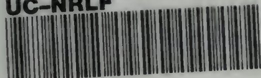
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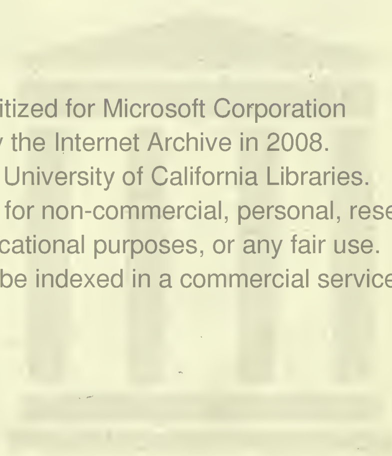

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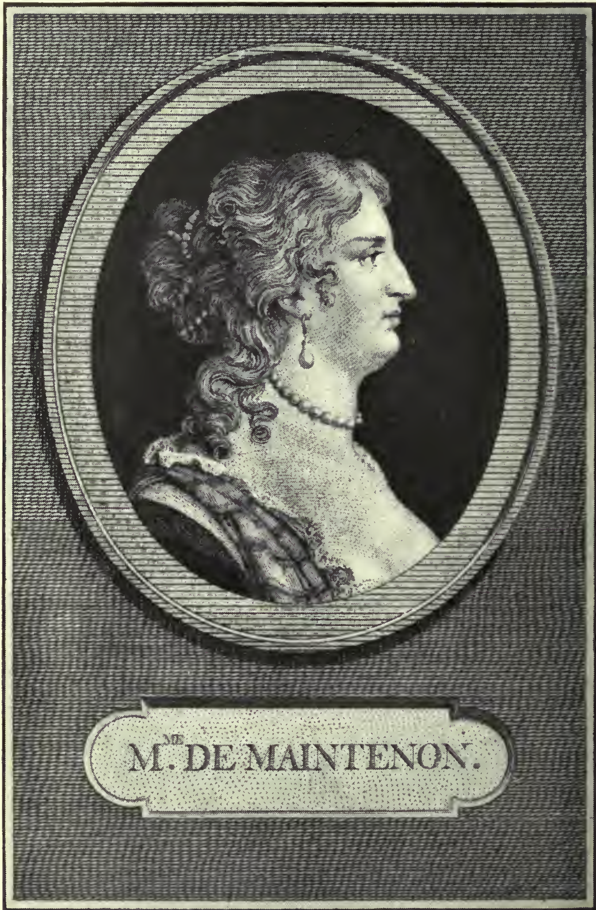

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THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

By

FRANZ FUNCK-BRENTANO

Authorised Translation by

H. SUTHERLAND EDWARDS

LONDON

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THE DIAMOND NECKLACE

I

AUTHORITIES

Among all the trial cases recorded in history, the Affair of the Necklace is the one which has exercised the deepest influence on the destinies of our country. It was taken up with passion, and in the hands of politicians became a battering-ram for shattering the monarchy. "The case of the Necklace," said Mirabeau, "was the prelude of the Revolution."[1]

Marie-Antoinette lost through it all joy, all peace of mind. "At this juncture," writes Mme Campan, "came to an end the happiness of the queen. Farewell for ever to the peaceful and modest Trianon parties, to the entertainments at which shone at once the magnificence, the wit, and the good taste of the Court of France; farewell, above all, to that consideration, that respect, which are the formal accompaniments of the throne, but which have no solid basis except in reality." Goethe took a passionate interest in the story. He wished to place himself in

[1] Quoted by Count de la Marck. "Correspondence between Count de Mirabeau and Count de la Marck during the Years 1789, 1790, and 1791," by M. de Bacourt. Paris. Three vols. in 8vo.

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direct communication with Breteuil, who had played an important part in the affair. He studied it in its original sources, in the documents of the case, and with his clear intellect deduced consequences. "The trial gave a shock," he said, "which laid the foundations of the state in ruins. It destroyed the consideration which the people had entertained for the queen and the upper classes generally; for, alas! each of the actors did nothing but unveil the corruption in which the Court and persons of the highest rank were plunged." Goethe adds: "The event filled me with dread as the head of the Medusa might have done."

These intrigues destroyed the dignity of the crown. Accordingly, the history of the Necklace forms the immediate preface of the Revolution. It lies at its foundation. The queen, closely bound up with this fatal affair, lost through it all consideration, all respect; she lost through it in public opinion that moral support which previously placed her beyond reach. [1]

[1] Goethe: "The Campaign of France." Arthur Chuquet's edition, page 159. Goethe tried to reconstitute the intrigue of the Necklace in a comedy, "Der Gross-Kophta," in which the opinion he entertained of the different personages is shown in action. The character of Cardinal de Rohan (der Dom Herr) is traced very happily. Cagliostro (der Graf), the Countess de la Motte (die Marquise), Count de la Motte (der Marquis), Mlle d'Oliva (die Nichte), are marked by their essential characteristics. But Goethe has combined in one single person Mlle d'Oliva and Mlle de la Tour, niece of Mme de la Motte. The sole person invented for the necessities of the piece is "the Knight" (der Ritten), and even this part seems to have been inspired by Baron de Planta.

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This view has been confirmed by the most eminent of Marie-Antoinette's historians, M. Pierre de Nolhac. "Starting," he writes, "from the Affair of the Necklace France hastened towards the Revolution. The royalty had lost its last prestige. Marie-Antoinette was by anticipation discrowned."[1]

In proportion to their importance the facts have been disfigured by party spirit, each one endeavouring to find arguments for his own particular side. Nor was this difficult in the mass of documents and dissertations of the different advocates, besides pamphlets of all kinds, newspaper articles, printed gossip, lampoons, satires, paragraphs, town-talk, and pasquinades, in which the affair was plunged from the very first.

The quantity of matter on the subject handed down to us, enabling us not only to untie the knot of the intrigue, but to become acquainted with the lives of the different personages, and to penetrate into their corners and recesses, so as to get at the smallest particulars, is really surprising. Among the original documents are the deeds in the case, with the interrogatories and the confrontations;[2] the

[1] Pierre de Nolhac: "La reine Marie-Antoinette," page 78.

[2] Preserved in National Archives, X^2, B/1417. Emile Campardon, who has published of all the works on this subject the one supported by the most solid documents, has only thought it necessary to insert in his appendix the interrogatories of the principal dependants, neglecting secondary witnesses, whose depositions, though they stand in the background, are the most picturesque. M. Campardon has also left unpublished the records of the confrontations, in which the characters of the witnesses stand out with exceptional colour and vivacity.

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pleadings and the very briefs of the advocates; the letters and correspondence of the actors in the piece; notes in sympathetic ink, furtively transmitted by Cardinal de Rohan, when he was under the bolts of the Bastille, to his advocate, Maître Target, in which his most secret thoughts may be read;[1] the letters written by Mme de la Motte, then a fugitive in England, to her husband and her sister, in which full daylight is thrown on her innermost thought.[2] Then there are the papers drawn up by the accused, either in the course of the trial or afterwards, in which each relates in detail and in his own manner what he knows and what he has seen; [3] there are the notes and administrative papers concerning the detention of the prisoners in the Bastille; [4] there are police reports, inventories, and reports by officers of the court describing in dry, concise phrases, in characteristic lines, furniture and costumes—as the patterns of a journal of fashion or the prospectus of a furnishing warehouse might do; there are numerous narratives by contemporaries, for the event having from the first struck the popular imagination, every one wished to note down what he thought of it,

[1] Dossier Target, preserved at the Library of the Town of Paris; manuscript documents not yet catalogued.

[2] National Archives, F^7 4445 B. Papers of the Committee of General Safety.

[3] Of these memoirs different collections have been made. The most important, though not really complete, was formed by Bette d'Etienville under this title: "Complete Collection of all the Memoirs which have appeared in the Famous Affair of the Necklace." Paris, 1786. Six vols. in 18mo.

[4] Bibl. de l'Arsenal. Archives of the Bastille, MSS. 12457-59 and 12517.

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to relate, what he knew of the personages, of their mode of life, their past history, and their characters: Beugnot, Mme Campan, Mme d'Oberkirch, Mme de Sabran, the Abbé Georgel, Besenval, the Duc de Levis, the Marquis de Ferrierres, Manuel and Charpentier; the notes of the bookseller Hardy;[1] the narrative still in manuscript of Nicolas Ruault,[2] the despatches of the foreign ambassadors at the Court of France to their respective governments; and all the newspapers, those of Paris and London, the Dutch sheets with their correspondence from Paris; innumerable pamphlets; the news-letters of the day; Bachaumont's "Secret Correspondence"; and in the way of iconography, the pictures of Mme Vigée-Lebrun and Pujos, the crayons of Cochin, the sculpture of Houdon, the engravings of Cathelin, of Janninet, of Desrais, of Einsen, of Legrand, of Macre, and many popular prints.

The very places which served as frame to the action can still be found, the houses still exist: at Versailles the Château with the private cabinet of the king and the Galerie des Glaces; the park with its Grove of Venus; the Place Dauphine with Gobert's Furnished Apartments; and the Hôtel de la Belle Image, now Place Hoche. At Paris, in the Rue Vieille-du-Temple, the mansion of Cardinal de Rohan; in the Rue Saint Claude, the house of Cagliostro; in the Rue Saint-Gilles, that of Mme de la Motte; in the Rue du

[1] "Mes Loisirs: journal of events as they have come to my knowledge." Bibl. Nat., MSS. Franç., 6680-85. The passages relating to the Affair of the Necklace are in the volume 6685.

[2] The collection of Alfred Bégis.

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Jour, the old Hôtel du Petit Lambesc; the gardens of the Palais-Royal; in Champagne, at Bar-sur-Aube, at Fontette, at Clairvaux, at Châteauvillain, not only the places, but the houses, the very walls between which the events of the narrative unfolded themselves.

In the fine days of last autumn we cycled through the hilly country. The roads shone white beneath the sun, the sides of the sloping land were covered with ripe grapes. In the fields where the harvest had been got in, the white, ochre-tinted fleeces of the sheep harmonised with the bright yellow of the stubbly fields, and here and there—such laughter—young girls were finishing up the harvest. On seeing the "Parisien" pass they stopped, held themselves up, and gazed with astonishment. And thus we travelled on from Bar-sur-Aube to Crottières, to Fontette, to Verpillières, to Clairvaux, to Châteauvillain.

The good people understood our researches: the Affair of the Necklace and the name of Mme de la Motte have remained legendary in the country.

"Ah, sir! she was a bad one," they said; and with eagerness, after emptying in our company on the table of rough wood their long glasses of rosy wine, they helped us in our task.

How can we sufficiently thank those who on every side held out their hands to us? M. Alfred Bégis, secretary to the Society of the Friends of Literature, became our cordial collaborator. How many sources we should have neglected without his certain, precise indications! For years past he had been collecting documents about the Affair of the Necklace, docu-

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ments gathered from our National Archives, from the parochial archives of London, from the departmental archives of the Aube, from the municipal archives of Bar-sur-Aube and of Vincennes; and many papers in the original are to be found in this fine collection. Notes and original papers M. Bégis placed at our disposal, besides several series of contemporary prints. Of many documents he furnished us with complete copies made by himself.

Our friend Paul Cottin, director of the *New Retrospective Review*, lent us a series of pamphlets relating to the case of the Necklace, as well as our master M. Jacques Flach, professor at the College of France, and our obliging colleague, Count de la Revelière, administrator of the Society of Historical Studies.

M. Pierre de Nolhac, the learned and most agreeable conservator of the Château de Versailles, the recognised historian of Marie-Antoinette, became also our collaborator. Notes in hand, he showed us one by one the rooms in the palace where the most important scenes took place, and in the park enabled us to identify with certainty the Grove of Venus, where the charming Baroness d'Oliva, disguised as the queen of France, met Cardinal de Rohan, bowing humbly before her.

M. Christian, administrator of the National Printing office, the former Hôtel de Rohan, and M. Le Vayer, administrator of the Library of the Town of Paris, are begged to accept the homage of our gratitude. The Countess de Biron has had the kindness to enrich the illustrations of our book by authorising the reproduction of her celebrated portrait of Marie-

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Antoinette, *en gaulle* or *en chemise*, by Mme Vigée-Lebrun, in which the costume is a direct copy of the one in which Mme de la Motte dressed Nicole d'Oliva for the scene of the grove. M. Storelli, who married the granddaughter of Maître Thilorier, advocate of Cagliostro, has communicated to us his family recollections, and has permitted us to reproduce the bust of Cagliostro by Houdon, which the illustrious alchemist gave to his defender. M. de Bluze, jeweller, has reconstituted with infinite art the necklace of the queen after very precise designs, lent originally by those who made it. We have thus in the present volume an absolutely exact representation of the famous and fatal ornament. Mr Morton Fullerton has lent us a manuscript copy with variation of the justificatory *Memorandum* of Jeanne de Valois. Finally, Dr Lebrun, attached to the Mayor of Bar-sur-Aube, helped us in our researches among the archives of the town. He enabled us to find, in the Rue Nationale, the house which belonged to Mme de la Motte; in the Rue d'Aube, the Hôtel Clausse de Surmont, where she passed the decisive years of her life.

We owe also the expression of our gratitude, and we offer it most heartily, to our predecessors; to Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, admirable writers and historians;[1] to our erudite colleague M. Emile Campardon, who has written the most solid work, containing the most exact information, about the *Necklace of*

[1] Edmond and Jules de Goncourt: "Histoire de Marie-Antoinette." Nouv. ed., Paris, 1884, in 16mo.

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the Queen;[1] to Chaix d'Est-Ange, who placed in the service of this emotional case his lofty and impressive talent;[2] to Maître Fernand Labori, who has defended the same cause, the innocence of the queen, with his lightning-like impulsiveness and his impetuous convictions; [3] to M. Desdevises du Dézert, author of a succinct and brilliant analysis of the trial in such a charming picture, so well painted and in such true lines, of France on the eve of the Revolution;[4] to our dear friends Paul Boulloche, substitute attached to the Tribunal of the Seine, the well-informed and judicious historiographer of the advocate Target,[5] and Gosselin-Lenôtre, who has written on Cagliostro and his old house, pages in which his habitual erudition, his picturesque thought, his coloured, animated style,[6] stand out; without forgetting M. Phillipe Chaperon's curious novel "La Marque," which revives the soul of Jeanne de Valois in that of a girl of

[1] Emile Campardon: "Marie-Antoinette and the case of the Necklace as brought before the Parliament of Paris." Paris, 1863. 8vo.

[2] "Marie-Antoinette and the Case of the Necklace," by G. Chaix d'Est-Ange. Published by his son. Paris, 1889. 8vo.

[3] Marie-Antoinette and the Case of the Necklace. Speech pronounced at the Conference of Advocates, 26th November, 1888. Published in the Gazette des Tribunaux of the same date.

[4] Desdevises du Dézert: "The Affair of the Necklace," in the Revue des Cours et Conférence, 13th and 27th December, 1900."

[5] Paul Boulloche: "Target, avocat au Parlement de Paris." Speech delivered at the opening of the Conference of Advocates, 26th November, 1892. Paris, 1892. 8vo.

[6] G. Lenôtre: "Paris révolutionnaire, vieilles maisons, vieux papiers." Paris, 1900. 16mo, pages 161-171: la maison de Cagliostro.

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our own time, a work of imagination, but embroidered on a firm historic web.[1] To those who have served us as models and guides, to those who have supported us by their encouragement and given us help, we extend our hand. May this book, in which we have endeavoured to put all the scientific strictness and conscientiousness that we possess, keeping beneath our eyes the rigid principles of method and investigation as taught by my esteemed masters of the Ecole des Chartes, not appear too unworthy either of our predecessors or of our numerous and friendly competitors

. . . . . .

Thanks to so much direct and precise information, to so many minute, circumstantial indications, one can get at the characters of the personages. Their pysiognomies stand out in a life-like manner. And, finally, it appears, as is always the case when one goes sufficiently deep into human affairs, that in character was to be found the origin, the explanation of facts which (since every one appreciates instinctively men and their acts according to his own nature) seemed so extraordinary, so mysterious.

[1] Philippe Chaperon: "La Marque." 3rd ed. Paris, 1900. 16mo.

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II

THE THRESHOLD OF THE STRASBURGH CATHEDRAL[1]

On the 19th April, 1770, the Archduchess Marie-Antoinette, daughter of the Empress-Queen Marie-Thérèse, married by proxy, in the church of the Augustines at Vienna, Louis, grandson of Louis XV., became through the death of his father heir to the throne of France. She was not yet fifteen. On the 21st April she left Austria accompanied by the Prince of Stahremberg. Reaching Strasburgh on the 8th May, she was harangued by a young prelate, coadjutor of the Bishop of the Diocese, Prince Louis de Rohan. Beneath the lofty portico of the cathedral Louis de Rohan advanced towards the dauphiness with a graceful, supple bow. Behind him stood the lay and ecclesiastical dignitaries of the Chapter: Prince Ferdinand de Rohan, Archbishop of Bordeaux, Grand Provost; the Prince of Lorraine, Grand Dean; the Bishop of Tournai, the two Counts of Truchsess, the Counts of Salm and of Manderscheid, the three Princes of Hohenlohe, the two Counts of Königseck, Prince William of Salm, and a group of canons in their ecclesiastical robes, who had just left the little houses which surround the

[1] Le Roy de Sainte-Croix: "Les Quatre Cardinaux de Rohan." Strasbourg et Paris, 1881. 4to.

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cathedral like the angels at the feet of the Virgin in primitive paintings.

Louis de Rohan was tall and lithe in figure. In his bearing and demeanour every movement proclaimed the nobility of his race. His features were very refined and as delicate as those eyes of limpid blue, at once reserved and caressing. He had something of the beauty of a woman, attired in his long robe of violet watered-silk, falling in folds after the manner of Watteau beneath the billowy foam of English point-lace. The mitre of gold and precious stones shone on his brow and the episcopal ring on his finger.

In the clearness of the sky shone the high dart of the cathedral, with its decorations of precious stones. The jewellery of the window-panes flashed from the bottom of the nave through the great open doors; and the impressive harmony of the organs in sonorous waves rolled out through the porch. It was like gusts of sound pouring into the streets and mixing with the acclamations of the crowd; for even to the steps of the church the people pressed on, hastening from all parts of the province in local costumes, in holiday attire: an animated, picturesque mass in which the green of the bodices was as fresh and frank in tone as the green of the meadows, in which the fair hair of the girls shone with a soft brilliancy beneath large black ribbons. The organs were silent, and the prelate said with a clear and penetrating voice, which the solemnity of the occasion rendered slightly tremulous, "You will be among us, madam, the living image of that much-loved empress so long the

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admiration of Europe, as she will be of posterity. It is the soul of Marie-Thérèse that is about to be united to the soul of the Bourbons."[1]

The little princess had a moment's emotion. Two tears moistened her cheeks, which had become more rosy, a light passed over her forehead. She was still suffering from the anguish of last embraces, the embraces of her mother left so far away. She had quitted her perhaps for ever, and she was still but a child. Marie-Antoinette adored her mother, who had watched over her education with all the force of her mind and all the tenderness of her heart; and suddenly, through the evocation of this unknown prelate with so expressive a face, clear and as if transparent in the glory of his attire among the sacred chants and the white smoke of the incense, his venerated image appeared before her. Marie-Antoinette, with her head leaning upon her breast, which was much agitated, entered the upper aisles, where the thunder of the great organs had begun again. The crowd formed a hedge on each side of her. The dauphiness arrived at the grand choir, beneath which stood the Cent-Suisses in glittering uniforms. At the foot of the altar of Saint-Lawrence, which the Gardes du Corps surrounded, a kneeling desk awaited her. She knelt down while the ladies of her Court arranged themselves on stools, and Rohan, before placing himself beneath the pontifical däis, turned towards the kneeling child and blessed her with a broad and tranquil gesture. From the height of the choir the harps rained down upon the flagstones their silvery notes. Mass had begun.

[1] This harangue was published by Le Roy de Sainte-Croix, pages 72 and 74.

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III

PRINCE LOUIS

At the French Court the young and graceful dauphiness was received with magnificence; but from Compiègne or from Versailles she asked more than once for information about the handsome prelate of Alsace who on her arrival in the land of France had awakened in her such lively emotion. What she learned about him could not but surprise her. In his palace of Saverne near Strasburgh, surrounded by the nobility and by the most charming women of the province, Prince Louis, as he was called until the day when he became cardinal, led the life of a feudal lord.

On horseback, followed by baying hounds, he rode across the plains through the woods in pursuit of the fox or of the wild boar. In the halls of his palace the wines of the Rhine and of Hungary flowed in profusion, and kids were served whole on the tables. The Duke of Aiguillon, supported by the all-powerful favourite of King Louis XV., Jeanne-Bénéditte Vaubernier, Countess du Barry, had just been made first minister. He was devoted to the illustrious family of Rohan-Soubise, very influential at the Court, above all on account of the situation of Mme de Marsan, governess of the Children of France.

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On the 9th June, 1771, Marie-Antoinette wrote to her mother the Empress Marie-Thérèse: "People say that it is the coadjutor of Strasburgh who is to go to Vienna as ambassador. He comes of a great house, but the life he has always led bears more resemblance to that of a soldier than of a coadjutor."

The Count of Mercy-Argenteau was the representative of the crown of Austria at the French Court, the very faithful counsellor of Marie-Thérèse, who was about to become the counsellor of Marie-Antoinette. He sent word on his side as follows: "This ecclesiastic is entirely given up to the cabal of the Countess du Barry and of d'Aiguillon, and I fear that that is not the only disadvantage which may render him little fitted for the place he is destined to fill."

The Rohans, claiming to spring from the ancient sovereign house of Brittany, had come into France with Anne, "the little duchess in wooden shoes" who married Charles VIII. They were connected with the branch of Valois through Catherine de Rohan, wife of the Count of Angoulême, grandfather of Francis I.; and they were allied to the Bourbons themselves through Henry IV., grandson of a Rohan, who had married the Duke of Albret, King of Navarre. The Rohans were classed with the princes of Lorraine, marching on an equality with them, immediately after the princes of the blood.

Prince Louis de Rohan was born in 1734. In 1760 he had been named coadjutor of the Bishop of Strasburgh, and consecrated the same year Bishop of Canope *in partibus*. His was a gifted nature; a

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delicate, aristocratic product such as the most refined civilisations produce in their most delicate developments. He had much heart and much wit, with a subtle elegance whose singular charm was heightened by his dignity as an ecclesiastic; "the gallantry and politeness of a grand seigneur," says the Baroness Oberkirch, "such as I have rarely met in any one." He had been received a member of the French Academy at twenty-seven years of age, and among so many illustrious personages figured with honour. No one had a more agreeable conversation. The Immortals declared themselves charmed with his company. A "sensitive" heart, in the language of his contemporaries, and a great fortune allowed him to do good on a large scale; and he conferred benefits graciously and in a genial spirit. Later on, after he had been crushed by a terrible catastrophe, he found in adversity friends who remembered his charming qualities and writers to recall them. Manuel, in his "Garde du Corps," a pamphlet which made a great noise and led to a prosecution at the demand of the Rohans, traces his portrait in these words: "He has really a good heart. He is haughty, but not overmuch. By mylording him one can get from him whatever one desires. As generous as it is possible to be, a thousand characteristic things are told of him which ought really to be published. Now is the time or never. But no one will speak. Gratitude is dull, while calumny has a thousand voices. To confer an obligation is a fine thing; but on whom?—always on the ungrateful. Render acts of kindness, then: that is just the reason why so few people care to do so."

