young, good looking, always cheerful, wonderfully courteous and polite, as compared with Frederick William's generals, and last but not least, very much in love with his wife. And how she gave back love for love! What a change in her sad, desolate life! Since she had been separated from her brother no one had spoken kindly to her, no one had pitied her, and suddenly she found herself tenderly cared for by this generous stranger who had been imposed upon her, and who, seeing her so forlorn, had been moved to compassion. It was incredible. The contrast was

rendered all the greater by the harshness of the Queen, who kept her promise of never forgiving; by the insolence of the courtiers, who followed suit by turning their backs on the Princess in disgrace; by the apparent coldness of Frederick, set at liberty according to his father's promise, but to whom misfortune had taught prudence; and by the new eccentricity of the King, who ignored his daughter since she had become a poor little future Margravine. On the other hand, Frederick William had undertaken to make his son-in-law less ridiculous by teaching him what he considered the four cardinal virtues: wine, economy, love of military matters, and German manners. With this in view he tried to intoxicate him on every occasion, and gave him a regiment, "insinuating that it would be a pleasing thing were he to go and take possession of it." As to economy, that was forced upon him; the King did not give the newly married pair a farthing and seemed quite to have forgotten all about the dowry and the settlements.

The young people were wild to run off to Bayreuth. They consulted as to the means of persuading the King to settle their money matters. "To accomplish this," writes the Margravine ingenuously, "there were but two means: one was to obtain giants for him; the other was to offer him and his boon companions a banquet in order to make him drink. The first expedient was not in my power, for tall men do not grow like mush-

rooms; they were so rare that scarcely could one find three that could suit him in a whole country. The second course had to be followed. I invited the sovereign to dine with us. . . . There were forty guests and the banquet was excellent." In one way the success was complete. The King and his friends left the table completely tipsy; the Margrave alone had kept his head. Frederick William embraced his daughter, embraced his son-in-law. He sent for ladies from the town and began dancing. At three o'clock in the morning he was still dancing, he, Frederick William!

They thought the victory certain. In truth, the King declared his intentions. He consented to *lend* his son-in-law two hundred and sixty thousand crowns, to be returned at stated times. He gave as dowry to his dear Wilhelmina, sixty thousand crowns, with a service of plate which already belonged to her (let us be fair: the plate had been given by him), and, inestimable privilege! a regiment for her husband, which he was to command every time that he came to Berlin. The husband and wife were dumfounded. The young Margravine's revenues were already eaten up by necessary expenses, and she calculated that out of what her husband possessed she could count on only eight hundred crowns a year for her personal wants. In spite of the severe economy to which both had been accustomed, with such a sum it was impossible to hold court, even at the price of small courts during the eighteenth

century. The Margravine ventured to make a few respectful observations. Frederick William, seemingly moved, caused the contract to be handed to him and cut off four thousand crowns from the dowry. There was nothing for it but to hold one's peace. They put off a last effort to mollify him to the day of their departure, January 11, 1732.

The opportunity seemed an excellent one. The Margravine showed signs of approaching motherhood, and this was the very moment for Frederick William to express his overflowing sentimentality; he was so happy at the thought of being a grandfather. His daughter's discourse on her great poverty was apparently too much for his tender heart: "He burst into tears, and could not answer me for sobbing, he expressed his feelings by his kisses." Making a great effort to control himself, the King assured his daughter that she could trust him, that he would help her, and then he added: "I am too much moved to take leave of you; embrace your husband for me; my feelings are such that I cannot even see him." Whereupon he turned heel and went off, still weeping. Tears were all they obtained. Frederick William in all this was by no means a hypocrite. He was sincerely touched by his daughter's penury, for the misfortune of having no money seemed to this miser the greatest of all, and he ran away so as not to be forced to diminish his own treasure. This old non-commissioned officer, known as King

Frederick William, was neither amicable nor easy to deal with; but he was certainly original and his manias interest one, after all.

The young people went off, as poor as Job, but with a light heart. They were overwhelmed with joy at leaving the paternal barracks, at not being awakened at four o'clock in the morning by the artillery exercise, at not having to dine with a dozen generals in uniform, at being free from scoldings and wranglings, at having the right to laugh and to love each other, to blossom into life and joy. Later, they would have to think of some means of buying shirts and other necessary articles; for the time being they enjoyed their liberty, and that was enough. This pleasure had no drawback, with the exception of official harangues, until they reached the frontier of the Bayreuth states. The Princess describes their arrival with her usual frankness. She had known avarice; she had not known sordid poverty, and it must be confessed that her future subjects, even those who were supposed to be well off, were a beggarly set. Their fathers, during the ruin of Germany, had become mangy, lousy, and ragged; they themselves had remained ragged, lousy, and mangy. With the exception of their filth they were not responsible. There is an obscure instinct which urges nations to do what they are meant to do. The ragged nobles who on her arrival so disgusted the Margravine were, quite unconsciously, Frederick William's

fellow-workers, ignorant as he himself of their great task: all together they laboured at the reconstruction of Germany, and they left to the following generations solid private and public fortunes.