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From among those characteristic things "which ought really to be published," the following may be cited. Prince Louis at Saverne kept open table. A poor knight of Saint-Louis came and sat down, but had not, like the others, a piece of money to slip under his napkin for the servant, who did not fail to point out to the prince the guest that had come without invitation. Rohan ordered that he should be put to sit beside him next time he arrived, an honour which took the knight by surprise, though he soon discovered the meaning of the trick from the face of the servant. Everything went on excellently until towards the end of the repast, when the prince, who occupied himself with magic, said abruptly to his guest:—

"How many devils do you know?"

"Three, my lord."

"Three?"

"Yes. A poor devil who manages to dine at the table of a good devil, and whom a bad devil wishes to place in an awkward position."

Rohan, charmed with the answer, gave orders that henceforth the knight's cover should be placed for him every day.

Of those characteristic things "which ought really to be published" let us quote another. At Saverne Rohan sometimes put up the same night as many as two hundred visitors, without counting their servants. A very charming lady accompanied by a young officer having come to visit him, the prince insisted on their staying the night, when a servant came to tell him that there was no more room.

B

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"Is the bedroom adjoining the bath-room taken?" he asked.

"No, my lord."

"Are there not two beds in it?"

"Yes, my lord; but they are in the same room, and this officer——"

"Well, they came together, didn't they? Narrow-minded persons like you find evil in everything. You will see that they will manage perfectly well and that no complaint will be made on the subject."

They in fact managed perfectly well, and not the slightest complaint was made either by the officer or by the lady.

Louis de Rohan was accused of being light-minded; the fault of his rank and of his education, but the source also of his agreeable wit. "He ought to wear good soles of lead to his shoes," continues Manuel, "and cover his head with a good leaden cap; that was the precaution taken by the light Philotas not to be driven in every direction by the wind."

"He is affable and polite," says another pamphleteer; "but it too often happens to him, as to other grand personages, not to respond to the marks of attention of which he is made the object. With his active, rapid intellect, seizing ideas before they are expressed, imagining at once all that the heavy tongue of a speech-maker has scarcely begun to pronounce, and consequently fatigued by the attention required from him, causing displeasure by the little weight he gives to things thought worthy of a great deal, always taxed by his inferiors with judging too lightly because he judges so quickly, and because the

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justest conclusions cannot be favourable to all, his brilliant qualities, to which he has not taken the trouble to give the proper form, help to lower him and serve as arms against him."[1]

[1] Letter on the occasion of the detention of His Eminence the Cardinal (1785, s. l.), pages 12, 13.

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IV

THE VIENNA EMBASSY

In the equipment of his embassy Rohan had spent immense sums. His two state coaches, costing forty thousand francs, had cushions of mauve velvet with silver trimmings, while the rest of the furniture was lined with white silk. They looked like two great lanterns carved by goldsmiths, adorned with plumes and suspended on steel springs. The whole body, even to the shell on which the coachman placed his feet, was painted with armorial bearings and with flowers set in gold. He had a stable of fifty horses, of which the first groom was a brigadier of the king's armies, with an under-groom and two assistants under his orders; six pages belonging to the nobility of Brittany and Alsace, dressed in embroidered silk and velvet, with a governor to teach fencing and a preceptor for Latin; two men of gentle birth for the honours of the chamber, the first a knight of Malta, and the second a captain of cavalry; six valets, a steward, a chief of the pantry dressed all in red with embroidery on the stripes; two heyducks who sported Brandenburgs and plumes; four runners covered with gold embroidery and silver stars, which sparkled in the sun with fairy-like effect, each of these costumes had cost four thousand francs; twelve footmen, two porters, one of them —the thinnest—for the apartments, and the other—

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very stout—for the hall door. To accompany the meals, six musicians dressed in scarlet, the button-holes filigreed with fine gold; then a house steward, a treasurer, four gentlemen of diplomacy named and commissioned by the Court, the secretary of the embassy, a Jesuit, and to second the Jesuit, four secretaries attached to him.[1]

Marie-Thérèse had not received in a favourable manner the name of the new ambassador. "I have every reason to be dissatisfied with the choice France has made in appointing such a wild fellow as the coadjutor of Strasburgh," she wrote to Mercy-Argenteau. "I should perhaps have refused him if I had not been kept back through fear of the consequences, which might have been disagreeable to my daughter. You will not fail to let the Court of France understand that it would be well to recommend this ambassador to lead a steady life in conformity with his calling. I confess that I am afraid of our women here."

Rohan arrived at Vienna on the 10th January, 1772, and presented his credentials on the 19th. Marie-Thérèse was surprised into a favourable first impression. She thus wrote about it to her representative at Versailles: "Rohan is always the same in his manner, and very simple in his outward bearing; no grimacing, no showing off, but very polite with every one. At first he declared that he did not mean to go to the play; but he soon changed his mind."

Unhappily, Marie-Thérèse also changed her mind

[1] See the details given by the Abbé Georgel, Secretary to the Embassy of Prince Louis at Vienna. Memoirs, ii. 218-19.

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in regard to the representative of the King of France, to return to the prejudices with which Mercy-Argenteau's letters had inspired her. The empress was simple, straight, and profoundly German by nature and took things seriously. The light manners of the prelate, his mundane elegance, his engaging conversation, in which was not absent a touch of that gallantry which constituted at that time the dangerous brilliancy of the French Court, first astonished her, then frightened her, and before long filled her with horror. A bishop who responded to the invitations of the nobility of the country in sporting costume—green body-coat with Brandenburgs of gold, and cap with falcon's feathers as aigrette; who in his castle on the banks of the Danube, a royal present from the Queen of Hungary to the ambassador of France, received in tumultuous hunting parties the most illustrious families of Vienna, and in one single day brought down with his own gun as many as thirteen hundred and twenty-eight heads of game; a priest who in brilliant attire attended masked balls and received at one of them from the Princess of Auersperg, in the costume of a "well-to-do Jewess," a portfolio "all embroidered in gold;" a prelate who at the embassy itself organised suppers at separate tables for the ladies of the Court, and to these ladies did not fail to address in the most agreeable style the most seductive compliments—seemed to the pious sovereign the representative of the devil rather than of the very Christian king.

"On the 7th September, 1773," writes one of his officers, "the Prince of Rohan gave a stag hunt, at

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which, besides numerous gentlemen, the Princess Lignowska, the Countesses von Bergen and von Dietrichstein were present. It was very gay. The hunt finished late and night suddenly came; also a storm. The ladies who had arrived together separated; so that the Princess Lignowska and the Countess von Dietrichstein came back with the prince and myself. They had not made fifty steps from the guard-house when the prelate and his officer and the two ladies fell out into a ditch."

Was there in a moral point of view any serious precise accusation to bring against Prince Louis? Marie-Thérèse would have been embarrassed to say. But whatever, up to the present day, may have been the opinion of historians, we do not believe there was. Appearances, however, seemed to the empress so abominable that with her woman's wit she could not doubt but that there was something beneath them.

"The Ambassador Rohan," she writes a fortnight after his arrival, "is a big volume stuffed with very bad contents, by no means in conformity with his position as churchman and minister; without knowledge of affairs he has not sufficient talent to compensate for his lightness, presumption, and inconsistency. The mass of his suite is in like manner a mixture of men without merit and without morality."

Time accentuated this unfavourable opinion to such a point that mere antipathy became little by little with the empress a sort of violent and passionate hatred. Having gone to take the waters at Baden, at six leagues from Vienna, Prince Louis gave there an open-air fête of a popular character. Many ladies

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and gentlemen from Vienna were present. The representation consisted of two taverns tastefully arranged with branches, at the end of which, and on each, were two tuns of wine. By the side of these tuns were baskets of bread and meat, which were thrown and strewed about on all sides. Wine flowed, and whoever wished for some had only to present himself with a jug. In the midst of all these festivities there was a great pine-tree, exceptionally high and with a complete suit of clothes at the top for any one who liked to go and take. These kinds of trees are polished and greased to increase the difficulty of climbing them. After several champions had really fatigued themselves in endeavouring to reach the prize, there was one who succeeded. To the sound of cymbals and trumpets there was general applause.

After this recreation, a German comedy company began to act on a stage built up for the occasion and very prettily decorated. The ladies and the world of distinction generally sat opposite beneath an immense tent. At the end of the tent was a little house, where ices and other refreshments were served in abundance. The populace saw the comedy quite at its ease. It was terminated by a very fine display of fireworks on the water's edge. There was a little dancing in the presence of every one; after which, in the Prince's own carriages, the ladies drove to the embassy and, after supping, danced again.

The incident of the suppers very nearly degenerated into a quarrel between the empress and the ambassador. It was an innovation of Rohan's and had met with the greatest success. The young prelate collected

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at his own house assemblies of from one hundred to one hundred and fifty persons, chosen from among the best families in Austria. Tables of six or eight covers at most were multiplied in the halls of the Lichtenstein Palace, with its illuminated gardens. The guests grouped themselves together at will; and what joyous chattering in the midst of the drinking of the porcelain, the silver, and the glass! Our ambassador avoided in this manner the formal and silent monotony of long official tables, where every one, until then, in these diplomatic agapes, had been so solemnly bored. Accordingly it was not astonishing if the gaiety became sometimes rather noisy. It was always, so Rohan declared, of the most open-hearted kind. The suppers were followed by games, dances, and music, "at which," said the Abbé Georgel, "the young people enjoyed innocent liberty beneath the eyes of their parents." Rohan presided on these occasions, with what success may be imagined. He was charmed to be in the midst of games and smiles which led to the interweaving of love affairs. And as the company found itself delightfully entertained, it did not separate until an advanced hour of the night. Invitations to these charming suppers of the bishop were more and more sought after, and Marie-Thérèse was more and more convinced that the ambassador of France was corrupting her nobility. She commissioned the Prince of Saxe-Hildburghausen, "whose counsels derived weight from his age, his rank, his personal consideration" to make some representations. Rohan replied, with infinite politeness and good grace, that the most perfect good taste never

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ceased to preside at these assemblies, that they had been announced for a whole year, and that it would be impossible to suspend them without furnishing a pretext for the most injurious reports in regard both to his guests and to himself. "Her Majesty," he said, "is begged to weigh these reasons in her wisdom, and to exact nothing which might cast a slur on the reputation of the ambassador as on that of the first houses of Vienna who do him the honour to frequent these assemblies." And the "assemblies" went on as before.

Marie-Thérèse was more and more irritated by these discussions, which became frequent, since Rohan brought to them the advantage of his lordly manners and his piercing wit. In the course of a dispute the servants of the ambassador had maltreated a secretary of the crown named Gapp. Marie-Thérèse insisted on their being placed under arrest, "but their fellow-servants," she writes, "were to visit them in order to amuse them in their confinement. Moreover, one of the prisoners having fallen ill, Rohan asked permission to take him back to the embassy, while replacing him by two others, who were to remain under arrest in place of the guilty ones. All this was accompanied by intolerable banter, irony, and impertinence. But he was told by way of answer that it is not the custom here to make the innocent suffer for the guilty, and, moreover, that the invalid could not be better cared for than in his confinement."

Even among the surroundings of the empress her antipathies had been shared; but this devil of a bishop with his wild ways charmed everyone and gained all

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hearts. The correspondence of the empress with Mercy-Argenteau is full of spite.

"Our women," she writes, "young and old, beautiful and ugly, are bewitched. He is their idol. He turns their heads; so much that he is delighted to be here, and declares that he means to stop here even after the death of his uncle," the titular bishop of Strasburgh. The Emperor Joseph II., whom his mother has associated with herself on the throne, appears quite conquered by him.

"The emperor, it is true, loves conversing with him, but only to enjoy his flippant gossip, his wicked stories."

The prevailing mania went even so far as the Chancellor Kaunitz, who declared himself enchanted with the ambassador. The empress tried to console herself by reflecting that it was because Rohan "did not incommode him, and showed him every kind of submission." The explanation of an irritated woman. She understood that the activity of the young prelate had a more serious character.

"This same Rohan," she writes to Mercy-Argenteau, 6th November, 1773, "having been out with the emperor on Saint-Hubert's day, was made to sit beside him at table, and kept in conversation for two hours together about I know not what; but the result of it is a marked desire to go to Paris after Easter. The journey, the visits, the life to lead, all has been concerted; the servants have had notice to get ready. You see by this what influence an enterprising man who expresses himself well may have on the mind of the emperor, and this renders my position very

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disagreeable. One wretched man may upset with a word all that my constant labour has produced."

Their relations had reached the last point of tension when Rohan, discovering the manœuvres of Mercy-Argenteau at the Court of France, where the Austrian ambassador had established even in the highest spheres understandings through which he obtained information as to all that took place in the councils, had recourse at Vienna to similar methods. Then resolutely making up her mind, Marie-Thérèse asked Mercy-Argenteau to obtain Rohan's recall. Until then she had had reason and right on her side. She from this moment committed the very grave fault of mixing up her daughter Marie-Antoinette with her resentment, asking her to co-operate in procuring the recall of the coadjutor, and endeavouring to inspire her with the aversion she herself felt.

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V

MARIE-THÉRÈSE

Marie-Antoinette may be said to have been the victim of her daughterly tenderness. What feeling more legitimate towards a mother like Marie-Thérèse, in whom genius was fortified by heart. Coming to France at the age of fifteen to a heavy, awkward, self-contained husband, who could not understand her at the time, and who afterwards only understood her little by little, in proportion as his own mind became developed; thrown at the age of fifteen into a Court where vice reigned with impudent boldness in the person of Du Barry; abandoned with all her inexperience to the ambitious passions which snatched at her influence and fought for her support; the object of the basest, and often of the most spiteful, intrigues, who in the world was to serve Marie-Antoinette as counsellor and guide? She had none, she could have none except her mother. Her husband neither sees nor feels. Louis XV. is corrupt and indifferent; her husband's aunts, Mesdames Adelaide, Sophie, and Victoire, are old maids with dry hearts and narrow thoughts—soured, saddened, wearied. It was the Du Barry who chose for the dauphiness her lady-in-waiting.

Marie-Thérèse profited by the position to make her daughter the instrument of her policy. The empress did not, of course, foresee how fatal this complicity

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would be "to the poor innocent queen," as she sometimes called her; and Marie-Antoinette on her side, brought up in the belief that an indestructible union of France and Austria assured the happiness of the world, could not imagine, in the goodness, simplicity, and *naïveté* of her heart, that in serving the interests of her mother she would expose herself one day to the reproach of having betrayed those of her adopted country.

To act upon her daughter, Marie-Thérèse had not only the letters which she wrote to her with so strong, so authoritative a pen, but she maintained at her side an agent of incomparable tact and skill, Count de Mercy-Argenteau. "As regards Rohan," she writes to her representative, "I have passed the word to my daughter enjoining her to speak of him only to you. Without making formal complaints, I should wish and I expect that the king will gratify me by delivering me of his unworthy representative."

And Mercy replies: "I have asked the dauphiness to give me three or four days' time in which to combine the steps her Royal Highness will have to take in connection with Prince de Rohan. I will set forth to her the means to be employed."

Pressed on two sides, Marie-Antoinette gave herself away. She spoke in a direct manner to Mme de Marsan, aunt of Prince Louis, and advised her to get the demand for the young ambassador's recall made by his own family. At this moment Marie Thérèse seems to have had a glimpse of the danger into which she was leading her child. "As the relations of Rohan are numerous and very powerful, there are

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people who fear that they may avenge upon my daughter the injury which, according to them, my steps have caused them. They fear this all the more because they suppose that my daughter does not maintain all the necessary reserve as to the letters I write to her concerning Rohan personally. I only now repeat to you that Rohan is more and more inconsequent and insolent. I should be vexed if there was any delay or any evasiveness about his recall which would oblige me to take a stronger step in order to be finally delivered of so insupportable a man."

One circumstance had made Marie-Antoinette share the liveliest resentment of her mother. Rohan, who knew of the empress's sharp attacks upon him, found in his biting wit the appropriate replies. They were often cutting. In a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, d'Aiguillon, he wrote, not, indeed, without justice: "I have seen Marie-Thérèse weep over the misfortunes of oppressed Poland; but this princess, practised in the art of not allowing herself to be seen through, appears to have sobs at her command. In one hand she holds a handkerchief to wipe away her tears, while with the other she seizes the sword to complete the partition."

From levity, or perhaps spite, for d'Aiguillon detested Marie-Antoinette, the minister carried the letter to Du Barry, who thought it amusing to read it aloud at one of her suppers. Then all the courtiers burst into applause, and one of them hastened to repeat the epigram to Marie-Antoinette. The irritation of the dauphiness may be imagined. She has no longer any doubt but that Rohan is directly in

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correspondence with the mistress of the king, with the favourite of scandalous morals, in order to subject to her mockery the virtues and the honour of her mother.[1]

It was not until two months after the death of Louis XV., when Louis XVI. having ascended the throne, the influence of Marie-Antoinette had become permanent, that the Empress of Austria was freed from this "horrid, shameful embassy," to use her own words. So great was the rancour of Marie-Thérèse that when there was some question of Rohan's temporary return to Vienna that he might take formal leave of the Court and of his friends, she wrote to Mercy: "I shall be as much vexed by the execution of this project as by an insult offered to me personally."

Rohan was replaced by the Baron de Breteuil.

"Breteuil might meet with some trouble on arriving here," observed Marie-Thérèse, "so much are people prejudiced in favour of his predecessor. His partisans, gentlemen and ladies, without distinction of age, are very numerous, even Kaunitz and the emperor himself."

To all his friends Rohan sent his portrait chiselled on a thin strip of ivory, and such was their enthusiasm that they had the ivory mounted as a ring, surrounding it with pearls and diamonds. The Chancellor

[1] The anecdote of the letter about the handkerchief is contested, but without any valid reason. The fact seems established on the one side by the testimony of Mme Campan, who had it from Marie-Antoinette; on the other by that of the Abbé Georgel, who had it from the cardinal.

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Kaunitz had his ring, and wore it on his third finger like the others. "I should have had difficulty in believing it," says Marie-Thérèse, "had I not been convinced by my own eyes."

Louis de Rohan looked upon his recall as an outrage. He did not forgive Breteuil for succeeding him, and he suspected him of having contributed to his downfall.

He attacked him in return with all the raillery at his command. Breteuil a man of quite another stamp, replied only by silence and by a vigorous hatred, which later on, in terrible circumstances, he was to put into action. In his resentment, however, Rohan did not comprise the pretty little sovereign whom, not long before, on her entry into France, he had welcomed on a day of festivity and hope beneath the porch, hung with crimson velvet, of the lofty cathedral in red stone.

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VI

MARIE-ANTOINETTE[1]

On her entry into Strasburgh the little dauphiness uttered a phrase which the whole city repeated. The chief of the magistracy, that is to say, of the town council, with the view of being agreeable to her, had begun a harangue in the German language. "Do not speak German, sir," she interrupted; "from this day I understand no language but French."

We owe to the pen of Edmond and Jules de Goncourt the best portrait of Marie-Antoinette that has ever been traced. "A heart full of impulse, of generosity, of prodigality; a young girl rushing with open arms into life, eager to love and to be loved; that is the dauphiness. She loves everything which causes and encourages reverie; all the joys which appeal to young women and give distraction to young sovereigns, familiar retreats where friendship becomes expansive, and intimate talks in which ideas

[1] Edmond and Jules de Goncourt: "Hist. de Marie-Antoinette," edition 1884. Pierre de Nolhac: "Marie-Antoinette, Dauphiness," 1898. By the same: "Queen Marie-Antoinette," 1899. Maxime de la Rocheterie and Marquis de Beaucourt: "Letters of Marie-Antoinette," Paris, 1895. Memoirs of Mme Campan, de Besenval, de Mme d'Oberkirch, and Mme de Vigée-Lebrun; Maurice Tourneux, "Marie-Antoinette before History," Paris, 1896.

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are freely interchanged, and the woods which inspire confidence, and the wide, open country and the horizon which neither look nor thought can traverse, and the flowers in their eternal holiday. By a singular contrast, the emotional, almost melancholy, nature of the dauphiness was covered by a superficial gaiety, a light, wild, petulant gaiety, which comes and goes, and meanwhile fills all Versailles with movement and life. Mobility, *naïveté*, flightiness, expansiveness, the spirit of mischief. The dauphiness moves and spreads all around her as she runs the flutter of her thousand graces. Youth and infancy, all things combine to render her seductive, everything tends to make etiquette in her case impossible, everything is charming in the princess, the most adorable, the most feminine of all the women at the Court. Always leaping and bounding, passing like a song, like a flash of lightning, without care for her following or her ladies of honour." At the head of these ladies of honour stands Mme de Noailles, a grave and solemn duenna penetrated with the importance of her post. The laughing dauphiness has baptised her "Mme l'Etiquette." When the dauphiness had become a queen and a mother, and holding her child in her arms wished to place it in the cradle, Mme de Noailles intervened; it was not in conformity with etiquette. It happened one day, when Marie-Antoinette was riding a donkey, that the animal by a sudden kick threw her on to the grass, where she lay with her petticoats turned up, clapping her hands. "Quick!" she cried; "go for Mme de Noailles, and ask her what etiquette requires

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when the Queen of France has fallen from a donkey?"

This was quite characteristic of Marie-Antoinette's wit, of her irony composed of gaiety and good sense; charming irony which made her quite of her period, but which excited against her irreconcilable enemies. In the mouth of the sovereign words acquire new weight. The darts she threw had more penetration, and the wounds made were often more painful from the accuracy of the aim. When she came to the Court of France, Marie-Antoinette was still a child. Louis XV. made the remark. Her greatest pleasures for her, the heiress to the throne, are games with the children of her principal maid, tearing her dresses, damaging the furniture, upsetting the room from top to bottom. One expects every moment to see a scolding mamma come in.

And as a matter of fact the Vienna post does bring her some scoldings. "People say," writes her mother, "that you are beginning to behave ridiculously in society, as by bursting out laughing in people's faces. That will do you infinite harm, and might well cause doubts as to the goodness of your heart. Such a fault, my dear child, in a princess is no light one." Louis XV. sends for Mme de Noailles. He wishes to speak to her about the dauphiness. Certainly her qualities and her personal charms deserve all praise, but there is too much liveliness in her public demeanour, and too much familiarity, at hunting parties, for instance, when she distributes refreshments to the young men assembled round her carriage. Trifles, people will say. But

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Louis XV., a clear-sighted man, could read perhaps in the future. The Abbé de Vermond, who had been sent to Vienna to watch over the education of the future dauphiness, had not thought it his duty to counteract the tendencies of her nature. He had, on the contrary, accentuated them. Vermond also was a man of his time: an eighteenth-century Abbé, who loved wit, lively repartees, good sense, and good humour. Far away with ennui, etiquette, and the cumbersome ceremonial by which ancient tradition has weighed down the Queen of France. "The Abbé de Vermond," says the Goncourts, "wished by his education to bring Marie-Antoinette nearer to her sex than to her rank." That is the doctrine of Jean Jacques. The author of "Emile" would not have brought up his pupil differently.

Were it possible to suppose that Rousseau would have admitted into the state he dreamed of a queen, one might say that Marie-Antoinette would have realised his ideal. What characterises her? Love of nature, a horror of conventions, and a sensitive heart. What more is there in the moral doctrines of Jean Jacques?

She conceived life as a sentimental young girl imagines it in the spring of existence: a walk every morning to the top of a hill to see the sun rise; a run in the green meadows among the field flowers; a meditative ramble in the woods, or in the evening by the moonlight. Her favourite residence is a habitation which she made as much like the country as she could. Trianon was not the comic-opera village which the Goncourts have imagined, but an actual

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little village with serious rural character, a real milkmaid, and genuine farmers.

"This country life," writes M. de Nolhac, "increased her naturalness and her easy ways. The Queen of France is less prominent in it than Mme de Montesson or Mme de Luxembourg in their circle at Paris. The unpretentious mistress of the house lets her guests group themselves as they please round any woman—Mme de Polignac, for example—and reserves for herself the cares of hospitality. Her only pleasure is to please her guests, who are all her friends; friends chosen by her heart, and by whom she thinks herself beloved." When she comes in the women do not leave the spinet or their embroidery frames; nor the men their billiard-table or their tric-trac.

Examples have been quoted of her sensitive nature. It was the queen who, sitting in an arm-chair on a raised platform where Mme Vigée-Lebrun was painting her, sprang down in order to pick up the paint-brush dropped by the artist, who might, she thought, being in an advanced state of pregnancy, injure herself. The recollections of Mme Vigée Lebrun contain charming details about the "sittings" of her model. When they were tired of painting and talking the queen and the artist sang at the harpsichord Grétry's duets.[1]

It was the queen who, solicitous about the young girls of her household, read in the morning the pieces of the evening—she who read so unwillingly—to know

[1] The memoirs of Mme Vigée-Lebrun were not written by herself, but during her lifetime and almost under her dictation, on the basis of her notes and personal recollections.

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whether they could be allowed to see them represented. The postilion of the carriage in which Marie-Antoinette is travelling falls and is injured. She refuses to continue her journey, and will not go on until an hour after all the bandages have been placed. It was she herself who secured the necessary aid, calling everyone, in her emotion, "my friend,"—pages, grooms, postilions. Using the familiar *tu*, she said to them: "Mon ami, va chercher les chirurgiens; mon ami, cours vite pour un brancard; vois s'il parle, s'il est présent!"

We now touch upon the striking feature of her character, the one which will do her most harm: the irresistible need of testifying her affection to those she loves, and of receiving testimonies of affection from those whom she thinks loves her. In the first place, her mother, who knows the power of the tenderness with which she has inspired her daughter—and with Marie-Antoinette the head is not capable of struggling against the heart—uses and abuses this knowledge. After prevailing upon her—what seemed to her the hardest thing of all, which revolted her whole being—that she should make herself agreeable to the Du Barry at the time when this woman was the mistress of Louis XV. and ruled the Court, Marie-Thérèse and Joseph II. pressed Marie-Antoinette and succeeded in making her their auxiliary in connection with the partition of Poland, the Bavarian succession, and the opening of the Scheldt. The only political idea which the queen had received as a child, and which with time had taken upon her a greater hold, was that the close

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union of her mother's family with that of her husband, cementing the alliance of the crowns of France and Austria, was the necessary basis of a sound policy for both countries. She writes to her mother in touching terms: "Mercy has shown me his letter, which has caused me much thought. I will do my best to contribute to the preservation of the alliance and the friendly understanding. Where should I be if a rupture took place between our two families? I hope the dear God will preserve me from this misfortune and will inspire me as to what I ought to do. I have prayed to him with a good heart."

She did not believe she was betraying the interests of France. And was she betraying them? But her attitude will at last be magnified, misrepresented, in popular opinion. Her reign will finish to the cry of "Down with the Austrian!" which will accompany her even to the scaffold; whilst her mother and her brother, irritated to find in her the resistance of a Frenchwoman, accuse her on their side of ingratitude and of not being towards them the devoted daughter and sister they had hoped to find.

Moved by her need of affection, Marie-Antoinette thought that being a sovereign it was possible, it was permissible, for her to have friends. We remember her cordial, natural affections, charming in form and in expression. Two names have become celebrated in connection with them, those of the delightful Princess de Lamballe and of the beautiful Countess Jules de Polignac. "The Countess de Polignac," says the Duke de Lévis, "had the most divine figure that

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could be seen. Her look, her smile, all her features were angelic. She had one of those heads in which Raphael has managed to combine an expression of spirituality with infinite sweetness."

The tone of her voice was pure and captivating. She sang in a simple, suave style, and with a most graceful self-abandonment. Her movements, almost to the point of negligence, had the charm of her nature. Her dress was always as simple as possible. A rose in her hair; a gown of white linen or light muslin floating and well in harmony with her natural, tender, affectionate nature. Her words were like caresses; her smile had the tenderness of a kiss. From the first Marie-Antoinette was conquered. And it was one of those charming friendships of youth made up of familiarities and flightiness, pleasantry and confidential secrets: "games in which the two friends were but two girls playing and wrestling, almost pulling one another's hair down disputing with infinite grace and animation as to which was the stronger."

Mme de Polignac's affection for the queen was sincere and disinterested. Her separation from dignities and wealth had been one of her principal attractions in the eyes of Marie-Antoinette, and had been the origin of favours showered upon her. With what joy she had learned one day that her friend was encumbered with a family and without fortune, lodging at Versailles in a second-rate hotel, in the Rue des Bons-Enfants, and now places pensions and titles for her. Little ambitious for herself, Mme de Polignac, like her friend, was full of affection and

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devotion for her family. A veritable party grouped itself around her; first, her relations, then her friends, then hangers-on. Around this fresh and gracious friendship, two roses bound together beneath the brightness of the heavens, intrigues are got up; cabals are formed, plans are laid, manœuvres practised. Marie-Antoinette becomes the captive victim of her own friendliness. Weeds and briars stifle the flowers in their fugitive brilliancy. The queen can refuse nothing to her friend, and little by little, through this friend, one sees raised little by little to honours and fortune an entire family, with its cortège of friends, creatures, and clients—the faction of the Polignacs.

Meanwhile the public poverty makes itself cruelly felt. There are bankruptcies for startling sums; the taxes seem heavier than ever; and in the midst of general want the rapid, unjustified prosperity of the Polignacs has quite a defiant look. It irritates the nobility at the Court, and their disapproval spreads to Paris and to all France. It grows indeed, and becomes more menacing with distance.

"During the last four years," writes Mercy, "it is reckoned that the Polignac family, without any claim upon the state, and by pure favours, has obtained through important public appointments and by other beneficial gifts nearly five hundred thousand livres of annual revenue. All the most deserving families cry out against the injury done to them through such a dispensation of bounties. And if to those already granted one more, which would be without example, should be ceded—the donation of the

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estate Bitche, in Lorraine, was in question—clamour and disgust will be raised to the last point."

If, indeed, in this commerce of friendship, which seemed to her the essence of her life, Marie-Antoinette had found sincere, devoted natures like herself. As to her dear Polignac she had no doubts; but she perceived one day that the friend of her predilection had been in her hands for years past nothing but an instrument for procuring favours; and other disillusions besides. The queen wished to be loved for herself, and she was not long without finding that what was loved in her was the queen. Then wounded she falls back upon herself. This movement brings her little by little into the society of foreigners; those that she meets at Mme d'Ossun's or in the salons of the embassies; the Stael-Holsteins, the Strathovens, the Fersens, the Esterhazys, the Prince de Ligne; so much so that at the Court people are still more discontented with her. When it is pointed out to her how objectionable this marked preference for foreigners must be, she replies, smiling sadly, with these bitter words: "You are right; but at least they ask nothing from me."

And then among those who ask, without truce and without mercy, what anger arises! It shows itself in lamentations and recriminations, soon afterwards in epigrams and satires. In the very heart of the Court these mocking verses were sung:

> Petite reine de vingt ans,
> Qui traitez mal ici les gens,
> Vous repasserez la barrière,
> Lan laire!

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Which in English would be something like the following:

> Little queen of twenty years,
> Have you, now and then, no fears,
> That if courtesy still you lack,
> Austria soon will have you back?

By flightiness, without the least ill will, for the most part in some endeavour to oblige her friends, the queen has alienated from herself, one after the other, the most powerful families of the Court: those of Rohan-Marsan-Soubise, who had acquired a preponderating position, of Clermont-Tonnerre, Civrac, La Rochefoucauld, Noailles, Crillon, and Montmorency. In Rivarol there is a very profound remark. Louis XVI. loved his wife with a love which the last Bourbons accorded only to their mistresses. Marie-Antoinette inherited all the animosities which the king's mistress raised around her. She had also against her the calumnies of the women introduced at Court by the Du Barry. Her very virtue, her purity, were to them an insult; and this purity they did their best to tarnish. The queen would not allow herself to be surrounded by doubtful characters. Women who were not widows were to appear at Court with their husbands exclusively; which struck out of the list a number of names.

Such affronts are not forgiven. The tribe of courtesans is soon joined by that of the over-pious. The piety of the queen was frank, simple, straightforward, of natural growth. Ceremonies and religious practices seemed to her much less fitted to please God than the impulse of the soul and the tenderness of the heart. And that again could not be forgiven by the

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ultra devout; especially as the Vauguyon and her following, the Countess de Marsan and her coterie, had been the most cynical approvers of the Du Barry and of the vices of the old king.

Infinitely kind-hearted, Marie-Antoinette would not have taken upon herself to do a real injury to the person she might have esteemed the least; but that same impulsiveness which she showed in her affections she also exhibited in her antipathies. The two things were inseparable in her character. Her heart was frank and open, whether in friendship or in aversion. This latter showed itself in abruptness, in sharp remarks, in phrases which had the whistle of a whipcut, however lightly given. And thus, round about her, child as she still was, though already a mother, grew up hatred, resentment, and rancour. To her satirical remarks a thousand invisible mouths in obscure corners, where they are all the more to be feared, reply in phrases loaded with venom. "It is in the mischievous and mendacious statements spread from 1785 to 1788 by the Court," wrote Count Marck, "that are to be found the pretexts for the accusations brought by the revolutionary tribunal in 1793 against Marie-Antoinette."

The queen, it is true, was of joyous humour, mixed, it may be, with levity. "She loved life," say the Goncourts, "amusement, distraction, as they are loved, as they have always been loved, by youth and beauty." The Countess de la Marck, in her description of the Court of France, speaks of her as follows to Gustavus II.: "The queen goes incessantly to the opera and to the Comédie Francaise, contracts debts,

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gets herself into lawsuits, attires herself in feathers and finery, and laughs at everything." The note is not yet very spiteful, but it will become more envenomed. At a ball given by M. de Vitry, Marie-Antoinette enters masked with the Duchess de la Vauguyon; the Marquis de Caraccioli, Neapolitan ambassador, not recognising her, converses with her in a tone of pleasantry. The intrigue amuses the queen, who replies in the same style. But suddenly the marquis blushes with confusion; by a burst of laughter the queen has unmasked herself. The next day the newspapers had got hold of the anecdote, and already one can see how little would be necessary to make it tell against the reputation of the young queen.

The familiar ways of Marie-Antoinette have, however, been exaggerated. "Her tact," says the Prince de Ligne, "imposed respect as much as her majestic bearing. It was as impossible to forget it as to forget oneself."

She went to the opera one night with the Princess d'Hénin. The spring of her carriage snapped. Thereupon she got into a hackney coach, and thus reached her destination. No one would have known anything about the incident, had not she been the first to speak of it on her arrival.

"Fancy my coming to the opera in a hackney coach! Is it not amusing?" she said. The next day all sorts of nasty stories were in circulation about some discreditable adventure in which the queen was said to have been mixed up. The interesting morning excursion made by her one April day on the slopes

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of Marly, in order to see the sun rise, was made the subject of a long satirical narrative, a dirty libel called "Le Lever de l'Aurore," which the courtiers passed to one another under their sleeves. During the warm summer evenings on the terrace of Versailles, Marie-Antoinette loved to take the air. From an orchestra concealed in the foliage strains proceed which the softness of the night renders still more harmonious. Marie-Antoinette, who loves the people and is never more delighted than when she feels her pleasure shared by every one around her, wishes the general public to enter freely. Leaning on the arm of the Count of Artois or of the Countess de Polignac, she comes into contact with whoever happens to step that way. The London journals are filled with infamous details about "the nights of Versailles." The English are entertained with scandalous details, transforming these innocent promenades into unclean orgies. These sheets cross the channel, are translated, and circulate throughout Paris.

The new writers imagine vain things about the buildings at Trianon. Mazières is said to have arranged there a scene painted on cloth with glass-work inlaid. Walls of diamonds are also spoken of. These shone so brilliantly in the imagination of the people that when the deputies to the States-General in 1789 visit Trianon they ask persistently to be shown the hall of diamonds. And as it is impossible to show them anything of the kind, they go away with the conviction that this evidence of the wild prodigality of the queen has been concealed from them.

The expenses and the debts of the queen were the

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most redoubtable of the arms with which she was crushed. Her flightiness had exposed her to this. Louis XVI. had one day to pay debts which the queen had personally contracted to the amount of three hundred thousand livres. The news writers spoke of it. "In handing to her these three hundred thousand francs," say the "Secret Memoirs" of Bachaumont, "the king made her feel that those who surrounded her, for fear of displeasing her, disguised from her the truth. He begged her to reflect that this money came from the very substance of the people, and ought not to be wasted in frivolous expenditure." The remark, which got abroad, had consequences. In 1777 a Mme Cahouet de Villiers was arrested for having obtained enormous sums of money by making use of the queen's name. She had led the Farmer-General Béranger, who desired Court honours, to believe that the queen wished to contract a loan without saying anything about it to the king, because he had scolded her for her too-great expenditure. She showed false receipts. The money was given.

"The queen," writes Count Beugnot, "had then a reputation for levity which she certainly never deserved. She was supposed to be in money troubles, brought about by her taste for expenditure. Word phrases were attributed to her which brought her down from the character of queen to that of a too-complaisant woman. The thought having been suggested, people accustomed themselves to think of her as such."

Some months after the affair of Mme Cahouet de Villiers, on 19th December, 1778, Marie-Antoinette

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brought into the world the first of her children. It had been expected for eight years. "My health is entirely restored," she writes soon afterwards to her mother. "I am about to resume my ordinary life, and consequently I hope soon to be able to announce to my dear mamma new hopes for another child. She may be at rest as to my conduct, and I feel too much the necessity of having children to neglect anything on that head. If formerly I was to blame, it was from youthfulness and levity; but my head is now more firmly fixed, and you may be sure that I feel fully the duties before me. I know, too, what I owe to the king."

These words were sincere, and they had practical consequences. A deep and lasting reform took place in the life of the queen; but was it still possible to stop calumny? Marie-Antoinette wished to give an example of economy. In the Salon of 1783 was exhibited a portrait by Mme Vigée-Lebrun, in a long, plain, white gown.[1] "She is dressed like a housemaid," said some; "she wishes," declared others, "to ruin the trade of Lyons and to enrich the Belgians of Courtrai, her brother's subjects." And the portraits had to be removed! By this alone one sees the depth of the impression produced. "Accusations against the queen," says M. de Nolhac, "might be read in obscene pamphlets, which went through the clubs, and passed from hand to hand from the boudoir to the antechamber. They are to be found in manuscript collections in which one blushes to note

[1] This is the portrait now belonging to the Countess de Biron, which is reproduced in the present volume.

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the armorial bearing of noble families, and the *ex-libris* of women. The filth which the Revolution was to stir up, the allusions to Messaline and Frédégonde, take the form of smart couplets, elegant and powdered rhymes; and the ladies of the Court sing them to the airs of the day in the intimacy of their supper parties. But the windows are open; the passers-by can hear, and from the drawing-room the song descends into the street. The mob, which is being taught to despise queens, women, and mothers, will not forget any of the lessons it is receiving; and the people of the Court are singing the very verses which will one day accompany them to the guillotine."

Yet if ever there was a woman who should have obtained the sympathy of the men of the Revolution, it was Marie-Antoinette. She approached the masses by the affection she felt for them, by the pains she took to understand them. She approached the men of the Revolution by the ideas she had in common with them.

Was it not she who obtained the authorisation of the "Marriage of Figaro;" she who made such efforts to get Voltaire received at Court? It was Marie-Antoinette who brought Necker back to the ministry. She supported the double representation of the *Tiers Etat.* In 1788 she made a reduction of 1,200,000 livres in the expenses of her household.

On the 8th June, 1773, took place the solemn entry of Louis XVI., still the dauphin, into the town of Paris with the dauphiness. The enthusiasm of the mob reached the point of madness. The houses were

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a mass of flowers; people threw their hats into the air. Uninterrupted acclamations of "Long live the Dauphin! Long live the Dauphiness!" were repeated in a thousand echoes. "Madame," said the Duke de Brissac, "you have here two hundred thousand lovers." Nothing would satisfy Marie-Antoinette but to go down into the gardens, to mix directly with the crowd, to thank them at close quarters, to shake the hands extended towards her. And she wrote to her mother a letter in which the beatings of her heart can be felt.

"As for honours, he received all that can be imagined; but that, though all very well, is not what touched me most; it was the tenderness, the eagerness of the suffering people which, in spite of the taxes by which it is crushed, was transported with joy on seeing us. When we went for a walk in the Tuileries there was such a crowd around us that we were three-quarters of an hour without being able to move backwards or forwards. We gave orders to the guards several times that no one was to be struck. On our return we went up on to an open terrace. I cannot tell you, my dear mamma, what transports of joy of affection were shown to us at this moment. How happy we are in our station to be able to gain the goodwill of the people at so little cost. Yet there is nothing so precious. I felt it, and I shall never forget it."

Marie-Antoinette and the French of the Revolutionary period were made to understand one another; but between the queen and the country Basile had slipped in. He was the man of the day. Beaumarchais,

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who has left such a striking picture of his time, has marvellously described him: "Calumny! There is no silly piece of spite, no horror, no absurd tale which one cannot get adopted by going properly to work. First a slight sound, skimming the ground like the swallow before the storm, murmurs *piannissimo*, and flies on and spreads as it flies the poisoned dart. Some mouth picks it up and, *piano*, *piano*, skilfully slips it on. The evil is done. It germinates, grows, travels *reinforzando* from mouth to mouth. It moves the imp; then suddenly, impossible to say how, you see the calumny sit up, hiss, spread out, grow taller to the naked eye. It springs forward, extends its flight, whirls, envelops, tears, pulls, bursts, and thunders, till at last it becomes a general cry, a public *crescendo*, a universal chorus of hatred and proscription." [1]

[1] It is necessary here to observe that in 1774 Beaumarchais had been sent to London by Louis XVI. and Sartine to buy up the entire edition of a frightful pamphlet against Marie-Antoinette. It was called "Important Notice to the Spanish Branch on its Rights to the Crown of France in Default of Heirs, and which may be very useful to all the Bourbon Family, especially King Louis XVI." Signed G. A. (Guillaume Angelucci), at Paris, 1774. This Angelucci was a Jew. Beaumarchais put himself into relations with him and bought up the edition. He had the copies destroyed, and did the same with a second edition at Amsterdam. He was about to return in triumph, when he heard that Angelucci had escaped with a copy saved from the general destruction. See "Corresp. entre Marie-Thérèse et Mercy-Argenteau," ed. d'Arneth et Geffroy, ii. 224; et d'Arneth, "Beaumarchais und Sonnenfels" (Vienna, 1868). Paul Huot: "Beaumarchais in Germany" (Paris, 1869). Soon afterwards it was necessary to buy up another pamphlet: "The Loves of Charlot and Toinette," S. L., 1779. Charlot

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The Goncourts have written these lines of profound truth:

"The pleasures, the affections of private life are forbidden to sovereigns. Prisoners of state in their palaces, they cannot go outside without diminishing the devotion of their subjects and the respect of public opinion. Their pleasures must be great and royal; their friendship highly placed, without confidential secrets; their smile public and the same for every one. Queens are subjected, like kings, to this penalty, this expiation of sovereignty. Let them descend to personal tastes, and neither their sex, their age, the simplicity of their soul, the *naïveté* of their inclinations, nor the purity and devotion of their affections will acquire for them either the indulgence of courtiers or the silence of critics or the charity of history."

Entirely of her own time, of which she was the lively, picturesque expression, imbued with the sentimental and nature-loving philosophy which from the shopkeeper to the nobleman had penetrated all minds, Marie-Antoinette thought that being a queen she might be a woman. A mistake which the Court where she lived did not forgive her, which the Revolution did not forgive her, and which we find it hard to forgive her even now.

These are the circumstances under which Marie-Antoinette was brought to bed.

represented the Count of Artois. The book was illustrated with indecent pictures. The destruction cost 17,400 livres to the private purse of Louis XVI., as is shown by the receipt of the bookseller, Boissière, published by Manuel, police dévoilée, i. 237-38.

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The keepers of the seals, the ministers, and secretaries of state were waiting in the great cabinet with the household of the king, the household of the queen, and the persons who had the grand entries. The rest of the Court occupied the card-room and the gallery. Suddenly a commanding voice is heard: "La reine va accoucher!" The Court rushed headlong in with the crowd. Custom demanded that all should enter at this moment; that no one should be refused. The spectacle is public. The room is invaded so tumultuously that the screens of the tapestry surrounding the queen's bed are almost knocked down. The queen's bed-chamber is turned into a market-place. Savoyards get up on the furniture to have a better view. Such a compact mass fills the room that the queen feels suffocated.

"Air! air!" cries the accoucher. The king throws himself upon the list-bound windows and opens them with the fury of a madman. Ushers and footmen are obliged to push back the gaping crowd. The hot water which the accoucher had called for not arriving, the principal surgeon punctures the queen's foot. The blood starts. Two Savoyards, standing upon a chest of drawers, have got into a quarrel and are calling one another names. A perfect hubbub. At last the queen opened her eyes; she is saved![1] Such was the ceremonial at the Court of France when the queen gave an heir to the crown. The woman who had to accomplish in such a manner the supreme acts of her life, should have understood that her heart had no right to love, that her mouth had no right to laugh.

She did not understand, and she was guillotined.

[1] Edmond et J. de Goncourt: "Marie-Antoinette," pages 131, 132.

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VII

JEANNE DE VALOIS

It was March and the weather was still cold. She squeezed against the wall as the carriages hurried by or pressed against the sides of the gateway—the poor little thing shivering in her rags, with naked feet and drawn features, her lips blue with cold and hunger. She held out a fine, delicate hand, and murmured in a trembling voice, which was shaken now and then as by shudders of rage, "Pity a poor orphan of the blood of the Valois!"

The passers-by did not, for the most part, listen to her; others, in a haughty, absent-minded manner, threw her a few sous; while those who were struck by her words, "an orphan of the blood of the Valois," replied by abuse, "oh, the little impostor!" and pushed her roughly aside. Then she sat down for some moments on the edge of the road fatigued, resting her elbows on her knees, her chin in the hollow of her hands. The wind blew up her chestnut hair which fell caressingly over her cheeks. Her lips shuddered and her eyes assumed an alarming brilliancy. She gazed at the carriages passing like a tempestuous wind along the king's high road from Paris to Versailles; the horses with their shining coats, the coachmen with epaulettes of gold, the lacqueys in brilliant liveries, the gentlemen with their plumed hats, the ladies in their hoops covered

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with satin and in delicate bodices with lace like a light foam, and diamonds which scintillated like stars; and the eyes of the little beggar-girl had a hard glitter, shining with envy and hatred.

At night she went home to a frightful den, crawling up, worn out as she was, a wooden staircase, of which ivy, honeysuckle, and other creepers had taken possession; tremulously she pushed open the door. In the room was a picture of sordid misery. A man received her with oaths. A woman, her own mother, did not embrace her. Each day the child was to bring back a fixed sum; and when she had not succeeded in getting the proper amount, her mother tore off her rags and beat her with nettles till she bled.

The little girl was in her eighth year. Sometimes she took out her sister, still younger than herself, and carried her on her back, after arranging her apron as a scarf too keep her in position. And her knees, when she had walked for some time, bent beneath the weight.