The princess only saw their rags and their vermin, of which she made great fun in her *Memoirs*. At the first town she entered, thirty-four nobles, gloriously dirty, offered her a bouquet and drank to her health until "they could no longer speak." Three days later, she solemnly entered Bayreuth in a coach worthy of a comic opera, and discovered that her capital was nothing but a big village "peopled with peasants," and that her father-in-law, a ridiculous sort of G ronde, "had the manners and habits of a parsimonious rustic proprietor. His palace was hung with cobwebs; the draperies were in shreds and the windows broken; nothing had been mended since the Thirty Years' War, and that had been over nearly a century. There were no fires, the food was coarse, and the old Margrave scolded when the horses were driven too hard or too much game was killed. The shirt problem proved to be even more serious than the young people had foreseen. When the clothes brought from Berlin were worn out, their poverty became very evident; the Margravine of Bayreuth could not replace them. She tried to borrow and met with a refusal; peasants do not easily lend money. She went without new dresses and soon resembled the Bayreuth ladies who had so excited her mirth.

The minds of the courtiers were as rustic as their appearances. Nothing was discussed but household affairs and agriculture. Still, the old Margrave had some literary pretensions, and whenever he thought it necessary to exhibit them, he talked of *Télémaque*, which he had read, and talked of it at great length. His daughter-in-law feared nothing so much as these literary conversations. Certainly the sojourn in the half-ruined Bayreuth palace was not gay. The Margravine suffered from the gossip and prejudices of the small town, from the political wranglings, from the jealousy of her sisters-in-law, and most of all from the distrust of her father-in-law, who looked askance at the fine lady from Berlin and was always on the watch for eccentricities; any sign of civilisation was looked upon as eccentric at Bayreuth. The old man reduced his daughter-in-law to positive slavery so as to keep her from scandalising his subjects; she did not dare go out for an airing without first asking his permission.

The old Margrave's ideal of life was to drink with his jolly boon companions. When he travelled, he stopped at every inn on the road. Once, having to cover thirty leagues, these were so numerous that the journey took up four days. His people adored him because he was not proud. He had the wiry figure of an old cacochymic peasant; his face was crafty and sly; his mind practical. To the Princess's great surprise, the fact of having a child of the King of Prussia as his daughter-in-

law had by no means dazzled him. He judged her more according to her dowry rather than her birth, and treated her roughly. He wearied his children with his perpetual scoldings and his petty tyranny.

I am sorry to say that my amiable Margravine by no means saw the picturesqueness of her new position. Sentimental persons rarely appreciate the picturesque aspect of life. She loved her young husband passionately; everything else bored her quite as passionately. Had she been told, six months earlier, when she left her father's generals, that she would have felt, at Bayreuth, as did Ovid among the Scythians, she would scarcely have believed it; yet it was quite true. Berlin, in her fancy, became a centre of luxury and refinement. Her father's letters added to her exasperation. Frederick William took offence, now that his money was safe, that any one should dare to command his daughter and to refuse her the common necessaries of life. He adjured her tenderly to come and "receive the caresses of a fond father," promising to secure for her "a good lodging" and interfered, without being asked to do so, by reproaching the old Margrave with his inconceivable avarice. "I have written," said he, "a very harsh letter to your old fool of a father-in-law." His daughter expected no good from this interference, and she was right. The old man meant to be master in his own house. During the autumn of 1732, the Margravine was forced to borrow from her

servants and was unable to afford a governess for the daughter to whom she had just given birth. She made up her mind to expose her painful situation to her father-in-law and to obtain permission to visit Berlin. He answered coldly that he was "greatly mortified" at being unable to assist her, but that "in the marriage contract there was no mention of travelling expenses for journeys which she might wish to take, nor of the cost entailed by daughters whom she might bring into the world."