On a fresh April morning, when the hoar-frost, bathed with light, made an inspiriting atmosphere, the child, out of breath, had stopped half-way towards the village Passy. At some distance from the road a carriage was coming slowly towards her. She waited for it, and, when it was sufficiently near, went up to it and held out her hand.

"Give alms, for the love of God, to two poor orphans of the blood of Valois."

"What do you say, little one?" asked a lady, richly attired, seated at the back of the carriage by the side of a fat man in a braided coat, who was

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already beginning to grumble. It was absurd to stop the coach in order to hear the lies of a little beggar-girl. But the lady wished to hear them, and already the child had begun her story.

"Wonderful!" replied the marchioness; "and I promise you, my little girl, that if your tale is really true—— But take care what you're about," she added; "you will be sorry, if you have been trying to impose upon me."[1]

It was the Marchioness Boulainvilliers, who was going to her estate at Passy in company with her husband, the provost of Paris. The marchioness, as she had said she would, made inquiries in the neighbourhood of the place which served as shelter to the little beggar-girls, and especially of the Abbé Enoque, curé of Boulogne, to whose parish they belonged. The priest, a worthy and charitable man, had had compassion on the unhappy children, and had procured precise information on the subject of the

[1] The sources for this portion of the narrative are very numerous, and allow us not only to speak with certainty, but to enter into minute details. They are the "Souvenirs of the Countess de la Motte," and her interrogatory of the 20th January 1786, by the Commissaries of the Parliament; the "Memoirs of Count de la Motte"; the "Memoirs of Count Beugnot"; a very curious narrative entitled "True History of Jeanne de Saint-Rémi," published in 1786, written by someone who was particularly well informed as to this part of our heroine's life; the "Secret Memoirs of Bachaumont"; a mass of correspondence, including a letter from Jacques de Saint-Rémy de Valois, dated 16th May, 1776, to the Count de Vergennes, in which he speaks of his years of infancy ("Archives of Foreign Affairs," vol. 1383, f. 86); and, finally, the information which Maître Target, advocate of Cardinal de Rohan, collected on the spot, and which is preserved in his brieff. Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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mother and her daughters from their birthplace near Bar-sur-Aube. He now hastened to place what he knew at the disposal of the marchioness.

The child was named Jeanne. She was the eldest daughter[1] of Jacques de Saint-Rémy, Baron of Luze and of Valois, who was born in his château of Fontette, at five leagues from Bar-sur-Aube, 22nd December, 1717, and had just died at the Hôtel Dieu, of Paris, on the 16th February, 1762. When she said that she was of the blood of the Valois, the child told the truth. She was directly descended, through the males, from Henry II. of the branch of the Valois, senior to that of the Bourbons then on the throne. The genealogy was certified to be correct by the judge-at-arms of the French nobility, Hozier de Sérigny, and by the learned Chérin, "Genealogist of the orders of the king." Henry II. had had by Nicole de Savigny a child, Henri de Saint-Rémy, whom he recognised and legitimised, recognition and legitimation being then two identical acts constituting one single act. Henri de Saint-Rémy had had of Chrétienne de Luz, René de Saint-Rémy, who had had of Jacquette Bréveau, Pierre de Saint-Rémy de Valois, who had had of Marie de Mullot, Nicolas-René de Saint-Rémy de Valois, who had had of Marie-Elisabeth de Vienne, Jacques de Saint-Rémy, Baron of Luze and of Valois, father of the ragged little girl whom the Marquise de Boulainvilliers had entered into conversation with on the steps of her carriage. The arms were, in heraldic language,

[1] Born at the château of Fontette, department of the Aube, 27th July, 1756.

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d'argent à une fasce d'azur, chargée de trois fleurs de lis d'or. And the little child was well acquainted with her arms. It was indeed the only thing she did seem acquainted with in her frightful indigence.

The "azure rod," the "golden lily;" her little head was as if interwoven with them. And when she spoke of them with singular precision, as also of her ancestor, the royal bastard of Nicole de Savigny, then all her body, bent down as it was with misery, sprang up in a movement of haughtiness and revolt.

For several generations the Saint-Rémy de Valois led in their domains of Fontette what Count Beugnot calls "the heroic life"—that of agriculturists and hunters, or rather poachers; the true existence, it may be said, for sons of kings from the moment they got separated from the throne, unless they occasionally took to forgery. The château was immense, stunted, and square, without style, dating from the end of the sixteenth century, on the side of a hill dominating an undulating plain, where fields of lucerne and oats alternated with champagne vineyards. It was surrounded by ancient walnut trees with shining foliage and gnarled trunks. Lower down, a second château, of feudal aspect, with great round towers sunk in ditches with dirty water stagnating in them, served as a sort of barn where hay and gathered fruit were stowed away, and as a lodge for the keeper. It was quite dilapidated. The roof had fallen in and the upper stories were open to the rain. "My father," writes Beugnot, "had seen the head of this unhappy family, that is to say, Jacques de Saint-Rémy, father

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of little Jeanne. He described him as a man of athletic proportions, who lived by hunting, by plundering the forests of their fruit, and even by stealing cultivated fruit from gardens. The members of the Saint-Rémy family had led for two or three generations this heroic life, which the inhabitants and authorities endured in the one case from fear, in the other from the renown still attaching to an ancient and celebrated name."

The baron's associates were all peasants, with whom he got drunk and fought. He sold patch by patch all that remained to him of his patrimony, to keep him going in his debauches. At last he seduced a girl named Jossel, daughter of the lodge-keeper of his château, and after she had given him a child married her.

This woman completed his ruin. She was addicted to the most degrading vices, and Jacques de Saint-Rémy, with his herculean strength, had a feeble character, an indolent nature. In the hands of his wife he was a mere rag.

"My father," writes Count Beugnot, "remembers that fifteen or twenty years ago he used to go every year to the canton of Essoyes for the assessment of the taxes. When he arrived in the parish of Fontette the curé never failed to secure the contents of his purse for Saint-Rémy's destitute children. There were three of them, living abandoned in a miserable building, pierced on the side of the street by a little trap through which the inhabitants, each in his turn, brought them soup or something more solid to eat.

"'I have seen it myself,' said my father, 'and the

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curé was afraid to open the door for fear of afflicting me by the spectacle of these children, naked and nourished like savages. He assured me that my contribution would help them to get clothes.' "

Jeanne, the eldest, went out with the village flocks. Shoeless, very thin, stalks of straw and hay entangled in her hair, she urged on the slow cows with her black crook, her patched gown of faded blue harmonising with the greyish verdure of the oats. But she did not like rising early, and her mother sometimes pursued her in the morning with a hay-fork in order to make her get up.[1] When the Baron de Saint-Rémy and his wife had exhausted their resources, even to the last square of earth, now ceded to their former farmers; when they had sold their château piece by piece to several families of the neighbourhood,[2] and had tired out the patience of creditors who were preparing to exercise against them warrants of arrest, they resolved to go and seek their fortune at Paris. They would at once take the road, father, mother, and three of the four children—that is to say, Jacques and Jeanne, the two eldest, and the fourth, Marguerite-Anne, who had just been born, and whom it was easy to carry. More embarrassing was Marie-Anne, aged a year and a half. It was decided to start at night,

[1] Doss. Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

[2] The descendants of these families still occupy the different parts of the château, where each family is separated from its neighbours by simple partitions. Of these families there are eight. A part of the château was unfortunately destroyed by a fire some years ago. As for the old château with the round towers, it is entirely destroyed; but the lower part of the towers can still be seen in the interior of the houses which have been constructed on its site.

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and to leave her, poor child, enveloped in swaddling-clothes, to the care of a brave fellow, a peasant, named Durant, one of Baron de Saint-Rémy's former farmers, and still on good terms with him. Let us say at once that this excellent man felt deep pity for the deserted child, and undertaking to provide for her brought her up with every care and with much affection.

It was in the spring of 1760, nothing remarkable took place on the road, says a well-informed contemporary.[1] They travelled by short stages, and after several days' march reached Paris. Not finding any occupation in the city they put up at Boulogne, where they knew the curé, who visited them from time to time and charitably helped them with gifts of money. The rest of their funds came from the little beggar-girl. The baroness, too, turned to account her beauty as a robust and attractive peasant woman. She ended by turning her husband out of doors—the baron was now almost always ill—to replace him by a soldier in the guards named Jean-Baptiste Raimond, a native of the island of Sardinia. Jacques de Saint-Rémy died at the Hôtel Dieu, as already mentioned, of misery and grief. The life of little Jeanne now became insupportable. She was the scapegoat of the depraved and spiteful couple, the child-martyr on whom their debauchery and remorse relieved themselves by acts of violence. "Unmoved by my tears," writes Jeanne, "my pitiless mother shut the door, and, after forcing me to strip myself of my miserable

[1] The anonymous author of the "Veritable History of Jeanne de Saint-Rémy."

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rags, which scarcely served to cover me, fell upon me with fury and tore my skin by the strokes of her rod. Nor was that all. Raimond tied me to the foot of the bed, and if, during this cruel proceeding, I dared to utter cries, she began again to strike me with redoubled blows. Often her rod broke in her hands, to such an extent did her brutal fury weigh upon me."

It was in 1763 that Jeanne found herself on the path of the Marchioness of Boulainvilliers. The marchioness adopted her and placed her with her little sister Marguerite-Anne, whom she had seen hanging on to her back, in the house of a Mme Leclare, who kept a school for young girls at Passy. Marguerite-Anne died soon afterwards of small-pox.

Meanwhile, the Baroness de Saint-Rémy, who had abandoned her husband, was soon afterwards abandoned by her lover. She returned with her son Jacques, who had remained with her, to Bar-sur-Aube. Rustic admirers helped her to subsist as long as she possessed any attractiveness. Little by little this with age disappeared, and the wretched woman died in the last stage of poverty. Her son Jacques, still a child, had gone off with a little money in his pocket. He made his way to Toulon, where he joined the first ship which consented to receive him. He had an energetic and worthy nature, and made in the navy an honourable career.[1] Jeanne remained with

[1] Naval ensign at Brest, 1st October, 1776; Lieutenant, 4th April, 1780; Captain of Fusiliers in the Marine Infantry, 1st November, 1782. He was in command of the frigate *Surveillante* and had been made Chevalier de Saint-Louis, when he died at Port-Louis (Isle of France) on the 9th May, 1785, at the age of thirty.

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Mme Leclerc until after her first communion. When she was fourteen years of age the Marchioness of Boulainvilliers placed her at Paris in the house of a dressmaker, Mlle La Marche, whom she left for Mme Boussol, dressmaker, in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, whom she quitted for a private engagement. Her restless, agitated character did not allow her to remain long in the same place. She seemed devoured by a fever. Personal service she could not support without impatience. From time to time Mme de Boulainvilliers had her to stay with her to put her in good humour and restore her to health. She was in this way now in apprenticeship, now in service, getting more and more irritable. "I became," she says, "a washerwoman, a water-carrier, a cook, an ironer, a needle-woman, everything except a happy and respected girl." Was she, a grand-daughter of the kings of France, made to remain in service? She did not fail to slip from time to time a word to this effect in the ear of her protectress, until at last Mme de Boulainvilliers determined to verify officially the alleged descent from Henry II. Seeing, moreover, that the young girl was unhappy, she took her finally into her house, where she remained for two years.

Jeanne had become a beautiful girl, in the flower of her eighteen years, when Mme de Boulainvilliers brought up from Fontette Marie-Anne, who it may be remembered had been hung up at the door of the Farmer Durand, to place both of them at the school of the Abbey Vyeries, near her Montgeron estate; a finishing establishment for young ladies. She

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supplied also the principal wants of the young Jacques de Saint-Rémy, who had entered the navy as midshipman; and procured for him the patronage of the Duke de Penthiévre. On 6th May, 1776, she was able at last to get officially authenticated by Hozier the famous genealogy, the children's only possession; and in consideration of their royal origin she obtained for each of them, by an order of 9th December, 1776,[1] a pension of eight hundred livres from the privy purse of the king. In March, 1778, she took the two sisters away from the Abbey Vyeries and placed them in that of Longchamp, where only girls of noble family were admitted. Jeanne was twenty-one years of age. By her skill in appealing to the sympathy of her protectress she had transformed her existence. Was she happier in consequence? She was now the victim of unbounded pride. It was the blood of the Valois in her veins, she said. This blood of the Valois may be said to impregnate all her thoughts, every one of her letters. Whatever fortunate position she may at times have reached, she seems alwavs to think of herself as the poor, deserted child, repeating by the wayside in rags, her eyes burning with hatred and envy: "Take pity on a little beggar-girl of the blood of the Valois."

"Ruled," she writes, "by an indomitable pride which I received by nature, and which the kindness of Mme de Boulainvilliers, by opening to me a glimpse of a more brilliant future, had rendered more acute, I could not but shudder when I reflected on my position. 'Alas!' I said to myself, 'why am I

[1] Arch. Nat., 1st October, page 199.

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sprung from the blood of the Valois? Oh, fatal name that has opened my soul to this haughtiness, which ought never to have found place in it. It is for you that I shed tears; it is to you that I owe my misfortunes.' "

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VIII

COUNT DE LA MOTTE

Aristocratic as may have been the life led at the Abbey Longchamp by our two young ladies, who went on growing in age and in beauty, if not in wisdom, they ended by finding it first monotonous and afterwards tiresome. The Marchioness of Boulainvilliers had them out from time to time. In her domain of Passy the pretty convent girls found themselves in contact with worldly life. They allowed themselves to be caressed by the perfumed speeches of elegant and sparkling young men, and on their return to the convent found the grey and black dresses of the nuns inelegant and tame. The magnificent wedding of Mlle de Passy, daughter of the Marchioness Boulainvilliers, who was marrying the young Viscount of Clermont-Tonnerre, to which Mlles de Saint-Rémy de Valois had been invited, displayed to their delighted eyes an enchanting spectacle.[1]

Accordingly, when Jeanne got back to her convent, and the abbess, commissioned to ascertain her intentions, asked her if she felt any vocation for the religious life, the lady was nicely received!

[1] The marriage was celebrated on the 29th of January, 1779. Mme de Clermont-Tonnerre died two years afterwards, leaving two little girls.

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"One day in the autumn of 1779,"[1] writes Count Beugnot, "it was announced at the house of Mme de Surmont, wife of the provost, who was also civil and criminal judge of the Manorial District and president of the salt storehouses of Bar-sur-Aube, the two fugitive princesses had put up at the Inn of La Tête Rouge; that is to say, the most wretched inn of a town in which there is not one that is passable. And we all began to laugh at the idea of princesses in such a lodging. It appeared that these ladies had escaped from the convent of Longchamp, and had made their way to Bar-sur-Aube as to a central point, from which to combine all their efforts in order to recover the considerable estates which formed the ancient patrimony of their house. These estates are the lands of Fontette, d'Essoyes, and Verpillières." One of the two ladies bears the name of Mlle de Valois—our little Jeanne; the other, that of Mlle de Saint-Rémy, Marie-Anne, her younger sister.

They had got over the surrounding hedge with two light packets in hand, and twelve crowns in their pockets. Then the barge took them as far as Nogent, whence the coach carried them to Bar-sur-Aube. Of their thirty-six livres they had spent twenty-four. The enormous and majestic wife of the President de Surmont,[2] in her beautiful mansion of the Rue de

[1] Count Beugnot speaks of the autumn of 1782. The marriage certificate of Nicolas de la Motte and Mlle de Saint-Rèmy de Valois, of 1780; in the registers of the civil state of Bar-sur-Aube proves that 1779 should be read.

[2] "I have painted in a few strokes the somewhat free society which assembled in the house of Mme de Surmont," writes Count Beugnot (i. 6). It is to be regretted that this portion of his memoirs has not been published.

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l'Aube, surrounded by flower-gardens, was the centre of a youthful and lively set. Every day there were excursions into the country in char-à-bancs with basketfuls of provisions, which were to be laid out on tablecloths of turf and furze in the depths of the woods; there were performances in which the young men and the young women exchanged phrases on a carpeted stage constructed in one of the lofty halls of the mansion,[1] and in which the spectators applauded a dialogue, all the more animated and natural from the fact that Frontin and Lisette had, arm in arm, rehearsed their parts in perfect solitude. It was necessary to prepare for the public beneath the thick, discreet bowers, the deep avenues of the park.

"Mme de Surmont resisted for some time," writes young Albert Beugnot, budding advocate, "but we had succeeded in persuading her that her position in the town imposed upon her the duty of protecting the fugitive and perhaps persecuted young ladies of high birth, whom the nobility in so shameful a manner neglected. We had touched the sensitive point."

The good lady then took the young girls under her roof, notwithstanding the objections of her husband, who had never ceased grumbling and protesting

[1] The Surmont mansion is in good preservation at Bar-sur-Aube, 16 and 18, Rue d'Aube. The rooms, style of Louis XVI., are for the most part of the period. By an interesting coincidence the house is now inhabited by a direct descendant of Henri II. and Nicole de Savigny, Mlle Olivia de Valois, belonging to the elder branch of the family, whose younger branch terminated with the heroine of this narrative, with her two sisters and her brother. See Em. Socard: "Table généal. de la Maison de Valois Saint-Rémy." Troyes, 1858, 8vo.

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against an invasion which disarranged his habits. As the young ladies were almost without clothes, Mme de Surmont lent them the day of their arrival two white dresses, but without much hope of their being able to wear them, for the dresses had been made for her figure, which was most voluminous. What, then, was her surprise when she saw the next morning that the bodices fitted them perfectly. They had passed the night in cutting them out and remaking them. "They acted in all things with the same freedom, and Mme de Surmont soon began to find the unceremoniousness of the princesses carried too far." The elder of the two, Jeanne de Valois, had an active, impetuous disposition, and arranged everything in her own way in the old house, where she so soon made herself at home. She was not long chasing away the ill-humour of the president of the salt storehouses, charming him by her graceful vivacity, her mischievous playfulness, and her thousand and one flattering and caressing ways. She filled him with delight.

"The demoiselles de Saint-Rémy," says Beugnot, "who were only to remain for one week with Mme Surmont, stayed in her house for one year. The time passed as it passes in a little provincial town—in quarrels, in reconciliations, statements, justifications, and frightful intrigues which never went beyond the walls of the city. Meanwhile the genius of Mlle de Saint-Rémy," the elder, took development even in so narrow a circle. She played preludes before attacking the principal piece. She had taken possession of M. de Surmont, and

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covered with blind attachment felt for her by this worthy man the spiteful things she distributed among all who came near her, including Mme de Surmont herself. She often repeated to me that the most unhappy year of her life was the one she passed in the society of this demon."

Among the persons whom the two sisters met at Bar-sur-Aube was a Mme de la Motte, widow of an officer of gendarmerie, of the Burgundy company,[1] in garrison at Lunéville. She had a son engaged in the very company in which her husband had served. Mark-Antoine-Nicolas de la Motte visited often at the house of the Surmonts. He was a young man with a long face, slim figure, pale complexion, and black eyebrows, and looked well in his scarlet uniform embroidered with silver braid. He wore the white cockade in his cocked hat bound with silver, and his heavy cloak of scarlet cloth was lined with red serge and had fawn-coloured trimmings. But he was a lout, and his comrades, disfiguring his name "La Motte," called him "Momotte," without his taking offence. La Motte had a talent for acting. He played parts with Mlle Jeanne, and gave her, she says, lessons in declamation. "These moments," observes Jeanne, "were not without their love interludes." They declaimed so much and so well that it became necessary for them to get married in great haste.[2] The union of Nicolas de la Motte, esquire,

[1] On the eve of the Revolution the gendarmeries comprised six companies, of which the first four, Scotch, English, Burgundians, and Flemings, had the king for captain.

[2] The "True History of Jeanne de Saint-Rémi" gives, in

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king's gendarme of the Burgundy company, and of Jeanne de Saint-Rémy de Valois de Luze was blessed on 6th June, 1780, in the parish church of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine of Bar-sur-Aube. The ceremony of betrothal had been gone through the evening before "under the authorisation of Messire Joseph-Henri-Arminot, esquire, lord of Fin-et-bonchemin, chosen guardian *ad hoc* by the meeting of relations held 20th May, 1780, on account of the prolonged absence of Mme Jossel, mother of the young lady."

"At the celebration of the marriage assisted: Nicolas-Clausse de Surmont, king's counsellor, president, provost, civil and criminal judge of the manor of Bar-sur-Aube, lieutenant-general of police and president of the salt stores, maternal uncle of the husband; Messire Joseph-Henri-Arminot, esquire, lord of Fin-et-bonchemin, relation and guardian of the bride, living at the said Bon-chemin, and Jean Durand, receiver of taxes, living at Fontette." This Jean Durand was doubtless the old farmer of Saint-Rémy who had adopted and brought up the little Marie-Anne.

One month afterwards, day for day, at the same parish church were baptised Jean-Baptiste and Nicolas-Mark, twin sons of Nicolas de la Motte, king's gendarme, and Jeanne de Valois. The godfathers were the servants of Mme Surmont. The two children died some days afterwards.[1] Nicolas de la

regard to the first loves of Nicolas de la Motte and Jeanne de Valois, details so realistic that it is impossible to reproduce them.

[1] These facts are in accordance with the registers of the civil state of Bar-sur-Aube.

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Motte was then twenty-six years of age and Jeanne de Valois twenty-four. The married couple usurped the title of count with such skill that all contemporaries, writers, and afterwards all the historians who have occupied themselves with their doings, have been deceived. In the official acts which have passed beneath our eyes, La Motte is simply described as esquire (écuyer). His uncle, the brother of his father, was a shopkeeper. It was easy, however, to get confused on the subject, since there existed in the Bar-sur-Aube country two families named La Motte. The one to which the husband of our heroine belonged was connected with the lesser nobility. The other was of more ancient and more considerable rank established at Breaux-le-Comte.

"M. de la Motte," says Beugnot, "was an ugly man, but well built; skilled in all bodily exercises, while in spite of his ugliness the expression of his face was pleasant and kind. He was not entirely without wit, but what mind he had was devoted to petty things. He was of gentle birth and the third of his name who had served in the gendarmerie. His father, Chevalier de Saint-Louis, and maréchal des logis in this corps, had been killed at the battle of Minden. Without any kind of fortune, he had, nevertheless, had the talent to get up to his neck in debt." "Gendarme enough to be able to carry his truss of hay from the forage magazine to his quarters," his brother-in-law, M. de la Tour, said of him. "But don't expect anything more," he added.

"He is not good-looking," wrote Manuel in his

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pamphlet, "but he offers Mlle de Valois what she wants."

When Mme de Surmont knew to what point Jeanne and her nephew had deceived her, irritated by the insult offered to her house, she told the young lady to go, and at the same time said good-bye to the gentleman. They sought refuge at the house of Mme de la Tour, sister of de la Motte; but very much pressed herself, she could not put them up for very long. Jeanne alienated for a thousand francs two years of her pension of eight hundred livres; La Motte sold for six hundred livres a cabriolet and a horse which he had bought on credit at Lunéville; and these were their only resources for starting housekeeping. The gendarmes were quartered at the Château de Lunéville, which they kept up and furnished at their own expense. La Motte took pride in presenting to his comrades his young wife—very pretty as well as very coquettish; and Jeanne was fêted by the entire corps. Had the husband any right to take umbrage? However that may have been, he placed his wife at the convent of Saint-Nicolas, in Lorraine, and resumed his bachelor life, overwhelming himself with debt, raising money from the Jews, and amusing himself as best he could. Soon, however, he removed Jeanne from the convent and took her to live with him again.[1]

Jeanne easily succeeded in making her husband share the dreams of ambition that haunted her. Certainly, with the name she bore, her intelligence, her activity, it would be possible to reconquer at last a position worthy of the daughter of the Valois? La

[1] Dossier Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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Motte had a commonplace, narrow-minded disposition, on which his wife soon found herself able to exercise her will. His creditors harassed him. Then, thinking of seeking his fortune elsewhere, he applied for a certificate of service, but it was refused.

The gendarmerie formed a corps d'élite, in which men of gentle birth serving without officers' rank were numerous. The rest of the privates belonged to the middle class, and for the most part to legal families. But to retire without a certificate of service was to lose all right to promotion in the army and to decorations; and no one could obtain a certificate of service without paying his debts.

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IX

AT THE CHATEAU OF SAVERNE

About this time, September, 1781, Mme de la Motte learned that her benefactress, the Marchioness Boulainvilliers, was making a passing stay at Strasburgh. She prevailed upon her husband to accompany her there. At Strasburgh the young couple hear that the marchioness is the guest of Prince Cardinal de Rohan in his château at Saverne. Mme de Boulainvilliers, who at first had taken offence when she heard of the wild flight of her protégées over the walls of the Abbey of Longchamp, relaxed her severe attitude before long and welcomed the young couple with her customary good nature. They tell her of their distressed position. She is touched, and consents to present them to the cardinal.

Prince Louis de Rohan has remained as we knew him at Vienna, except that years, with their experience and the greater and greater dignities they have brought, have given him a somewhat graver air—not much. He is now a cardinal and the actual holder of the bishopric of Strasburgh, the richest in France; Prince of the Empire, Landgrave of Alsace, Abbé of the Grand Abbey of Saint-Vaast and of that of de la Chaise-Dieu; provisor of Sorbonne, grand almoner of France, the highest of Court appointments; superior-general of the royal hospital of the Quinze-Vingts,

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and commander of the order of the Holy Ghost. We know what he was like at this epoch: a man with a fine face, but always the face of a child, round, graceful, and doll-like; with high colour, hair of a whitish grey, and a bald forehead; very tall, an erect bearing and a good figure. He carries well his fifty years. Although with age he has become a little stout, there is always something noble and easy in his carriage, indicating at once the man of the Church and the man of the Court. He is as affable, as amiable, as gracious as ever, and merits still the name given to him some time before: La Belle Eminence.[1]

Rohan has had reconstructed sumptuously and in artistic style, by the architect Salins de Montfort, the palace of Saverne, the residence of the bishops of Strasburgh, which a fire, nearly fatal to himself, destroyed on 8th September, 1779, a loss of several millions. The new construction is admirable. It contains a collection of physical objects and of natural history; a well-stocked library of books beautifully bound, bearing on the covers stamped in gold the cardinalian arms with this inscription: "*Ex bibliotheca Tabernensi.*"[2] At Paris he occupies the admirable Hôtel de Rohan, Rue Vieille-du-Temple,

[1] Bette d'Etienville: "Défense à une accusation d'escroquerie," éd. originale, p. 12. There is a portrait of Rohan by Rossin (1768), engraved by Cathelin (1773). Another portrait engraved by Campion de Tersan, after the design of C. N. Cochin (1765); also those of Capellan, Chapuy, Klauber, François, and some anonymous prints.

[2] These artistic and scientific treasures were transported by the directory of the Lower Rhine to the library at Strasburgh, where the bombardment of 1870 destroyed them. Le Roy de Sainte-Croix, page 89.

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which has taken the name of Maison de Strasbourg. Large gardens place it in communication with the Palais Soubise.[1] There may still be admired the *salon des Singes* of an eccentric taste; Chinese landscapes, by Christophe Huet, remarkable for harmonious and delicate ornamentations; the mythological pictures of J.B. Marie-Pierre; the picturesque fancies of Boucher; and, above all, on the portico of the immense stables in which Prince Louis fed his fifty-two English mares, the admirable bas-reliefs of the painter of Lorraine, the horses of Apollo: "*un bas-relief en pierre et qui semble d'airain,*" they are called by a marvel of erudition who is at times a poet —Anatole de Montaiglon.[2]

Rohan collected, moreover, ancient prayer-books and missals brilliantly illuminated. He could not bear to hold in his hands during service commonplace printed books.

To speak of quite another matter, he took deeply to heart the failure of his nephew, Prince de Guéméné; that crushing insolvency of thirty millions, which to so many brought ruin and misery. Those most affected by it were people in a small way, shopkeepers, porters, servants who had entrusted their savings to the prince. Rohan was not mixed up with it, was in no way compromised; but as far as he was able he wished to attenuate the disaster. Every year, with-

[1] Now palace of the National Archives. At the Hôtel de Rohan our National Printing Office found a shelter, which it is said to be on the point of quitting.

[2] Concerning the Hôtel de Rohan, see Henry Jouin, "Ancien hôtel de Rohan affecté à l'Imprimerie Nationale." Paris, 1899, in fol.

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out being in the least obliged to do so, he contributed a considerable sum towards the liquidation of his nephew's debts.[1] Rohan had recently made a pilgrimage to Salzbach, to the field where Turenne met with his death. "The thought occurred to me," he said, "to raise a monument to this great man. I therefore bought the field where he was struck by a cannon-ball, and with him the fortune of France, that I might construct a pyramid there. By the side of it I shall build a house for a keeper, an old and infirm soldier of Turenne's regiment, and by preference I should like him to be an Alsatian." The monument was erected, the house was constructed, and an old soldier put to live in it.[2]

In this way much money disappeared. Accordingly all his contemporaries—with Marie-Antoinette first of all, and with what bitterness: "A needy man," she calls him—accordingly all historians even to this day, without exception, have reproached Rohan with his dilapidated fortune. A bishop who is in debt, what a horrible thing! He must have spent his money on women.

Everyone knows that what a man finds most difficult to pardon in another man is want of money.

Mme de la Motte was a refined, delicate, supple little creature, graceful and alert. Chestnut hair, with that fine chestnut which has a nut-brown shade, undulated on her forehead. She had blue eyes, full

[1] Declaration made by Baron Planta, 28th November, 1785 (Arch. Nat. X^2, B/1417), and his interrogatory (ibid., F^7/4445, B); "Memoirs of the Baroness d'Oberkirch," ii. 1.
[2] The monument and the house were destroyed in 1796.

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of expression, beneath black eyebrows well arched. Her large mouth seemed the defective feature in her face as regards design, but it was its principal charm, thanks to beautiful teeth of perfect whiteness, and, above all, to her smile, which was enchanting.

"Her smile went to the heart," says Beugnot, who speaks from experience. The pure brilliancy of her complexion, a white fresh skin, a spiritual physiognomy, and a vivacious manner, so light that in moving from one point to another she seemed to weigh nothing, added to her charm.

Then her voice, sweet, insinuating, with a delightful caressing tone. In spite of a neglected education she had a quick and natural wit, expressed herself correctly, and spoke with great facility. "Nature," says Bette d'Etienville, "had lavished upon her the dangerous gift of persuasiveness."[1]

Before persons of high rank she knew how to assume an aristocratic air; a noble bearing at once deferential and easy, wonderfully appropriate to the situation. As for laws of morality and the laws of the state, they formed a domain of which, in all simplicity, with infinite naturalness and without the least evil intention, Mme de la Motte did not even suspect the existence. She thus, with the redoubtable arms which her sex, her beauty, and her wit placed in her hands, went straight on without seeing any obstacle, just as her impetuous fancies directed her. "All

[1] Bette d'Etienville: Second memoir in the "Complete Collection," ii. 32. Georgel says, on his side, "An air of good faith in all she said put persuasion on her lips." Memoirs, ii. 36.

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these characteristics, taken together," concludes Beugnot, "composed something frightful for a true observer, but enchanting for the generality of men who do not examine too closely."[1]

Such was Mme de la Motte. We are already acquainted with Cardinal de Rohan.

It has been seen how Jeanne de Valois met for the first time Mme de Boulainvilliers on the road leading to the village of Passy.

It was again on the high road between Strasburgh and Saverne that she was presented for the first time to the cardinal. "I met Mme de Boulainvilliers," said Rohan, "driving along the high road. She stopped her carriage. I approached it, and she presented to me a person who, she told me, was Mlle de Valois.[2] 'The name,' she added, 'really belongs to the lady, who has no fortune whatever.'" M. and Mme de la Motte were received at the château of Saverne. Rohan showed himself eager to hear what adventures had taken place in the life of such a pretty woman, and it was impossible to imagine a story more interesting or better told.

While Jeanne, seated on a stool, with her figure bent slightly forward, spoke in a clear, penetrating voice, animated by her enchanting smile, her husband, in an armchair, dignified and grave, expressed

[1] The physiognomy of Mme de la Motte may be reconstituted from the testimony of Count Beugnot, of Réteaux de Villette, and of Bette d'Etienville, who observed her with the eye of a novelist. These testimonies complete one another and harmonise perfectly.

[2] "Interr. du cardinal de Rohan," 11 Janv. 1786, Campardon, page 207.

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his assent from time to time with a nod; while the Marchioness de Boulainvilliers underlined with friendly interest the most striking passages. Rohan promised his protection. La Motte obtained a captain's commission, attaching him to the regiment of dragoons commanded by the king's brother. In the commission he is described as "count," an error to which he himself contributed. But he can now make use of the fact for the confusion of unbelievers. Mme de Boulainvilliers, on her side, paid the Lunéville debts. The certificate of service so much desired was at last obtained, and the young couple took the diligence for Paris.

Fortune was dawning before Jeanne de Valois.

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X

CAGLIOSTRO[1]

At the very time when Cardinal de Rohan was making the acquaintance of Mme de la Motte, he entered into relations with a personage who filled the whole world with the report of his prodigies, Count

[1] The documents for the history of Cagliostro are very numerous. The difficulty is to make a critical choice, so as to put aside those which are not exact. In the first line must be placed the information collected by the agents of the law at the time of the Diamond Necklace prosecution. They are to be found in the National Archives, X^2, B/1417—F^7, 4445 B—Y, 13125. A portion has been published by M. Campardon, but the interesting report from Commissary Fontaine remains unpublished. These indications will be completed by the book entitled "Vie de Joseph Balsamo," Paris, 1791, translated from the original Italian which the Apostolic Chamber had published that same year in accordance with the report of the action brought against Cagliostro by the magistrates of the Sovereign Pontiff. To these may be added the interrogatories and confrontations of the Diamond Necklace trial; the reports drawn up in this affair by the advocates, and, above all, that of Maître Thilorier for Cagliostro; besides the papers in the action brought, June, 1786, by Cagliostro against the Marquis de Launey, governor of the Bastille, and against the Commissary Chesnon, with Launey's and Chesnon's replies. A fervent adept, the Farmer-General J. B. de Laborde, published at Geneva in 1784 his "Letters on Switzerland" in 1781, in which he speaks much of his hero. See, also, "Letters of Count de Mirabeau on Cagliostro," 1786. In the *Courrier de l'Europe*, published in London, Morand undertook in 1786-87 (numbers 15-22)

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Cagliostro. The count had just come to Strasburgh, preceded by a renown which from the first day of his arrival went on increasing. He cured all possible maladies without condescending to accept the least thing from those of his clients who were rich, while he gave money to those among them who were poor. Prince de Rohan was at his residence in Saverne, where he had received Mme de la Motte. He came to Strasburgh to enter into relations with so extraordinary a man.

An audience was requested for the cardinal bishop, but it was refused. "If the cardinal is ill," replied Cagliostro, "let him come and I will cure him; if he is well, he has no need of me nor I of him." Rohan found this reply sublime, and his desire to see the hero was much increased. No one, moreover, in the town spoke of anyone but him.

a lively campaign against the celebrated adventurer, and published the results of a minute inquiry as to his life and acts in England. The memoirs of the period, those of the Abbé Georgel, of Count Beugnot, of Mme Oberkirch, of Casanova, the "Secret Memoirs" of Bachaumont, the "Correspondence" of Métra, and, moreover, the *Courrier de l'Europe*, the *Leyden Gazette*, the *Utrecht Gazette*, the *Courrier du Bas Rhin* have been thoroughly searched in the journal of the bookseller Hardy (Bibl. Nat., MS. France, 6685); and in numerous private letters the opinion of his contemporaries concerning Cagliostro and his miracles may be seen. The Freemasonry of Egypt, which Cagliostro advocated, and his relations with the Scotch lodges, are discussed in detail in the books of Thory, "Annales originis magni Galliarum Orientalis" (Paris, 1812) et "Acta Latomorum" (Paris, 1812), in French under Latin titles. As to the house of Cagliostro at Paris (1, Rue Saint-Claude, still preserved), read the charming pages of M. G. Lenôtre: "Old Papers, Old Houses," pages 161-171.

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One day, when he was walking in the public square wearing a coat of blue silk braided along the seams, with his hair in powdered knots gathered up in a net, followed by a band of urchins who stared at him in wonder; his shoes *à la d'Artois,* fastened with buckles of precious stones; his stockings studded with gold buttons; rubies and diamonds sparkling on his fingers and on the frill of his shirt; with a diamond watch-chain terminating in six large diamonds and four diamond branches, from two of which hung a diamond drop, from the third a gold key adorned with diamonds, and from the fourth an agate seal; all which had a fine effect in conjunction with his flowered waistcoat and his musketeer hat decorated with white plumes: on this occasion Cagliostro stopped with an exclamation of surprise before the great crucifix in carved wood; for he could not understand how an artist who had certainly never seen Christ could have secured such a perfect likeness.

"You knew Christ, then?"

"We were on the most intimate terms," replied Cagliostro. "How many times we walked together on the wet sandy shore of the lake of Tiberias. His voice was of infinite sweetness. But he would not listen to me. He loved to walk on the seashore, where he picked up a band of lazzaroni—of fishermen, of beggars. This and his preaching brought him to a bad end."

Then turning to his servant he added: "Do you remember that evening at Jerusalem when they crucified Christ?"

With a deep bow, the servant replied:

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"No, sir! You forget, sir, that I have only been in your service for the last fifteen hundred years."

Cagliostro disposed of a cordial which had the virtue of "fixing" those who drank of it permanently to the very age they possessed at the time. Another elixir in smaller bottles rejuvenated by twenty-five years.

The newspapers related with the greatest gravity what follows: "An old coquette had heard that Cagliostro possessed the veritable water of Youth. She begged, she entreated him so much that he at last promised to send her a small bottle. His fifteen-hundred-year-old servant brought the little phial, labelled 'To rejuvenate by twenty-five years.' The lady being absent, the chambermaid, named Sophie, aged thirty, wished to taste the beverage, which she found so agreeable that she drank the whole of it. Immediately her limbs shrank as well as her figure; her head became smaller, and Sophie was now a child of five lost in the clothes of a grown-up woman. The lady returned, and called Sophie, who enveloped, embarrassed in her too-plentiful petticoats, hurried towards her mistress. Surprised at the metamorphosis, she asked for the phial, and found it empty. In her fury she took the poor little girl and whipped her cruelly. She went afterwards to Cagliostro, who had a good laugh, but refused to give a second potion." [1]

"This man," writes in this same year Labarthe to the archæologist Séguier, "this man, who is suspected of being married to a fairy, is of Jewish race

[1] *Utrecht Gazette*, 2nd August, 1787.

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and Arab origin. No one has purer morals. His only pleasures are study, dinner, and sometimes the play. He never sups, and goes to bed at nine o'clock all the year round. After dessert he takes Mocha, and after that a spoonful of a certain liquor which he will not allow anyone to taste. People do not know what his religion is, but he speaks of Jehovah in terms of the greatest eloquence and with the most profound respect. This is the man I mean to consult next year. I am quite sure that my stomach will become like that of a young man of twenty-five, and that my asthma and my rheumatic gout will disappear. I am sure that you will have no more pain, and that your legs will permit you to run up mountains. Mme Augeard, a young and very pretty woman of Paris, whom I know well, very rich through her husband's office as farmer-general, having been attacked by an incurable malady, went to see him. She received from him as a present an elixir which made all her illness disappear. And I hear from her brother that she now enjoys the most brilliant health."

"Sudden cures," says the Abbé Georgel, who did not like him, "of illnesses thought to be mortal and incurable, performed in Switzerland and at Strasburgh, carried the name of Cagliostro from mouth to mouth, and made him pass for a truly miraculous physician. His attentions to the poor and his disdain for the rich gave to his character a superiority and an interest which excited enthusiasm. Those whom he consented to honour with his familiarity never left him but to publish with delight his eminent qualities. Thus at Strasburgh five or six hundred persons

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besieged on certain days the house of the servant of the canon of Saint-Pierre-le-Vieux, where he lodged, pressing one another in order to get in.

Cagliostro seemed in 1781 to be about forty years of age. He was small and stout. He had a thick, short neck, a brown complexion, and a bald forehead. His large eyes, level with his eyebrows, were bright and animated, but his look was said to pierce like a gimlet; a nose with wide nostrils and slightly turned up; a large mouth with strong jaws; a loud, sarcastic laugh, and a sonorous, metallic voice, gave to his physiognomy a character of boldness, effrontery, and good humour. "He seemed moulded," said Beugnot, "expressly to play the part of Signor Tulipano in the Italian comedy." Casanova found that he had, together with "his boldness, his effrontery, his sarcasms, and his roguery," a very agreeable face. Most persons who saw him—even those who did not like him—declared his appearance to be very imposing. "I found it difficult," writes Mme d'Oberkirch, "to save myself from a fascination which I scarcely understand even now, but which I cannot deny."[1] He expressed himself fluently in Italian; the French he used was gibberish beyond conception, but in his mouth, with his vivacity, his energy of ex-

[1] Besides Houdon's bust and the engravings of the time, we have the written portraits of Cagliostro by Beugnot; by Casanova, who met him at Aix-en-Provence; by Mme d'Oberkirch, who saw him at Strasburgh in 1780 ("Memoirs," i. 135); by a man named Bernard, who sent a report about him, 2nd November, 1786, from Palermo to Commissary Fontaine; and by the *Courrier de l'Europe*, 3rd April and 15th June, 1787.

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pression, his fire, it did not fail to produce a certain impression. One of his enemies has appreciated as follows his manner of speaking: "If gibberish can be sublime, no one is more sublime than Cagliostro. He utters long words in unintelligible phrases, and excites among his auditors more admiration in proportion as they fail to understand him. They take him for an oracle because he has the obscurity of one. His art consists in not addressing himself to the reason, but only to the imagination of his listeners. Reason is clear and has power only over the wise. Imposture renders itself unintelligible and exercises its empire over the multitude."

To effect his cures he had three great remedies: baths, in which an important part was played by "extract of Saturn;" an infusion, the secret of which had been confided only to one particular apothecary of his choice; and, finally, certain drops of his own composition whose miraculous and sovereign effects caused his praises to be everywhere sounded. To all who pressed him with questions as to who he was, he replied in a grave voice, knitting his eyebrows and pointing with his forefinger towards the sky, "I am he who is;" and as it was difficult to make out that he was "he who is not," the only thing to do was to bow with an air of profound deference.

He possessed the science of the ancient priests of Egypt. His conversation turned generally on three points: (1) universal medicine, of which the secrets were known to him; (2) Egyptian Freemasonry, which he wished to restore, and of which he had just established a parent lodge at Lyons, for Scotch

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masonry, then predominant in France, was in his eyes only an inferior, degenerate form; (3) the philosopher's stone, which he proposed to obtain through rendering quicksilver stationary, and which was to ensure the transmutation of all the imperfect metals into fine gold.

He thus gave to humanity, by his universal medicine, bodily health; by Egyptian masonry, spiritual health; and by the philosopher's stone, infinite wealth. These were his great secrets. But he had others very interesting though of less importance, that of predicting the winning numbers in lotteries; of giving to cotton the lustre and softness of silk; of making the commonest hemp thread as fine as that of Malines; of softening marble and afterwards restoring its primitive hardness, which it may be imagined would be of great convenience to sculptors, who would thus be able to model their statues directly in the marble instead of clay or wax. He possessed the secret of increasing the size of rubies, emeralds, and diamonds by burying them underground and afterwards treating them so as to preserve their newly-acquired proportions; the secret of imitating, beyond the possibility of detection, every kind of writing, and, finally, that of fattening a pig with arsenic in such a manner as to transform the fat into a fulminating poison. Cagliostro challenged, indeed, one day a London journalist, who had attacked him in the *Courrier de l'Europe*, to a duel of arsenicated pig, for he himself was, of course, secure against its effects. The journalist, however, was wanting in courage, and the encounter did not take place.

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Cagliostro spoke of God with respect and never failed to offer him the highest praise. As to the revelations made to men by the Creator, it had never, he held, in its integrity gone beyond the era of the patriarchs—Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These patriarchs had been the depositaries of the truth, which became altered, however, in the mouth of the prophets, and more again in that of the apostles and the fathers of the church. His (Cagliostro's) task was to restore the knowledge of God in all its purity. The delegates of the French lodges, after hearing him, declared in their report that they had seen in him "a promise of truth which none of the great masters had so completely developed before, and perfectly analogous with the blue masonry of which it seems to be a sympathetic and sublime interpretation."

Cagliostro had a wife who by her personal charms produced as much emotion as he himself. She was quite young; already a woman and still a child. She might have been taken for an Italian by her accent and from the fine, precise lines of her face; a fair Italian with large, deep, soft blue eyes shaded by long eyelashes; eyes which Maeterlinck would have said were a fresh, peaceful lake to bathe her soul in. Her nose was small and delicately aquiline. Her lips, arched in the antique manner of a carmine, which seemed very bright in contrast with the whiteness of her complexion, were always motionless, as if they were never to be awakened but by the caresses of love. "She had nobility," says Casanova, "modesty, *naïveté*, sweetness, and that blushing

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timidity which gives so much charm to a young woman."

Accordingly, when she passed by on Djérid, her black mare, with set figure, with animated bust, men followed her with their looks. They fell in love with her at a distance without having seen her.

"Her warmest partisans," says an historian, "her most exalted enthusiasts, were precisely those who had never looked upon her face. There were duels about her, duels proposed and accepted as to the colour of her eyes, which neither of the adversaries had ever seen, as to whether a dimple was on her right cheek or her left."

When in due time she was mixed up in the Affair of the Necklace and put into the Bastille, an advocate of the Paris bar, Maître Polverit, undertook her defence before the Parliament: "People do not know any more," he said, "where she than where her husband comes from. She is an angel in human form who has been sent on earth to share and soften the days of the Man of Marvels. Beautiful with a beauty which never belonged to any woman, she cannot be called a model of tenderness, sweetness, resignation; no! for she does not even suspect the existence of any other qualities. Her nature offers us, to us poor human beings, the ideal of a perfection which we can adore, but which we are unable to comprehend. Yet this angel who knows no sin is under lock and key. It is a cruel piece of unreason which cannot too soon be brought to an end. What can there be in common between a being of this nature and a criminal process?" These arguments seemed to the Parliament of

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Paris just and conclusive, and it ordered Mme de Cagliostro to be at once set at liberty.