She had other and bitterer sorrows, caused by her brother Frederick, sorrows none the less cruel because they were imaginary. She thought him forgetful and ungrateful, and never was there more flagrant injustice. The letters from Frederick II to the Margravine of Bayreuth show an affection as perfect as it is constant. But he hurt her, nevertheless, by a certain roughness, and because she had not foreseen that, coming to man's estate, he must necessarily change his tone of submission and dependency. She was indignant that he should not be eternally at her feet and that his duties as prince must sometimes cause him to refuse her requests. In the second part of the *Memoirs* she sometimes speaks of Frederick with irritation; luckily for both of them he always forgave her fits of ill temper. He knew that they came from a loving and jealous nature, rendered over-sensitive by much suffering, and he never ceased to admire the superior intelligence, the noble and generous soul of her who remained

to the end "my incomparable sister, my divine sister."

She always came to her senses and accused herself to her brother. Meanwhile her imagination ran away with her. She nursed her sorrows, real or false accused now one, now another, and vowed that she was the most unhappy princess in Christendom, that she was pursued by an evil fate. Frederick William added to her woes by ordering her husband to join his regiment; a Prussian regiment must not thus be left to itself. He was forced to obey and then the Margravine became like one possessed. According to her sex's logic, she convinced herself that what she ardently desired was necessary; that she must also go to Berlin; that the Queen her mother was dying of impatience to see her; that the King, changed by her absence, would prove to be the tender and generous father which his letters seemed to promise; that everybody would receive her with open arms and heap presents and attention upon her. Yet the Queen on learning of her intentions had written very plainly: "What business have you here? Is it possible that you should still believe in the King's promises, after having been so cruelly abandoned by him? Remain at home and spare us your perpetual lamentations; you might have expected all that has happened." The advise, however brutally given, was wise, but the Princess turned a deaf ear to it. She managed to scrape together the necessary money, and

started for Berlin, where the most cruel disillusionment of her life awaited her.

She arrived November 16, 1732, toward evening, preceded by a courier who was to give the Queen the good news and cause the whole palace to be filled with joy. When she stepped from her carriage there was no one to receive her. All was dark. Much disturbed, she went to her mother's room. The Queen on seeing her went forward, took her by the hand, and led her to her boudoir. "She threw herself in an armchair without telling me to sit down. Looking at me severely, 'Why have you come here?' said she. My blood froze in my veins at these words. 'I have come,' I answered, 'on the King's commands, but especially to throw myself at the feet of a mother whom I adore and from whom it is cruel to be separated.' 'Say rather,' she continued, 'that you have come to plunge a dagger in my heart and to prove to the world at large that you have been fool enough to marry a beggar. After such a step you should have remained at Bayreuth so as to hide your shame there, instead of spreading it before us all. That is what I ordered you to do. The King will not help you and already regrets his promises. I foresee that you will deafen us with your complaints, which will greatly annoy us, and that you will be a burden on us all.' "

The heart of the poor Margravine was broken. She fell to the floor and sobbed as after a paternal

whipping when she was a child. As soon as she was in a fit state to return to the Queen's room she made a show of embracing her former friends; but they looked at her from top to toe without answering. Her favourite sister turned her into ridicule because of her shabby clothes. The King was not at Potsdam. She hastened to write to him. After all he had said in his own letters, she could not doubt of his joy at seeing her. He returned to Potsdam the following day. "He received me very coldly. 'Ha! ha!' said he, 'so, there you are. I am very glad to see you!' He took a light, examined his daughter, remarked that she was greatly changed, and added: 'How I pity you! You have not even bread, and but for me you would have to beg. But I am also but a poor man and cannot give you much. I will do what I can. According as I am able I will give you ten or twelve florins. That will help to lighten your misery.'" Frederick alone, whom the Margravine in her heart had accused of inconstancy, received her tenderly. He was even on good terms with his father; he did all he could for his sister and shared his purse with her.

Curiously enough, after this fine reception, the King refused to allow his daughter and her husband to go back to Bayreuth. The Margrave was a tolerable colonel; Frederick William kept him to his work. The King's personal expense amounted merely to the providing of food; but that had always been a small item, and he had reduced it to

almost nothing. There was, as of yore, nothing much to eat at dinner, and supper was often suppressed. The Margrave, quite in vain, begged the King to give him at least a little cheese. The King refused and the prince "grew visibly thinner." His wife almost fainted from sheer want. They implored to be allowed to go home, but without success. The summer of 1733 found them still in Berlin. The Margravine was pretty nearly spent when the festivities for Frederick's marriage with Elisabeth of Brunswick took place.