Prince Cardinal de Rohan, who had never ceased to take a lively interest in botany and chemistry, did not allow himself to be discouraged by his first check. He resumed his attempts, but with much humility, and so successfully, that he was at last admitted into the sanctuary of Esculapius. When he went out he confided his impressions to his private secretary, Abbé Georgel, who has reproduced them. "I saw on the physiognomy of this man, who is so little communicative," said Rohan, "a dignity so imposing that I felt myself penetrated with religious emotion, so that my first words were addressed to him with the most submissive respect. This interview, which lasted but a short time, excited in me more acutely than ever a desire for a more intimate acquaintance." And the joy of the cardinal knows no bounds when one day Cagliostro says to him: "Your soul is worthy of mine, and you deserve to be the confidant of all my secrets." From that day this connection became intimate and public. Cagliostro took up his abode in the Château de Saverne, whose wide chimneys were blackened with the smoke of his alchemistic furnaces. On the terrarce of the château, beneath the brightness of the stars, the conversations of the alchemist with Prince Louis were prolonged until an advanced hour of the night. Rohan listened, his head bent forward, his hands resting on the arms of his chair, while the white light of the stars caressed with its opal tints the long folds of the cardinal's silken robes.

The Baroness d'Oberkirch saw Cagliostro in 1780 at

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the château of the Bishop of Strasburgh. As he came in the usher opened the folding-doors and called out, "Son Excellence Monsieur le Comte de Cagliostro!"

As the baroness expressed surprise at such marks of attention, the cardinal exclaimed—

"Really, madame, you are very difficult to convince."

"And he showed me a large solitaire which he wore on his little finger, and on which were engraved the arms of the House of Rohan.

"It is a beautiful stone, my lord; and I had already admired it."

"Well, it is Cagliostro who made it; do you hear that? He created it out of nothing. I saw him. I was there with my eyes fixed on the crucible, and I even took part in the operation. What do you think of that, baroness? People cannot say that he is deceiving me, that he takes advantage of me. The jeweller and the engraver have valued this brilliant at twenty-five thousand livres. You will at least allow that he must be a strange thief, one who makes such presents."

"I remained stupefied. Monsieur de Rohan noticed this, and went on.

"That is not all: he makes gold. He composed some in my presence to the value of five or six thousand livres, up there in the loft of my palace. He will make me the richest prince in Europe. These are not dreams, madame; they are things proved, and all his prophecies which have been verified, and all the cures that he has effected, and all the good he has

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done! I tell you that he is the most extraordinary, the most sublime of men, and that his knowledge is unequalled except by his kindness."

Rohan placed the alchemist's bust in his palace, after engraving on the pedestal in letters of gold "The divine Cagliostro."

"When the prince returned to Paris," says Georgel, "he left in Alsace one of the gentlemen of his suite, his confidential friend, Baron de Planta, that he might procure for Cagliostro whatever he desired."

When our alchemist had plunged the population of Alsace into a sufficient state of stupefaction, he thought he might enlarge the scene of his performances and in his turn go to Paris. He took leave of the numerous friends he had made at Strasburgh, of Marshal de Contades, of the Marquis de la Salle,[1] and started in great state, with a considerable following of couriers, lacqueys, grooms, guards armed with battle-axes, and heralds draped in cloth of gold blowing clarions. On seeing him go away, many good old women shed tears, saying that it was the heavenly God who was departing. The epoch seemed made for Cagliostro. "We wanted distractions at all price," said Beugnot, "and a general vertigo seemed to have seized everyone. People hurried to the desk of Mesmer, around which people in good health declared themselves ill, while dying men persisted in thinking themselves cured. When Marat attacked the sun, and denied his being the father of light, cries of admiration were raised. A peasant of Dauphine,

[1] Interr. de Mme de Cagliostro, 21st August, 1785, Arch. Nat., F[7], 4430.

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Bliton, perceived water at a hundred feet beneath the surface of the earth, and made it spring up at will. He had disciples and writers who celebrated his genius. Both the Court and the town were fatigued, worn out; something new and startling was needed. The French stage was deserted for shows worthy only of the fair, where vulgar and indecent stupidity provoked boundless applause." People were driven by ennui to extravagance, minds were agitated in paradoxical ways. Social ties were broken; the time was ready for strange adventures.

"Our fathers," writes the author of that remarkable pamphlet, "Dernière pièce du fameux Collier,"[1] "went into fits over the mountebanks of Saint-Médard, after dancing over the ashes of a silly idiot[2] whom their fanaticism canonised. One saw them running in crowds to obscure corners, where fanatics showed them young girls of feeble constitution solaced by sword-thrusts or heavy blows, together with men crucified, and really nailed through hands and feet, in honour of the Redeemer. The Bastille and cold baths having got the better of the convulsionists, these were replaced by somnambulists and magnetisers Hysteria was cultivated in scientific forms. The veritable discoveries of Mesmer had little by little given place to scenes which are repeated in the present day, but which, when they were new, caused a fury of excitement, shrieks, convulsions, and invocations. Sorcery was no longer a sanguinary affair, as at the end of the preceding century, but

[1] S. l. n d. (Paris, 1786), in- 8 de 45 p.
[2] The deacon Pâris.

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more dangerous for the nerves. The Illuminati, the Martinists, the Theosophists, the Philalethes put forth the most astounding stories. "It would be difficult," said the editors of the "Bachaumont," "to say what was at the bottom of their belief; but to judge from the books they publish, it was all gibberish." [1] Numbers of these fanatics were about to play a considerable part in connection with the most important events. Since the great crisis of the poisoning affair the alchemists had been prosecuted with vigour; but the *lettre de cachet* having gone out of use, thanks to the tolerance of the new reign, these gentlemen had recommenced their industry. A contemporary has traced a picturesque description of them. "Alchemists who are unknown retire to the Faubourg Saint-Marceau. Some make gold, others fix mercury (known to be part of the problem of the philosopher's stone), these by their blowing double the size of diamonds; those compose elixirs. Here mixing powders, there distilling waters, they all possess secrets of immense value, and they all die of hunger. Their language is unintelligible; their appearance poverty-stricken; their habitation is dirty and obscure; and when curiosity has drawn you for a moment into one of these sad redoubts you perceive in a certain corner an uncanny creature, who looks like a witch and who keeps the laboratory."

As for well-known adepts they have superb laboratories, furnished with costly instruments and vases duly labelled. Two or three youths seem to be at

[1] See Beugnot, i. 65; the Bachaumont under date of 24th March, 1786; Hardy, Bibl. Nat., MS. France, 6685, p. 106.

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work, and when the great nobleman arrives the director dangles before his eyes the hope of seeing the most valuable secrets realised. He shows him the happiest beginnings, and promises him that at the third moon "he will see." "See" is the alchemist's great words.[1] Cagliostro rented at Paris the mansion of the Marchioness d'Orvillers. "It exists to this day," says M. G. Lenôtre, "and one can imagine without great effort the effect which the house would produce at night with its angular pavilions, at that time concealed by ancient trees, its deep court-yards, its wide terraces when the flames—the live flames from the crucibles of the alchemist—showed themselves through the high window-blinds. The carriage entrance opens on to the Rue Saint-Claude, at the corner of the Boulevard Beaumarchais. The court-yard seems now when one enters it sombre and severe, indeed quite solemn with its cordons of large stones blackened by time. At the back, beneath a porch of stone slabs, a staircase also of stone, where steps towards the middle have been a little worn, seems still proud of its railing of forged iron, a vestige of the period. From day to day Cagliostro animated it with a joyful sound, with an animated running to and fro. From morning till night there was a constant movement among the servants in their varied liveries; the court-yard full of splendid carriages, the horses neighing, the coachmen shouting, and the elegant young women walking up and down the stone staircase, dirtying their gloves with the balustrade of

[1] Mémoire pour servir à l'Histoire de Cagliostro, ii. 49.

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forged iron, anxious, full of emotion, scared, frightened.[1]

At Paris Cagliostro showed himself what he had been at Strasburgh, dignified and reserved. He refused with haughtiness the invitations to dinner sent to him by the Count of Artois, brother of the king, and the Duke of Chartres, prince of the blood. He proclaimed himself chief of the Rosicrucians, who regarded themselves as chosen beings placed above the rest of mankind, and he gave to his adepts the rarest pleasure.

These favoured beings, as we read in the Paris correspondence of the *Leyden Gazette*, supped with Voltaire, Henry IV., and Montesquieu. They saw by their side at a house in the Marais, women who were in Scotland or at Vienna. A man of great sense went to visit a lady of his acquaintance about a month ago. They sat down to table, when, surprised to see four extra covers and chairs in front of them, he asked who was expected. He was told that the places were filled; that he had the good fortune to dine with intellects, with beings altogether superior to feeble humanity. Never had the lady shown herself more amiable. Never did she show so much affability and wit in entertaining her guests and in making the invisible "intellects" pleased with their dinner. After the repast they passed into the garden. Here there was another enchantment. Each tree had its hamadryad, each plant was protected by its own particular genius. Even the basin of a fountain concealed

[1] Mémoire pour Mme de la Motte, dans la "Collection" Bette d'Etienville, i. 39, 40.

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a nymph. The prudent man did not wish to quarrel with the mistress of the house, and left her without wishing to destroy an illusion which constituted the charm of her life. Cagliostro had soon in every corner of Paris adepts of this kind. To those who did not see the marvels said to be placed before them, he made harsh replies, reproaching them with their sins, their scepticism, their incredulity.

He undertook to reform Freemasonry according to the Egyptian rite, following the details he had found at London in the manuscript of a man named George Coston. He had cases filled with statuettes representing Isis, camels, and the ox Apis, covered with hieroglyphic signs, and these he distributed among his disciples. The Freemasons were much struck by him personally, and wished to come to some arrangement with him. But with them also he took high ground, exacting as a first condition that they should burn their archives, which he said were only a mass of stupidities. He understood all that could be made out of the indifference of Freemasons for women, whom, however, he admitted only at festivals. In his lodges, formed in accordance with the Egyptian rite, women played an active part. This proved a prodigious success, and in the highest classes of society. The lodge of Isis, of which Mme de Cagliostro was grand mistress, counted in 1784, among its adepts, the Countesses de Brienne, Dessalles, de Polignac, de Brassac, de Choiseul, d'Espinchal, Mmes de Boursenne, de Trevières, de la Blache, de Montchenu, d'Ailly, d'Auvet, d'Evreux, d'Erlach, de la Fare, the Marchioness

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d'Avrincourt, Mmes de Monteil, de Bréhant, de Bercy, de Baussan, de Loménie, de Genlis, and others besides. The fanaticism was pushed to such a point that the portrait of Cagliostro was seen everywhere. Women wore it on their fans and on their rings, men on their snuff-boxes. In 1781 he returned for some days to Alsace. "Never," says Mme d'Oberkirch, "can any idea be formed of the fury, the passion, with which everyone rushed upon him." A dozen women of quality and two actresses followed him from Paris, not to interrupt their treatment. A seemingly miraculous cure of an officer of dragoons was all that had been wanted to get him accepted as a divine personage.

The illustrious Houdon did his best.[1] His portrait, after the bust, was published with these verses:

De l'ami des humains reconnaissez les traits:
Tous ses jours sont marqués par de nouveaux bienfaits,
Il prolonge la vie, il secourt l'indigence:
Le plaisir d'être utile est seul sa recompense.

or in English:

Here of the friend of man behold the features:
Each day he succours suffering human creatures,
Life he prolongs and illness drives away:
The love of doing good his only pay.

Cardinal de Rohan could no longer do without him. He had him constantly in his palace, and several times a week passed the evening with him. Under the auspices of the cardinal, Count Cagliostro and Mme

[1] The one reproduced in this volume. The original is preserved in the Wallace collection at London. Our reproduction is from the cast which was given by Cagliostro to his advocate, Maître Thilorier, now the property of M. Storelli, at Blois.

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de la Motte became acquainted. We owe to this circumstance a charming page from Beugnot, who got his friend Mme de la Motte to invite him to dine with the great man at his house.

"Cagliostro," says Beugnot, "wore that day an iron-grey coat cut in the French style and trimmed with gold; a scarlet waistcoat embroidered with Spanish point-lace; red breeches; sword-hand through the skirts of the coat, and an embroidered hat with a white feather. This last article of dress was still obligatory for vendors of drugs, tooth-drawers, and other medical artists who deliver speeches and sell remedies in the open air. But Cagliostro carried it all off by his lace cuffs, several valuable rings, and shoe-buckles, really of an old pattern, but brilliant enough to be mistaken for fine gold. There were only members of the family at the supper, for as such was regarded the Chevalier de Montbruel, a veteran of the green-room, but still a brilliant talker, who found himself by chance wherever Cagliostro happened to be, who bore witness to the wonders the alchemist had accomplished, and offered himself as an example of a man miraculously cured of I don't know how many maladies, whose names alone inspired terror. I took a side look at Cagliostro, and still could not tell what to think of him. His face, his hair, the ensemble of the man, impressed me in spite of myself. I noted his conversation. He spoke I don't know what sort of a gibberish, half Italian and half French, making numbers of quotations which passed for Arabic, but which he did not take the trouble to translate. He alone spoke

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and had time enough to go over twenty different subjects, because he gave to each only just as much development as suited him. He did not fail to ask every moment if he was understood, and the company bowed all round to assure him that he was. When he attacked a subject he seemed transported, and treated it in the loftiest style by voice and gesture. But suddenly he came down to a lower level and paid very tender compliments and comic attentions to the mistress of the house. He went on in the same style throughout supper. I could remember nothing of his conversation except that the hero had spoken of heaven, the stars, the great *arcanum*, Memphis, hierophancy, transcendental chemistry, giants, immense animals, a town in the interior of Africa, ten times as great as Paris, where he had correspondents; of the ignorance we were in concerning all these fine things which he had at the tips of his fingers, and that he varied his discourse with burlesque inanities addressed to Mme de la Motte, whom he called his fawn, his gazelle, his swan—borrowing for his compliments whatever he considered most agreeable in the animal kingdom. As we left the supper-room he condescended to address questions to me one after the other. I replied to all of them by confessing my ignorance, and I afterwards learnt from Mme de la Motte that he had formed a most favourable opinion of me and of my learning."

Beneath the red hat of the cardinal, Cagliostro and Mme de la Motte were bound either to form a close alliance, or on the other hand to become bitter rivals.

It was the second of these two alternatives which

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was to be realised. "Mme de la Motte," writes Abbé Georgel, "did not find sufficient the somewhat considerable benefits she derived from Cardinal de Rohan, and assumed that they would have been much greater if Cagliostro, who possessed the prince's confidence, and directed, so to say, all his actions, had not advised him to limit his bounty towards her. It was only a suspicion on the part of the countess. It was enough, however, to make her conceive the strongest antipathy against Cagliostro. She made impossible efforts to ruin him in the mind of the cardinal; but seeing that she could not succeed, she enclosed and nourished in her heart projects of hatred and vengeance, seeking constantly for an opportunity of putting them in action."

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XI

THE SORE STRAITS OF JEANNE DE VALOIS

COUNT and Countess de la Motte had not been able to resign themselves to the garrison life they were called upon to lead in the little provincial hole called Lunéville. The reception accorded to her by Cardinal de Rohan at Saverne had stimulated the ambition by which Jeanne de Valois was devoured. They went so far as to treat with contempt the post of captain in the Count d'Artois's dragoons, preserving in connection with it nothing but the title. They borrowed a thousand francs from M. Beugnot, of Bar-sur-Aube, and started for Paris. This was towards the end of 1781.

The young couple installed themselves at the Ville de Reims, in the Rue de la Verrerie, a hotel of modest appearance and only moderately frequented.[1] "It had about as good a name," says Beugnot, "as the Tête Rouge of Bar-sur-Aube." Jeanne and her husband have only two little rooms, half-furnished. And from this day begins the most extraordinary life of agitation and intrigue that can possibly be imagined. Besides her lodging at Paris, the countess hired one at Versailles, in order to be able to take her steps more

[1] This hotel had belonged in the previous century to Bossuet, farmer of taxes of the Lyonnais and of Languedoc, father of the Bishop of Meaux. Lefeuve: "Les Anciennes Maisons de Paris," iv. 320.

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easily in connection with the ministers and other influential persons at Court. She installs herself at Versailles, on the Place Dauphine, where she takes two rooms in a furnished house kept by a couple named Gaubert. The square—or rather the octagonal with its two-storied houses, most of which are adorned as regards the upper story with balustrades at the edge of the roof in imitation of the château—is always full of carts laden with baskets of eggs and vegetables. It is the centre of the quarter where unimportant people put up who have business at the ministerial offices and with the people around the king. Not far from the furnished house of the Gauberts, and still on the Place Dauphine, is the inn of the Belle Image. It is scarcely better than the Tête Rouge or the Ville de Reims.[1] At the bottom of the court-yard three coach-houses, right and left, and stables where the neighing of the horses may be heard. The inn takes in travellers on horseback or on foot. The place is inhabited by a swarming mass of place-hunters, scribblers for the gazettes, officers of fortune, and members of the body-guard mixed up with pedlars and horse-copers. Jeanne will take some of her meals at the Belle Image.[2]

Count de la Motte loves luxury and amusements, wine and good cheer. He dresses with bad taste but

[1] The old Place Dauphine at Versailles is now the Place Hoche. The Belle Image stood at the present No. 8. Jehan: "La Ville de Versailles, ses monuments, ses rues." Paris, 1900.

[2] Confrontation of Nicole Leguay with Madeleine Briffault, 21st March, 1785. Legal document.

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showily, covering himself with jewels. He prides himself on the good impression he makes on women, and his wife, who considers herself very much above him, does not condescend to notice it. The countess dresses also in a showy style, with loud, extravagant toilettes. Accordingly the quarterly instalments of the pension assigned to her are spent long before they are received. She has taken temporarily to stay with her brother Jacques and her sister Marie-Anne, for she means suddenly at one stroke to advance all the Valois to honours and fortune. "Her life was at that time as mysterious as the advocate Target will afterwards represent. One remarks in it the strange confusion of a precarious, uncertain existence composed of splendour and misery—a footman, a groom, maids, a carriage; and at the same time hired furniture, quarrels with her landlady about rent, fifteen hundred livres of indebtedness for her food and—mendicity."

The Marchioness of Boulainvilliers had just died.[1] Jeanne had lost in her a precious support; but she relied on the cardinal, on the Grand Almoner, to whom the marchioness had confided her. She told him of her misery in her soft, insinuating voice, with her large blue eyes. From May, 1782, Rohan sent to her from time to time, out of the funds of the great almonry, sums of three, four, and five louis; and on one occasion only twenty-five louis out of his own pocket when she was in extreme distress.[2] She afterwards denied that she had received these charit-

[1] In December, 1781.

[2] Notes of Rohan for his advocate, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve, dossier Target.

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able gifts. She, the daughter of the Valois, was not, she said, a woman to accept four or five louis. But we see that in a letter of 1st March, 1783, she sends to the controller-general, Lefèvre d'Ormesson, pawn-tickets for objects deposited by her at the Mont-de-Piété, and asks humbly for assistance. There is a receipt from her dated on the 7th of October following, by which she acknowledges to have received from this controller-general assistance to the amount of forty-eight francs.[1]

"Her credit at the Hôtel de Reims," says Beugnot, "had singularly diminished, and the two loans of ten louis each which I had made to her had but feebly relieved her. I could not ask her to dine at my place, because I had no regular establishment; but once or twice a week she did me the honour to accept an invitation to the Cadran Bleu, and she astonished my inexperience by her appetite. The other day she had recourse to my arm for a walk, which always ended at some café. She had a remarkable taste for good beer, and nowhere found it bad. She ate from absence of mind two or three dozen cakes, and this absent-mindedness of hers was so frequent that I could not but perceive that she had dined very lightly, if she had dined at all."

No troubles, no poverty, prevented Mme de la Motte from increasing her expenditure. On the 5th September, 1782, she rented at No. 13, Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, in the Marais opposite the little gate of

[1] Document belonging to the Duplessis collection. L'Amateur d'Autographes of the 1st March, 1856; now in the collection of M. Alf. Bégis.

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the Minims, a house with porter's lodge, baker's oven, coach-house, great and small stable, with three stories, whose high and narrow windows are adorned by iron railings with ironwork flowers and other designs in the Louis XV. style. Bette d'Etienville visited it.

"I was at a house in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles," he says, "where the carriage entrance seems very narrow as one drives in. On the left is the porter's lodge, on the right the staircase, which is very ordinary. At the top is a square room serving as vestibule; an antechamber of middling size, from which one enters a panelled drawing-room with two windows opposite one another, a sort of console, or round table with marble top, furniture of mixed stuff, a very fine harp. At the end of the drawing-room a boudoir."[1]

The house is in good preservation.[2] One still goes up the stone staircase, with glittering balustrades

[1] Mme de la Motte recognised at the confrontation that "the description of her apartment was correct." (Documents of the trial.)

[2] At present No. 10 (previously No. 6) of the Rue Saint-Gilles. On the 5th September, 1782, Rose-Louise Vanmine, widow of Louis de Courdoumer, Maréchal des Camps, heiress of Mlle de Baudelot, had let the house to the La Motte couple (Arch. Nat., X^2, B/1417). This is how it was possible to identify it. A description indicates that the house was situated Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, opposite the small gate of the Minimes (Arch. Nat., F, 7/4444 B), which limited the search to numbers 818 of the present Rue Saint-Gilles. The present numbers, 12-14, formed in the seventeenth century the "Court of Venice," where the ambassador resided; in the following century Hôtel de Péreuse. A passage cited by Lefeuve ("Anciennes Maisons de Paris," iv. 208-211), concerning a house opening upon Rue Saint-Gilles and Rue des Tournelles belonging to the Baudelot

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supported by ironwork and adorned with lilies in relief, which with a nervous and rapid step Jeanne de Valois so often ascended.

The apartment of the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, taken in September, 1782, could not be occupied, M. and Mme de la Motte being unable to furnish it. On the 6th October Jeanne wrote to the Baroness de Crussol d'Uzès: "The greater part of my things," she said, "are at the Mont-de Piété. The little that belongs to me and all my insignificant furniture are seized, and if by Thursday I do not find six hundred livres, I shall be reduced to sleeping on straw."[1]

succession, puts aside the present numbers 16 and 18, for to the heirs Baudelot belongs the house of Mme de la Motte. It was impossible then to hesitate any longer between the numbers 8 and 10.

Now among the titles of ownership to No. 10 which we have been able to examine in the offices of Maître Fleury, notary, Faubourg Saint-Honoré, and of Maître Robineau, notary, Quai de la Mégisserie, is an inventory after death, dated 11th March, 1783, of the property of Mlle Marg.-Cath. de Baudelot, drawn up by Maître Lormeau (now represented by Maître Leroy, his successor, Rue Saint-Denis), in which is described "the house situated Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles au Marais, près les Minimes, let at two thousand two hundred livres a year; namely, an apartment let to Mme Chapuzeau de Viefvillers under private seal of 7th October, 1781, at the rate of one thousand livres a year, and the remainder of the said house, including the stable and the coach-house, to the Count de la Motte and to the lady his wife by lease, also under private seal of the 5th September last, to be enjoyed by them from the 1st October for twelve hundred livres a year." The house was sold the 9th May, 1821, by Alexandrine-Victoire de Courdoumer, to M. Honoré. Since that date it has undergone no modification.

[1] Letter included in the Duplessis collection, published in the Amateur d'Autographes, 1st March, 1866.

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The La Mottes had been obliged to leave the Ville Reims, having received notice because they did not pay their debts. They then went to live at the Hôtel d'Artois, where Jeanne was fed by the mother of her maid, a Mme Briffault, while the Count de la Motte, threatened with arrest by his creditors, fled from Paris to Brie-Comte-Robert and concealed himself at the house of a man named Poncet, innkeeper at the sign of l'Espérance.[1] On the 10th November, 1783, several tradesmen, creditors of La Motte, had them forbidden in a formal manner to sell or remove from their house whatever furniture remained to them; and Jeanne went once more to see Cardinal de Rohan, who consents to become security for her for the sum of five thousand livres lent by a usurer of Nancy, Isaac Beer. Another Jew supplies her, under security, with furniture. She had brought her husband back to Paris, and towards Easter, 1784, she is able at last to take possession of her house in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles.

Mme de la Motte was supported by the devotion of her servants: admirable devotion of simple, loving natures who attach themselves instinctively; such servants as one met with under the *ancien régime*, remaining in the service of their masters without wages, assisting them with their own savings in times of extreme want, and sacrificing themselves even to and including death. Rosalie, Jeanne's maid, and her footman, Deschamps, were at this period of her

[1] In November, 1782. Dossier Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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life her chief support![1] "The apparent comfort of the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles," continues M. Target, "is in reality only additional poverty. The husband and wife lived only on borrowed money; now half-furnished, now without furniture, according as their goods were removed through their distress or brought back by some unforeseen stroke of luck. Pewter spoons and forks replaced on gala days by six silver covers which they borrowed;[2] a pension of eight hundred livres increased to fifteen hundred and then sold at a sacrifice through want;[3] servants unpaid, purchase of goods on credit to be pledged at the Mont-de-Piété, and at the same time constant journeys to and fro, constant solicitations at Versailles and at Fontainebleau, a few presents devoured as soon as received, debts, intrigues.

At the end of each week, Jeanne, assisted by Rosalie, washed her two muslin gowns and her two linen petticoats, the only ones she had not pawned, and ironed them on the dining-room table. As to the

[1] These facts are from the notes of Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

[2] From Baron Vieuxvillers, their fellow-lodger. Dossier Target.

[3] In April, 1784. There exists a letter from Baron de Breteuil, dated 15th May, 1784, in which he announces that the king has authorised the Count and Countess de la Motte to transfer to Hubert Gautier, citizen of Paris, the pension of fifteen hundred livres assigned to Mme de la Motte and the pension of eight hundred livres assigned to her brother in consideration of their domestic distress. The double cession was made for the sum of nine thousand livres. Declaration of Grenier, goldsmith (Arch. Nat., X². B/1417), and Target's notes, Bibl. v. de Paris.

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count, he could no longer go out, having no clothes. The cook, out of his savings, made advances to the butcher and baker. Then the servant's purse ran dry, and it was necessary to fast.

"Let us go to bed," said Rosalie. "As long as we sleep, we shall not feel hungry."

From time to time Jeanne got money by doing a little business. She bought largely on credit; to such a point that she attracted the notice of the police, and received a warning.[1] In the month of August there was a sudden alarm, for the agents of the law were at the door. The faithful Deschamps saved the bed and the arm-chairs of the drawing-room with the aid of a hairdresser's assistant. They carried them on their backs to a man named Berlandeux, Rue des Tournelles.

"Quick, my dear Deschamps," cried Mme de la Motte; "get down the looking-glasses and the curtains from the windows."

"And where am I to take them?"

"As fast as you can to the Mount-de-Piété."

The servant hurried away and came back with five louis.

Their co-tenant, Baron de Vieuxvillers, lent two hundred livres, and a monk of the order of Minimes, twenty-five louis. They bought rich garments; a lace skirt for the countess, a velvet coat for the count, that they might be in a position to make solicitations at Court. We are now in October, 1783, when the La Motte couple start for Fontainebleau. Jeanne puts

[1] Declaration of J. F. de Brugnières, Inspector of Police, dated 11th April, 1786. Arch. Nat., X, B/1417.

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up there with her husband at a house in the Rue d'Avon. She has a square room of good size, prettily furnished. The chimney-piece is of white marble; the windows are decorated with curtains of figured muslin. "A good many men of gentlemanly appearance used to come, one after another, to visit Mme la Comtesse, while Monsieur le Comte went to warm himself in the apartments of the château." "Soldiers and gentlemen of the long robe from the Court were delighted to pay her visits, and to leave marks of their generosity behind them."

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XII

AROUND THE COURT

The money received had been frittered away and new resources were now necessary. A thousand and one plans to be thought of. To go to the Court the count and countess hired a private carriage. But they have no money. They paid a visit together in their equipage to the mercer Lenormand in the Rue Saint-Honoré. Jeanne buys on credit a piece of satin twenty-five ells in length, puts it in her carriage, and continues her drive. On reaching the Champs-Elysées she tells the driver to call a hackney coach from the Place Louis Quinze. La Motte gets into it, takes the piece of satin to the Mont-de-Piété, borrows twelve louis on it, and rejoins his wife in the evening at Versailles, where they congratulate themselves on the happy issue of their expedition.

Mme de la Motte had a precise object in view. She aimed at procuring a restitution of the property which had not long before been in her family; the estates of Fontette, d'Essoyes, and of Verpilliéres, of which her ancestors, she said, had been unjustly deprived. The restitution seemed to her all the more easy to obtain since these domains had recently fallen into the hands of the king. She did not succeed, however—in spite of all her efforts—in getting beyond

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the limits of the middle-class people of Versailles.[1] Despairing of success by ordinary means, she imagined audacious ones. One day in December, 1783, in the crowded antechamber of Mme Elizabeth, sister of Louis XVI., she pretended to faint from weakness and inanition. The princess was informed that a lady of quality was dying of hunger in her antechamber. Much moved, she had the petition brought to her, which by a lucky chance Jeanne held in her hand, and had the young woman carried to the Hôtel de Jouy, where she herself was then staying.

As soon as she found herself alone, Jeanne called up her faithful Deschamps.

"If Madame,"[2] she said, "sends any of her servants to ask after my health, say that I have had a miscarriage, and that I have been bled five times." Madame's own doctors came twice to see the patient. The princess sent her two hundred livres, and afterwards twelve louis. The Abbé Malet made a collection at the Court which produced three hundred livres;[3] and this money enabled Jeanne to go at night from Versailles to Paris and in the morning to return to Versailles in order to pass the day in her bed. She thus went through three months at Versailles, when she quitted the Hôtel de Jouy, leaving a debt of five hundred crowns.[4]

It was at this time that, on the prayer of Madame,

[1] Mme Campan, éd. Barrière, p. 463; Beugnot, i. 29.

[2] It is known that by the expression "Madame" was meant the sister or sister-in-law of the king.

[3] Declaration of Mme Pothey, Madame's first waiting-woman.

[4] Target's notes, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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the pension of Jeanne de Valois was increased from eight hundred to fifteen hundred livres.[1] But what were fifteen hundred livres for the La Mottes? Jeanne tried to reach the princess herself, who seemed to take an interest in her. But just then Mme Elizabeth became suspicious of her artifice, and put her aside as an intriguing person. A second fainting fit had no better success with Countess of Artois. A third attempt on 2nd February, 1784, was more daring still. Jeanne placed herself in the gallerie des glaces to wait for the queen on her way to Mass. She pierced through the crowd and fell senseless to the ground. But this caused so much confusion that the queen missed the principal incident. The plot was a failure. Jeanne renewed her attacks of syncope, complicated them with nervous convulsions, under the windows of the apartments occupied by Marie-Antoinette; but this time again the queen did not see her. In her "Memoirs," where her desires are transformed into realities, Mme de la Motte reveals her true thoughts.

"The king," says Mme de la Motte, "found her Majesty in a state of extreme agitation, of which he hastened to inquire the cause. She replied that she had just been witness of a very sad sight; that she had seen a young woman fall into frightful convulsions. 'I asked her name,' added the queen, 'and I was told that it was Mlle de Valois, wife of Count de la Motte. The accident is much to be lamented. They are young people, and I pity them with all my heart.' The interest with which I had inspired the

[1] Order dated 18th January, 1784.

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queen could not fail to excite the envy of those persons who endeavoured to reserve her good graces exclusively for themselves."

The only person of the Court whose acquaintance Jeanne succeeded in making after so many endeavours and solicitations was a certain Desclaux, musician of the king and page of the queen's chamber, with whom she dined several times in the course of the year 1782, at the house of the wife of a surgeon-accoucher of Versailles; though after this date she was no longer received by these people and lost sight of Desclaux altogther.

Meanwhile at Versailles, at Paris, and among the people who visited her in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, Jeanne spread the report that she was becoming influential at the Court, where no one now called her anything but "Countess de Valois." She dined with Madame and with the Countess of Artois. She enjoyed the favours of the queen, and had even a foot in her private apartments. Accordingly her journeys to Versailles became more and more frequent. These receptions at Court consisted, alas, of visits to the lodging-house keeper Gobert, where Jeanne dined off a plate of cabbage, lentils or haricots, paying for her repast twelve *sous*. But to Gobert also she declared that she was received at the Court, and on certain days, the days that she was supposed to dine with Marie-Antoinette, Jeanne took her place at the table d'hôte of the Hôtel de Jouy. On these occasions she came back late, and could not sufficiently expatiate on the gracious manner of Madame, the affability of the Countess of Artois, and the kind-

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ness of the queen, who deigned to honour her with her sympathy. M. de la Fresnaye, who was well disposed towards Jeanne, heard the reports, which became more and more astonishing, and gave her a bit of advice.

"I heard," he said, "during my stay at Versailles what people said of you. You boast, it seems, of seeing the queen, of approaching her Majesty, and of speaking to her. Léonard, the queen's hairdresser, who was present, said that it was only necessary for him to say one word to the queen, and you would be shut up for the rest of your days, and that he was sure you did not approach the queen. If you boast of such things and they are not true, you are a lost woman."

Jeanne, disconcerted for a moment, stammered out: "I do not boast of speaking to the queen," but, as if correcting herself, she added, "I see her Majesty, but never speak of it."

Jeanne had her plans. She was preparing and studying the part of what was called at the lieutenancy of police *une faiseuse d'affaires* in the ministerial offices and at the Court. In the archives of the Bastille the names are found by hundreds of those intriguers who profited by a credit, real or imaginary, to obtain right and left sums of money under promise of securing the success of some project, of getting a place or a decoration. Naturally a flourishing trade at a time when the wish of a minister, a favourite, a queen, could decide the most important matters. Jeanne understood that the day when everyone was persuaded that she had influence

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with Madame and with the queen would be the last of her poverty.

Her name, Jeanne de Valois, which she loved to hear announced, and which in her signature she placed before that of her husband, calling herself Countess de Valois la Motte, was of great assistance to her. She had already obtained appreciable results. She had extorted one thousand crowns from M. de Ganges, promising him her interest with the queen to obtain a place of eighty thousand livres for M. de Blainville, brother of the Abbé de Lattaignant, counsellor at the Parliament;[1] and she had had sent to her by MM. Perrin, merchants at Lyons, who wished to get accepted a project "useful to the government"—to their industry, that is to say—a case filled with superb stuffs; a present valued by connoisseurs who saw it at ten thousand francs at the very least.

[1] Lettre, s. l. n. d. s., à M. Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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XIII

THE COUNTESS'S HOUSEHOLD

The reputation, more firmly established from day to day, of Jeanne de Valois's powerful influence with the queen and at the Court, her charms, her playful and seductive grace, and the big bottles of Burgundy which the count brought up from the cellar, attracted to the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles a circle of familiar friends. It was a curious assembly, comprising financiers of ripe age manœuvring around the young woman whose indigence they could scent beneath the show of luxury; elegant perfumed abbés; a few advocates, such as Maître Laporte, son-in-law of the substitute of the Procureur-General at the Court of Requests, and the young Maître Albert Beugnot, who only came, he says, in black coat and long hair "to testify his respect;" countesses and marchionesses, whose coats of arms it would not, perhaps, have been prudent to examine, and a few soldiers. One of these last was Count d'Olomieu, an officer of the guard—bright eyes, martial face, sonorous voice—who came every day to play with Jeanne a game of tric-trac. Her most intimate friend was a certain Rétaux de Villette, a retired gendarme, a comrade of Count de la Motte, who had introduced him to his wife—so like a husband!

Rétaux was the son of the Director-General of the

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Octrois of Lyons; a fine young fellow of about thirty years of age; good figure, fair hair, already, in spite of his youth, streaked with silver threads; blue eyes, and a fresh complexion with colour in it.[1] He was insinuating, made verses, imitated, to make you die of laughter, Mlle Contat, of the Comédie Francaise, and to the harp accompaniment of La Motte sang with taste the melodies of Rameau or of Francœur.

With a handwriting which he could make extremely delicate—the writing of a woman—Rétaux acted as secretary to Mme de la Motte, and we have reasons for believing that in connection with this lady his functions went still farther. The inspector of police, Quidor, ended by arresting Rétaux at Geneva. An expert, from his professional occupation in these matters, he characterises the relations of the young secretary with the lady who employed him by a picturesque and vigorous expression which cannot here be reproduced.

Mme de la Motte had, moreover, an assistant secretary, a member of the order of Minimes in the Place-Royale, and procurator of the house, Father Loth by name. A secret door of the monastery opened into the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, opposite No. 13, where Jeanne resided. The Minime said Mass every morning for the countess, for she heard Mass every day. He introduced her through the little door into the chapel, where a velvet kneeling-desk awaited her. He also acted as her major-domo, engaged her servants, superintended her pantry and her kitchen, and scolded

[1] Confrontation of Cardinal de Rohan with Rosalie, 21st March, 1786, Arch. Nat., X², B/1417.

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her maid. This was Rosalie, the typical soubrette, eighteen years of age, slight figure, black eyes, and a little turned-up nose.[1] He settled accounts with the tradesmen and kept the keys of the house when the count and countess went to the country.[2] It may be added that he was a very honest man.

Another personage who was once seen in the countess's drawing-room had just arrived from Troyes, in Champagne, and bore, like his hostess, the name of Valois. Jeanne called him "my dear cousin," and invited him to dine with some knights of Saint Louis. He had come to get himself officially recognised, after the manner of his cousin, and had great need of it, for he had six children. But he committed the blunder of saying at table that he was a cobbler by trade, on which Jeanne turned him out of the house and forbade him ever to appear before her again.[3]

Finally, Mme de la Motte had taken into her house a Mlle Colson, a relation of her husband's, a very poor young girl, who had to fulfil the functions of reader and companion.[4]

[1] Confrontation of Nicole Leguay, otherwise d'Oliva, with Madeleine Briffault, otherwise Rosalie, 21st March, 1785. Arch. Nat., X², B/1417.

[2] Deposition of Father Loth before the Commissaries of the Parliament, Arch. Nat., X², B/1417.

[3] Bibl. de la Ville de Paris, dossier Target.

[4] Mlle Colson, who was very clever and intelligent, was never the dupe of her cousin's manœuvres; accordingly, Mme de la Motte dismissed her in June, 1784. She then wished to become a nun, and retired into a convent at Versailles, and thence to the Abbey of Longchamp; but in the course of 1785 she came out and got married.

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With its footman, cook, coachman, groom, porter's lodge, soubrette, reader and companion, confessor, secretary, major-domo, an officer for the game of tric-trac, a friend of her husband's for confidential business, and a monk for delicate commissions, the countess's household was indeed complete. Just after Jeanne's installation at the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, a person had come forward who, by a singular coincidence, was called Mme de la Motte. By her maiden name she was Marie-Joseph-Françoise Waldburg de Frohberg. She had married the administrator of the College de La Fléche, Pierre du Pont de la Motte. This lady had been confined at the Bastille from the 22nd of February to the 29th June, 1782, and had then been transferred to La Villette, to the house of a man named Macé, who kept one of those curious boarding-houses for prisoners by *lettres de cachet*, of which there were several in Paris before the Revolution. She escaped from Macé's a few days after her arrival.

The history of this other Mme de la Motte possesses a certain interest for us. She also boasted of being honoured with the confidence of the queen, showed letters which Mme de Polignac was said to have written to her, spoke of the favour with which she was treated by the Princess de Lamballe, used one of the queen's seals—obtained, she said, through the Duke de Polignac—related how she had disarmed, through her influence with the sovereign, the resentment of the Princess de Guéméné against a certain Mme de Roquefeuille, and, placing all this powerful influence at the disposal of the highest bidder,

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obtained from various people important sums. We shall see her soon collaborating with Jeanne de Valois, who, however, will march on her traces with an energy and an audacity which Françoise Waldburg de Frohberg would never have suspected.[1] Meanwhile, Jeanne, who led daily a more and more brilliant life, felt more and more heavily the burden of poverty. A safe-conduct from the minister Amelot protected her against the creditors, now anxious to arrest her, to whom she had owed large sums for the last two years;[2] but as she wrote to the comptroller-general some days afterwards,[3] "that does not protect me against having to sell my furniture." "There will be scandals," she added, "and I don't see how they are to be avoided. I and my people must live." On the 6th April, a judgment for debt was pronounced against her by the Provost of Paris.[4] The rent for the term of Saint-Jean, 1784, could only

[1] Later on, during the revolutionary period, Mme Dupont la Motte was arrested on an order from the Committee of Public Safety, dated 3 Thermidor, year II. Saint-Just himself had drawn up the following note: "La Dupont la Motte thrown into the Bastille for court intrigues. A portion of her history is to be found in that of the Bastille. The first intriguer in Europe, corresponding with the ministers at the foreign courts under the old régime, received by Cardinal de Rohan, mistress of Fleury, who was prisoner of state at the citadel of Arras. She had for agent in her intrigues Deuzy, whom she brought to Paris, and whom she disguised now as an abbé, now as an officer." Arch. Nat., F[7]/4437.

[2] The safe-conduct is dated 12th May, 1783, Arch. Nat., F[7]/4450.

[3] 1783, 16th May.

[4] Arch. Nat., F[7], 4445, B.

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be paid by means of three hundred livres, which Father Loth managed to borrow.[1]

Jeanne wrote on the 16th May, 1783, to Lefévre d'Ormesson : "You will think me without doubt very extravagant; but I cannot help pitying myself, since not even the smallest favour can be accorded to me. I am no longer surprised that so much evil is done, and I can moreover say that it is religion which has prevented *me* from doing wrong."[2]

[1] Deposition of Father Loth, 14th December, 1785, Arch. Nat., X^2, B, 1417.

[2] Published by Chaiz d'Estanges, p. 13.

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XIV

THE PUNISHMENT OF CARDINAL DE ROHAN

ARRIVING from his Vienna embassy, Cardinal Rohan brought with him two letters written by Marie-Thérèse—one for Louis XVI., the other for Marie-Antoinette. The king's reception was most reserved. He listened to the cardinal for some minutes, and then said to him, abruptly, "I will in a short time let you know my wishes."

As to the queen, Rohan could not even obtain an audience from her. She sent for the letter which the empress had entrusted to him. The young prelate was much pained by this, even more than he was irritated, and he made the resolution to do everything in the world to soften little by little the rigour of his queen.

The child whom he had saluted and blessed at Strasburgh had become a woman of the most perfect grace, to which the majesty of her position gave new brightness. Rohan endeavoured to gain the friendship of those who had occasion to approach the queen, and might be able to efface from her mind the bad impression which letters from Vienna did not cease to cause. "The disquiet which your Majesty testifies to me in her very gracious letter concerning the intrigues of Prince de Rohan," writes Mercy-Argenteau to Marie-Thérèse, under date of 16th July, 1776, was not with-

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out foundation. The coadjutor, having thoroughly made it up with the Princess de Guéméné, got her to promise that she would deliver a letter to the queen in which the coadjutor begged her to grant him an audience. Happily, the letter, under a varnish of respect, had a tone of haughtiness and reproach with gave offence. The Abbé de Vermond and myself did our best to induce her Majesty to declare point-blank that she had no audience to give to the coadjutor. But she took a less decided part, and on the reiterated requests of the Princess de Guéméné, the queen, without granting or refusing, pretended to be engaged now by one appointment now by another, so that in the end the coadjutor was obliged to leave for Strasburgh, without obtaining an audience.[1]

When in 1777 the office of grand almoner, the highest appointment as regards dignity at the Court of France, became vacant, Rohan, to whom it had been promised, came very near not being named, by reason of the lively opposition made by Marie-Antoinette, urged on by Mercy-Argenteau. Nor would the king give his consent, except on condition of his resigning the appointment at the end of a year. But, as Mercy points out, the family combination of Rohan-Marsan-Soubise was "too powerful not to stop such a bill from coming to maturity."

Marie-Antoinette thus announced the news to her mother:

"I think, like you, my dear mamma, about Prince Louis, whom I look upon as very unprincipled and very dangerous by his intrigues; and if it depended

[1] Geoffroy et d'Arneth, ii. 470, 471.

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only on me he would not have any appointment here. However, that of grand almoner does not bring him into relations with me, and he will not have much to say to the king, whom he will scarcely see except at church."[1]

"In vain," says Abbé Georgel, private secretary of the Prince de Rohan, "did the grand almoner write to the queen as many as three times; these letters, as he knew absolutely, were not read. They were not even opened." In vain did he employ the mediation of persons to whom the queen gave particular marks of kindness and of friendship. In vain did he have recourse to Joseph II., brother of the queen, during his visit to France, to be authorised to present his apology. The answers he received announce the settled determination not to enter upon any path of reconciliation.[2]

Perhaps, however, the queen would have allowed her resentment to soften down, if Mercy, agent of Marie-Thérèse, had not been always on the watch, eager to reawaken it.

"As far as I know the Coadjutor de Rohan," wrote the Empress of Austria, "I consider him as capable of insinuating himself into the mind of my daughter, as he was fortunate enough to make for himself here, at Vienna, such numerous partisans."

Sad and revolting spectacle presented by this mother, Marie-Thérèse, who no longer sees anything in her child but an instrument of her policy. "Everything in her henceforth," says M. de Nolhac,

[1] Recueil de MM. de Beaucourt et de la Rocheterie, ii. 140.
[2] II. 19, 20.

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"her beauty, her popularity, her maternity, must at the necessary moment serve the interests of Austrian policy." The empress dares to make her daughter, dauphiness of France, say that Austria is her country. And how does she wish her to serve it? By being gracious towards the Du Barry, towards the courtesan who dishonours the Court, who shocks in Marie-Antoinette her modesty as a woman and her dignity as a wife. Marie-Antoinette answers that something stronger than herself prevents her, that she cannot. But the empress insists she has made up her mind; she speaks severely. Does her daughter imagine that she can give her mother lessons in dignity and experience? Mercy comes to the rescue. Marie-Antoinette, obliged to give way, speaks to the favourite with a smile, and the favourite, in her somewhat coarse gratitude, wishes the king to buy her forthwith, as a sort of reward, a set of diamonds. Marie-Antoinette had become queen, and it would now be part of her duty to enter into relations with Cardinal Rohan, her grand-almoner; but the empress is on the look-out with her devoted auxiliaries, Count de Mercy and Abbé de Vermond, and arranges things so well that he succeeds in preventing this.

Rohan was in despair. Marie-Antoinette, with her grace, her animation, fascinated him, and Rohan was ambitious. His first steps, the rapid advancement in his career, the preponderating position of his family, the dignities with which he was clothed, open to him the vastest expectations. The flatterers who preyed upon his fortune and his patronage intoxicated him by their references to Richelieu, Mazarin, and

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Fleury, the three cardinals who had reigned over France. It was more than his right, it was his duty, people said to him, to obtain the direction of state affairs. The misfortune was that Prince Louis ended by believing them. He dictated to his secretary, Baron de Planta, the projects he intended to carry out when he was minister. They were projects of political reforms, whose execution would have made France a happy country.[1] One obstacle, however, stood between him and power. And what an obstacle—the queen!

Aud thus entering more deeply into this mind where imagination played so great a part, into this feminine heart to which reason was not admitted, a fixed idea took root and gradually acquired entire possession of him—to regain the good favour of the queen. "I could fancy," says Count Beugnot, "this unhappy Cardinal de Rohan between Cagliostro and Mme de la Motte."[2] They had both from the first day penetrated his kind, credulous disposition, full of confiding *naïveté*—the character of a child—and had also understood the ambition which devoured him, and which, notwithstanding so much wealth and so many honours, made the torment of his life.