Military reviews, as usual, formed the staple of the festivities ordered by Frederick William. On such days, the court was on foot before daybreak, and the ladies, in their gala dresses, often remained twelve hours on the grounds without so much "as a glass of water." The Queen set a good example for she knew that her lord accepted no excuse when he condescended to show the ladies his soldiers in all their glory. There were, therefore, two reviews, to which the King added a negro concert and a drive in open carriages, organised after a military fashion; the departure was fixed for such an hour; a certain road was to be taken; and the return was likewise fixed for a given time; immediately afterwards the ball was to take place. The display was immense and magnificent. The court and the nobility filled nearly one hundred open carriages; the women were gaily decked; the King led the show which traversed Berlin at a foot pace. A storm burst. The King did not change his

orders; rain never stops a marching army. Sheets of water fell on the ladies' curls, on their paint and powder. Hair and plumes hung about their faces, the rich dresses clung to them, and the procession still went on at a snail's pace. The procession was to last three hours; it lasted three hours, after which dancing began as soon as the ladies left their carriages. The Margravine, ten years later, could not without laughing allude to the appearance presented by the drenched ladies at this ball; but it was too much for one, already worn out with misery and privations. She was stricken with fever and the doctors declared that she would die if she were not well fed and cared for. Yet Frederick William hesitated to let her go. He had inspected the Margrave's regiment and had found it admirably trained; this rendered the loss of its colonel hard to bear. When urged, he answered, "My son-in-law must be subjected to military duties and to economy." Frederick clearly used his influence in order to liberate his sister; she and her husband wild with delight started for Bayreuth August 23, 1733. They swore never again to be tempted away, but it was too late; such vows are rarely made in good time. The Margravine never recovered from her visit to Berlin, and was an invalid for the rest of her life.

VII

WHEN they reached Bayreuth, they understood how necessary was their presence. The old Mar-

grave was declining rapidly, his system was ruined, and his mind weakened by drink. One foot in the grave, he had still developed a senile passion for his granddaughter's governess, wore a new coat every day, had his hair dressed so as to appear young, and was most gallant. The Margravine could hardly believe her eyes when she found her father-in-law changed into a beau. "He was all day long with his beloved," she says, "to whom he made very moral declarations, and was content to suck her fingers." But these caresses soon proved insufficient and he proposed marriage. The Margravine broke off this union, the day before it was to be declared, by menacing the future bride with her anger. But an old man's love is tenacious; that of the Margrave grew in violence the more he sank into the vague dreams of second childhood; every one saw that the fat face of Flora, the governess, was each day more indispensable to him. Drunkenness brought the comedy to an end. The old Margrave died in 1735, just when Flora had made up her mind to brave all menaces and marry him.

The following years were interesting for the principality, but would be less so for the reader. The Margravine restored her castles, renewed her furniture, gave entertainments, and Bayreuth took on quite another aspect. The nobility by degrees lost its grotesqueness, the traces of barbarism were effaced, and this little country was caught up by the movement of renovation which

swayed all Germany. Frederick II notes the change very forcibly in the picture of Europe which opens the *History of My Time*. The German nation, says he, was a prey to the "gothic taste" for drunkenness and coarseness, resembling, so to speak, a field only just harrowed. The rough field became once more a "garden." "Riches, augmented by commerce and industry, have brought the pleasures and comforts of life, and perhaps also those disorders inseparable from them. For the last century, year by year, the number of equipages, the expenses for clothes, liveries, living, furniture, have increased greatly." Frederick feared that the change might be too sudden. He would have preferred to have his people preserve for a time at least, the habits of economy practised by the former generation, and in his visits to his sister at Bayreuth, he insisted upon this. "You do not need so many people about you," he would say to her. "I advise you to break up your court and to live like simple gentlefolk. At Berlin you had but four dishes for dinner; you do not need more, now." The Margravine, at these sermons, would weep, quite persuaded that her brother no longer loved her, for she adored luxury and, unfortunately, she could not forget that she had been on the eve of becoming queen of several great countries.

At Berlin, old Frederick William resisted the new spirit with all his might and main, and it was time he gave up his throne; he was becoming

ridiculous. His great work, the Prussian army, by dint of being put in a bandbox, was becoming ridiculous also. It was so well understood that he would never accept a war that, relates his son, "his allies treated him with as little ceremony as his enemies." Great and small monarchs openly expressed their contempt for him. "The Prussian officers, exposed to every contumely, had become the laughing stock of the world; when they pressed in recruits in the imperial towns, according to the right of all electors, they were arrested and thrown into prison; the least among the princes took pleasure in insulting Prussians; even the Bishop of Liège heaped humiliations on the King."¹ The old Margrave of Bayreuth himself snarled, a little while before he died, because a Prussian officer had snapped up a giant in his states, and, almost at the same time, the Dutch shot without so much as a trial a Prussian officer commanding a press gang, who had been caught on their territory. Frederick William's subjects were beginning to be very "sore" at the "ignominy attached to the name of Prussians."

The King's exit from this world at least was not ridiculous. All there was of good and of bad in him showed vividly at the last moment, making his death both singular and heroic. It was in the month of May, 1740. Frederick William was dying of dropsy. Ecclesiastics took advantage of the moment to exhort him to a reconciliation

¹ History of My Time. Chap. II.

with a relative. "Your Majesty must write to him, saying that all the wrong he has done is forgiven." The King was pious. "Very well," said he, at last, "write the letter; only, if I recover, do not deliver it; it must be sent only in case I should die." On the 31st of May he felt very ill, and caused himself to be wheeled to the Queen's room; she was asleep. He awoke her, telling her to dress as he was about to die. Then he visited the royal princes, one after the other, politely taking leave of them. When he returned to his own room, he summoned his ministers and all the generals and colonels present in Berlin, and before them gave up all authority into the hands of the prince royal, made a little speech on the duty of sovereigns toward their subjects, then ordered every one to retire.

As soon as all had left, he sent word to give new uniforms to his great regiment, and peacefully awaited death, having before his mind's eye a vision of giant grenadiers, parading with immaculate uniform and shining arms. He was asked to allow the ecclesiastics to enter. He declared that "he knew all they could say to him, therefore they might as well go away." He died that day. His generals mourned for him, his people did not. His son Frederick announced his death to the Margravine in these words: "My very dear sister, the good God took, yesterday, at three o'clock, our dear father to Himself. He died with angelic courage and without much suffering." The brother

and sister showed a decent amount of sorrow and were quickly consoled, as was their right. The memory left by this terrible father resembled a nightmare. Frederick II, twenty years later, often dreamed that Frederick William entered his room, followed by soldiers whom he ordered to bind his son and throw him into prison. "And I would wake bathed in perspiration, as though I had been plunged into the river." Even by day he would dream of it. "In the midst of the pleasures I enjoy, my father's image arises before me to weaken them."

The Margravine, on her side, forgot nothing. Her *Memoirs* are the proof of this. They stop in 1742, and we must stop with them. The end of Princess Wilhelmina's life was absorbed by her devotion to her brother, and this has been revealed to us especially through their correspondence. Here opens a new phase of German history, other times, other faces, another tone; sentiments, art, and politics have taken the place of life and manners. To follow the Margravine further would be quite another study, and has already been done.¹ We even regret that Wilhelmina should not, earlier, have put down her pen, or that she neglected to tear from her manuscript the pages written during her bitterness against her brother. She acknowledged her fault in a noble and tender letter, and Frederick always refused to see in this beloved sister anything but her noble heart, her great cour-

¹ Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*.

age, and her "genius." The *Memoirs* remained intact and show the pettiness which is but the alloy of a generous nature.

It is true that this alloy renders her singularly living and — I add under my breath — very attractive. Perfect people are a bit monotonous; the little Margravine in ill health, jealous and malicious, interests us at all times, in all her moods. Her soul was quivering and passionate, her mind bold and frank, her temper lively and violent, her heart imperious in its demands. Whether we praise or blame her, we must confess that she was truly a woman even more than a princess; yet, she was a princess to the tips of her fingers. It is her womanly side that appears in the pamphlet in two volumes which has been so bitterly criticised, and yet which it would be a great pity not to possess, for the court of Frederick William and that of the old Margrave of Bayreuth form pictures which are unique of their kind. It was as a princess that she wrote in 1757, at the time of the Prussian reverses, that she was resolved to kill herself should her brother set the example, and Frederick understood this thoroughly when he wrote: "I have not the heart to dissuade you. We think alike." Events changed Frederick's determination to "finish the play," but the Margravine was soon to have no choice in the matter. For a long time past she had been a mere shadow of herself. She expired October 14, 1758, the day of the battle of Hochkirchen. There can be no more beautiful funeral

oration than that which Frederick the Great unconsciously gave in his attitude after his defeat and on learning of her death.

On the 14th of October, after the battle, the King called his reader, Henry of Catt, and received him with a calm face, reciting the speech of the defeated Mithridates, which he modified for the occasion.

“ Je suis vaincu. *Daunus*¹ a saisi l'avantage
D'une nuit qui laissait peu de place au courage, etc.”

On the 17th of October, a messenger brought the news of the Margravine's death. Henry of Catt again was summoned. Frederick II was sobbing like a child and was several minutes without being able to utter a word. For more than a year he had but one cry, in the midst of his tears, “In losing her I have lost everything.” This exclamation absolves the Margravine for all her faults and her errors. Happy the woman who can say to herself that, at her death, some human being will utter those words: “I have lost everything.”

¹ Count of Daun, who commanded the Austrians at Hochkirchen.

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