Cagliostro undertook to secure success by means of his incantations. Count de la Motte had a sister who had married at Bar-sur-Aube a Monsieur Lancotte de la Tour, a man of wit, but caustic and brutal. We have seen the young people take refuge at the house

[1] Rétaux de Villette declared before the Parliament that he had seen the papers, which were in Planta's handwriting. Dossier Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

[2] I. 62.

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of the La Tours when Mme Surmont had driven them out. Mme de la Tour, worn out by her husband's escapades, had left him in the year 1783 and come to Paris with her daughter, Marie-Jeanne, to take up her abode with her aunt, Mme Clausse, of the family of M. de Surmont, who had received her at her place in the Rue de Sentier. Marie-Jeanne was a girl of fifteen, remarkably beautiful and fair.[1] Now, Cagliostro, for his occupations, had need of a clairvoyante, a subject more difficult to find than might be imagined. For among the requisite conditions were: a purity unequalled except by the angels, delicate nerves, and blue eyes. It was, moreover, necessary that the angel should have been born under the constellation of Capricorn. Now, it so happened that Mlle de la Tour fulfilled all these conditions. "The mother," says Beugnot, "nearly died with joy, and thought the treasures of Memphis and of the large town in the interior of Africa were about to fall upon her family, which was prodigiously in want of them."

The illustrious magician thought it useful to proceed to preliminary experiments. He received the young girl in his laboratory, installed in the Hôtel de Rohan, Rue Vieille-du-Temple. "Mademoiselle," he said, "is it true that you are perfectly innocent? Well," continued Cagliostro, "I shall know in a moment whether you are or are not. Pray to God, and with your innocence go behind that screen, close your eyes, and form within yourself a desire to see whatever you wish to see. If you are innocent, you

[1] Beugnot, i. 58, 59.

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will see what you desire to see; if you are not, you will see nothing." Mlle de la Tour placed herself behind the screen, while Cagliostro and the cardinal, who stood by the chimney-piece, remained on the other side.

Cagliostro made for some time magical signs. Then, addressing the young girl, he said, "Strike the ground, and say whether you see anything."

"I see nothing," said Marie-Jeanne.

"Then, mademoiselle," said Cagliostro, "you are not innocent."

Thereupon the young lady, irritated beyond bearing, replied that she saw what she had desired to see, and came from behind the screen, pleased to have proved that she was innocent. We possess a very precious interrogatory of Marie-Jeanne de la Tour, in which the incantations of Cagliostro are related to the commissaries of the Parliament. It is a precise authentic document which exhibits the character of Prince de Rohan in the most curious light.[1]

The young girl relates that having gone with her mother to the cardinal's mansion she found there the cardinal and Cagliostro. They made her put on a little white apron on which was a silver ornament, and after having made her recite prayers brought her up to the table, on which were two lighted candles and a large vase filled with clear water. Cagliostro, behind the screen, made gestures with a sword, and invoked the great Kopht, with the angels Raphael and Michael. He then asked Mlle de la Tour if she saw

[1] Interrogatory of Marie-Jeanne de la Tour, aged fifteen, 21st September, 1785, Arch. Nat., X^2, B/1417.

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the queen in the vase. Marie-Jeanne, who saw nothing, replied that she saw the queen perfectly; doing so, as she declared to the judges, "not to be bothered." Cagliostro asked her afterwards if she did not see angels and little figures who wanted to kiss her, and as she replied in the negative. "Get into a rage?" cried Cagliostro; "strike with your foot, summon the great Kopht, and tell the angels to come and kiss you;" to which she replied that she saw the angels, and that they were kissing her; "and all," she added, "not to be bothered."

The cardinal during this time was praying and prostrating himself, and he told the deponent, as she was going away, not to say anything about it, as it would do him harm.

Mlle de la Tour went once more to the cardinal's palace. She brought with her this time, on the recommendation of Cagliostro, a long white chemise and a blue scarf. Clothed in this chemise and girdled with this scarf she was introduced into a room brilliantly lighted with wax candles. On the table there was again a vase full of clear water, and all around stars, little figures, and signs which she had not before seen. These were hieroglyphics and little statues representing Isis and the Apis. Cagliostro, having again made great gestures with his sword, asked her if she did not see in the vase a fair woman, and if this woman did not resemble the queen. Marie-Jeanne, who all the time saw nothing, replied that she saw her.

He afterwards asked her if she did not see an old man, dressed in white, walking about the garden and coming towards her to kiss her. She answered that

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she did, and always "not to be bothered." She had then to repeat the invocations to the great Kopht and the angel Gabriel; and Cagliostro now told her that she would see the cardinal on his knees, holding in one hand a snuff-box in which there was a silver crown. Then the cardinal, with much animation, said that it was "incredible," "extraordinary"; and he seemed penetrated with joy and satisfaction.

"I was completely blinded," said the prince, later on, before the Parliament, "by the immense desire I had to regain the good graces of the queen."[1] The great difficulty in the strange story of the Necklace is the excessive credulity attributed to the cardinal.[2] But here are precise documents agreeing with one another which prove that the cardinal was incredibly credulous. Two days before he was arrested, Cagliostro persuaded him that he had dined with Henri IV. "This anecdote," says the *Leyden Gazette*, "of which the authenticity can be proved, explains all the cardinal's imprudences."[3] "His incredible credulity," notes the Duke de Lévis, "is really the knot of the whole affair, and renders it unnecessary to have recourse to not less incredible explanations which have often been suggested."[4] It may be said that we have described Rohan as a man of intellect. In his "Garde du Corps" Manuel

[1] Georgel, ii. 201.

[2] See Maître Labori, "The Lawsuit of the Necklace"; discourse pronounced at the Conference of Advocates, 26th November, 1888. Printed in the *Gazette des Tribunaux* of the same date; p. 2, and 1.

[3] *Leyden Gazette*, 9th November, 1785.

[4] "Souvenirs and Portraits" (1813), p. 154.

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had foreseen the objection, and quotes the following from Beaumarchais's "Barber of Seville:" "Quand la jolie Suzanne dit à Figaro que les gens d'esprit sont bêtes, elle a bien raison, Suzanne." (When the charming Susan says to Figaro that intellectual men are fools, she is quite right).

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XV

THE FAVOUR OF THE QUEEN

The Countess de la Motte had on her side erected her batteries. In April, 1784, she began to speak to the cardinal, discreetly at first, of her relations with the queen.[1] Then she went in for details, which Rohan, kept at a distance from the Court, could not control. She accumulated anecdotes with her bright, lively imagination, which, as conversation went on, served her with abundance and rapidity. The cardinal, with his confiding nature, suspected nothing, suspected still less, inasmuch as little by little she gave him information of the most agreeable kind. She was received, she said, in the strictest privacy by the queen, who had no secrets from her and confided to her all her thoughts—to her, her friend, her cousin, the daughter of the Valois; thoughts which were now, perhaps, more familiar to her than to the king himself. And she declared that the queen was recovering little by little from her first impressions from the perfidious falsehoods insinuated to her by Count de Mercy, from the calumnies communicated to him in the letters from Vienna. The conduct of Cardinal de Rohan, so generous towards the Prince de Guéméné,

[1] Rohan's notes for Maître Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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his nephew, with other examples of his benevolence, showed, said the queen, that the grand almoner had a good heart.[1] In May, Jeanne declared to Prince Louis that, penetrated with gratitude for so many benefits received from him, she was resolved henceforth to consecrate herself to his service, and to exercise on his behalf all the influence she disposed of at Court; and she announced to him, with radiant countenance, in this same month, that their aim, beyond doubt, would soon be attained.[2]

She went further still, and, renewing the trick which had succeeded so well in 1777, as practised by Mme Cahouet de Villiers towards the Farmer General Béranger, persuaded Rohan that the queen as she passed by would make a sign with her head, in which he would see clearly a mark of her interest. Rohan looked eagerly; and this sign, this *nuance*, to use his own words, he fancied he saw on several occasions.[3] This point settled, Mme de la Motte took another step. She ventured to place beneath the cardinal's eyes letters on white paper bordered with a band of light blue bearing the lilies of France in the corners, which the queen was represented to have written to her cousin, the Countess de Valois, and in which from time to time the name of the grand almoner appeared. Father Loth was later on to depose as follows before the commissaries of the Parliament:

"I recollect that, going one day to Mme de la

[1] Rohan's notes for Maître Target. [2] Ibid.

[3] Declaration drawn by Cardinal de Rohan at the Bastille for Vergennes and Marshal de Castries, 20th August, 1785.

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Motte's to speak to her, I could not be received because she was said to be occupied with M. Villette. Soon afterwards the door was opened, and I saw near Mme de la Motte's bed a little table on which stood an inkstand and some lined notepaper edged with blue vignettes."[1] The faithful Deschamps used to buy the paper with vignettes at a perfumer's in the Rue Saint-Anastase, and sometimes at a stationer's in the Rue des Francbourgeois.

Mme de la Motte was not long before she said to the cardinal, "My representations have had their effect. The queen authorises me to ask you for your justification in writing." Jeanne had an enchanting smile, a fascinating voice. Rohan was fascinated and enchanted as he listened. He wrote out his justification, and took infinite pains with it. The rough draft was written and torn up twenty times. At last he finished the fair copy, and Mme de la Motte brought in a few days afterwards an answer written upon a small sheet of paper with gilt edges. "I am charmed," wrote the queen, "to find at last that you were not in fault. I cannot yet grant you the audience you desire; when circumstances permit I will let you know. Be discreet!" The Countess de la Motte advised the cardinal to send a reply expressing his gratitude, his joy.

Villette afterwards avowed before the Parliament that he began to write letters to the cardinal from the queen in May, 1784. He wrote under the dictation of Mme de la Motte. He described these letters as

[1] Confrontation of Rohan with Father Loth, 16th March, 1786, Arch. Nat., X^2, B/1417.

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"agreeable." He first said "lettres de inclination," but afterwards corrected himself.

"I did not understand," said Villette, "what Mme de la Motte was making me write. But I perceived by what she dictated that she was deceiving the cardinal, and by the cardinal's replies that his ambition was to use the influence of Mme de la Motte with the queen in order to become prime minister."[1]

These letters were sufficiently numerous; but all of them, those which were supposed to come from the queen as well as the cardinal's answers, were one after the other burnt by Jeanne de Valois.[2] "In this way," observes Abbé Georgel,[3] "the letters and answers succeeded one another. This correspondence, of which unfortunately no vestige can any longer be found, was graduated and shaded in the pretended letters of the queen, so as to make the cardinal think that he had succeeded in inspiring this princess with the greatest interest, the most complete confidence."

Georgel speaks under this date of conferences between Rohan, Baron de Planta, his confidential man; Cagliostro, and the cardinal's private secretary, Raimond de Carbonnières.

Baron Frédéric de Planta belonged to a good family from le Grisons. He was a Protestant, and had served with distinction as captain in the armies of the King of France and of the King of Prussia. Prince Louis had met him at Vienna, where Planta

[1] Notes drawn up for the defence of Cardinal de Rohan, Dossier Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

[2] Declaration of Rétaux de Villette.

[3] Memoirs, ii. 42.

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had rendered him great services as "an observer of affairs at Court and of general politics." Carbonnières was a young man of great distinction but of exalted imagination, and he played later on, as deputy for Paris, a part in the Tribune and in the committees of the legislative assembly.

To this little council was joined Mme de la Motte. Here in the greatest secrecy, by candle-light, the notes with blue borders were read. "Mme de la Motte," remarks Georgel, "took them all in." Cagliostro invoked the angel of light and the spirit of darkness. He predicted that this fortunate correspondence would raise the prince to the highest point of favour, that his influence in the state would become preponderant, and that he would make use of it for the propagation of good principles, the glory of the Supreme Being, and the happiness of the French nation. The effect of all this was that Rohan had no longer any doubt as to the desire of the queen to receive him, in order to express to him her feelings of affection and esteem; though, on account of Breteuil and his faction, still so powerful over the mind of the king, her change of view must remain concealed for some time longer. The first interview would take place secretly in the evening, at the end of a lonely path in the park of Versailles, at some distance from the château.

This was for Rohan a brilliant dawn of light and joy. The queen, since she had kept him at a distance, had become for him a supernatural creature, radiant in the majesty of her glory, with the brightness of her graciousness and her grace. And it was her

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graciousness, her kindness, which now brought them together again; she knew now the origin of those debts with which he had been so much reproached, and she doubtless reproached herself with the severity, the cold and haughty disdain by which, for some time past, she had wounded him. She would announce to him, herself, his recovery of her good opinion. She would tell him that she knew now what he really was. She would inform him of his restoration to favour alone, in the silence of the night, while waiting for the day when she would proclaim it before the whole of France.

Rohan was leaning on the sill of the open window looking out upon the gardens of the Hôtel Soubise. The evening was drawing in, his ideas were getting uncertain. He could no longer analyse his own feelings. It was no longer a mere feeling of gratitude that moved him—of gratitude towards a gracious and clement sovereign and towards a charming young woman also; towards Jeanne de Valois, whom he had assisted in her poverty with some trifling sums, and who now, with her feeble hands, thanks to the intervention of a too-bountiful providence, was raising him almost to a level with the throne.

"I have always remarked," said, a year later, the author of a recently-published pamphlet, "in the genius of the cardinal an elevation of thought, a directness and a penetration which have made me look upon him as a rare man, whose qualities do not appear to full advantage because he does not take sufficient pains to show them in a certain light, so as to attract the esteem they merit. He is like a precious

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stone which, polished not quite in the ordinary manner, gives forth a kind of brilliancy to which one is not sufficiently accustomed to be able to judge of its value."[1]

[1] Letter on the occasion of the detention of his Eminence Cardinal de Rohan at the Bastille (s. l., 1785), p. 17.

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XVI

THE BARONESS D'OLIVA

In July, 1784, Count de la Motte noticed in the gardens of the Palais-Royal—the rendezvous at this time of gay, young persons, among whom, for purposes of his own, often found himself—a pretty girl, who came and sat down regularly at the same place, where she amused herself very gracefully playing with a little child. She had long, light-brown hair, supple and wavy; a superb bosom and large blue eyes, clear and sweet in expression—the look of a child.[1] She followed the interesting occupation of milliner, and was by her true name Marie-Nicole Leguay. She was born in the Rue Saint-Martin, 1st September, 1761, of Claude Leguay, retired officer, citizen of Paris, and his wife, Marguerite David.

"My first misfortune," she said some time afterwards, "was to lose too soon a tender and vigilant mother, whose presence and whose care would have guarded me against the dangers inseparable from unprotected youth." Orphan as to both father and mother, Nicole had been placed in the Rue de la Grande Batelière, in the house of a certain Antoine

[1] Bette d'Etienville: Second memoir in his "Collection complète," ii. 32. See the portrait of Nicole Leguay, otherwise Baroness d'Oliva, from life, by Pujos, engraved by Legrand.

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Legros, who took in children to board. But here she was badly treated, and her education entirely neglected. The young girl was obliged to run away, and found herself alone in Paris. Legros took care not to tell her where her family was to be found. He also took care not to remit to her a rather important sum of money which, before dying, Leguay had entrusted to him for his child. Legros having died in his turn (February, 1783), his heirs remitted to Nicole four thousand francs. In reality they owed her more, but, weak at self-defence, she had accepted this proffered sum.[1] She was no longer called Nicole Leguay. Among the gilded youth she was now known only under a *nom de guerre*—Mme de Signy; for, kind-hearted girl, too kind-hearted by far, she could refuse nothing, absolutely nothing, to those—and there were many of them—whom her charms filled with admiration. She lived at the Petit Hôtel Lambesc, Rue du Jour, frequented assiduously by a young man of good birth, Jean-Baptiste Toussaint de Beaussire, son of a lieutenant at the salt stores of Paris, who, after losing—he also—both father and mother, was spending gaily the somewhat considerable patrimony which he had inherited.

In the afternoon the young milliner went frequently to pass two or three hours in the gardens of the Palais-Royal with a child of four, a pretty little fellow with brown curls, to whom she had taken a fancy, and whom his parents entrusted to her. Nicole was, in short, a good and gentle creature; one of those little Parisian girls who do not expect much from

[1] Arch. Nat., Y, 510.

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life, who gather in their youth the fruits of love, rejoicing in their beauty and their affection, careless and confiding, at once simple and cunning, but whose cunning has no malice in it. Marie-Antoinette will treat her with contempt; "a mud lark of the streets," she called her. Let us preserve our sympathy for her, she was really worthy of it.

Count de la Motte was at once struck by the grace of the young girl, and still more by her resemblance to the queen, which was really surprising. He got into conversation with her. "He presented himself," said Nicole Leguay, "with every mark of courtesy and respect, and begged me to allow him to come and see me, to pay me court. I could not take upon myself to refuse this permission." Of course not!

In one of his pamphlets, a libeller, calling himself "Motus," reproduces Nicole's narrative of the facts, breaking it up with his own reflections.

"One day in the month of July," says Nicole, "in the afternoon, I was sitting down in the Palais-Royal. My only companion was the child of whom I have just spoken. I saw pass before me several times a tall young man, who was quite alone. He was unknown to me. He looked at me, and I noticed that as he approached he walked more slowly, as if to study me at leisure. A chair was vacant two or three steps from mine."

"Here a little wink!" interrupts Motus.

"He came and sat down," continues Nicole.

"As is generally done," observes Motus.

"I pass rapidly," says Nicole, "over these preliminaries, which it would be useless to relate in detail."

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"Quite useless," according to Motus. "The most ordinary Parisian knows all about it."

"It is enough to say," continues Nicole, "that we met one another several days running in the Palais-Royal."

"Good!" cries Motus; "all is going on satisfactorily."

"I had just left him one evening, and was going back home," says Nicole in conclusion, "when I saw that he had followed me."

"As is the custom," terminates Motus.

Count de la Motte conformed to this custom in the most assiduous manner.[1] His wife, moreover, not allowing much time to pass before making the acquaintance of so amiable a person, introduced Nicole Leguay to the friends she received in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, after giving her the name of "Baroness d'Oliva"—an anagram (or nearly so) of the name of Valois. She invited her to dinner, paid her all kinds of attention, and did everything possible to please.[2]

She soon succeeds in getting her newly-made friend to enter into her projects. What she asks of her, moreover, is only a trifle, and "You will give so much pleasure to the queen, my dear, who intends to give you in return fifteen hundred francs, besides a present which will be worth still more."

"What, then, do you want me to do?"

[1] Suite des observations de Motus sur les Mémoires de Mlle d'Oliva, pp. 21, 22.

[2] Analyse pour la demoiselle d'Oliva dans la "Collection complète," vi. 18; second Mémoire pour Bette d'Etienville, ibid., ii. 15.

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"The least thing in the world. One evening, in one of the avenues of the gardens of Versailles, you will give a rose and a letter to an important nobleman who will kiss your hand."

"What can that matter to the queen?"

"My darling, it would be too long to explain it to you. The count will call for you to-morrow evening and will take you to Versailles."[1]

"It was not difficult for me," said Mme de la Motte, in giving her evidence to the commissaries of the Parliament, "to persuade the girl d'Oliva to undertake the part, for she is very stupid."[2]

[1] Mém. pour la demoiselle Leguay d'Oliva, éd. orig., p. 72. Second Mémoire, p. 18.

[2] Interr. du 8 Mai, 1786, published by Campardon, p. 391.

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XVII

THE GROVE OF VENUS

THE next day was 11th August, 1784. Between seven and eight in the evening, Count de la Motte and Rétaux de Villette went in a hired carriage to take up the new Baroness d'Oliva at her Petit Hôtel de Lambesc and drive her to Versailles, where they arrived at ten in the evening. The carriage stopped on the Place d'Armes, where travellers usually get out. On her side, Mme de la Motte in another carriage had been to take up Baron de Planta, and had now arrived with him and with Rosalie, the soubrette of the turn-up nose. Nicole was taken to the lodging occupied by the countess on the Place Dauphine, at the house of the Goberts.[1]

Mlle d'Oliva had her hair done by Rosalie, under the orders and according to the taste of Mme de la Motte; and it was arranged according to the recognised phrase "*en demi-bonnet.*" She was dressed by Mme de la Motte herself, who clothed her in a white dress of figured muslin over a pink slip made "baby robe" or fashion. The countess had borrowed the idea from the portrait of Marie-Antoinette by Mme Vigée-Lebrun, which had made a sensation at the salon of 1783, in which the queen had been repre-

[1] Target's notes, Bibl. v. de Paris MS. de la réserve; second Mémoire pour la d'Oliva, pp. 10, 11.

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sented wearing a long white gaulle, very simple, consisting only of muslin cambric.[1] Before going out, Mme de la Motte threw over the shoulders of her young companion a white mantle of fine wool, and placed on her head a hood of white Italian gauze. She herself put on a domino of black watered silk. They then went with Count de la Motte to the most famous restaurant of the town, in order to have supper and take courage.

In the great park everything was dull and deserted in the silence of the night. All that could be heard in the distance in the shadow was the sound of the water playing in the basins. The sky was dark, without either moon or stars. The baroness and her two companions walked for some moments on the terrace which extends in front of the château, of which the great rectangle forms but a dark mass in the dark night. Then they turned down towards the Grove of Venus.[2] They walk in. The grove, resting upon

[1] This portrait, now the property of the Countess de Biron, is reproduced as frontispiece to this volume.

[2] It is by error that some historians have placed the scene on the terrace of the château, and others in the grove of the Baths of Apollo. It is described by us in accordance with depositions and interrogatories of Cardinal de Rohan, Rétaux de Villette, and d'Oliva, the statements of the Abbé Georgel and the declaration of 7th November, 1785, of a Jew named Nathan, a broker and money-lender, to whom little d'Oliva, who was in his hands, confided a few days after the event. Rétaux, in his two interrogatories, the one he underwent after his being arrested at Geneva (see narrative of what took place in the Parliament relative to the affair of the cardinal, p. 57), and the one he was subjected to before the commissaries of the Parliament (Campardon, p. 362), indicates clearly the Grove of Venus.

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the enormous wall which supports the staircase of a hundred steps, is darker still. The pines and firs, the cedars, the willows, the elms which cover it with their foliage, intermingle their branches, forming a vault through which at intervals the dark sky can be seen. The yoke-elms form curtains, studded with larches, tulip-trees, and massive boxwood. Scarcely can the open square of a little glade be distinguished, nor the avenues which traverse it, nor the circle in the middle. Silence would now be absolute but for the night-birds, who in their flight brush with their wings the foliage of the trees; the faintest rustle which, all the same, startles and causes a shudder. Nicole is really afraid, and clings to the count. Suddenly, like a shadow, arrives a man, to whom the count says, "Ah! there you are!" And the man disappears. This was Rétaux de Villette.

In one of the avenues they make a halt. Mlle d'Oliva, motionless from fear, does not know where to turn. The little stones of the avenues creak beneath the sound of steps drawing near. Three men appear. One of them advances, tall, thin, tightly buttoned in a frock-coat beneath a long cloak, the sides of his wide-brimmed hat turned down over his face. Mlle d'Oliva is pushed forward, the count and countess have hastened away. She is alone, trembling like the leaves on the trees. The rose she holds

A statue of Venus was to have been placed in the centre, but was not. At this time, in anticipation of the project, the grove now called the Grove of the Queen was generally known as the Grove of Venus. See Aug. Jehan, the Labyrinth of Versailles and the Grove of the Queen, in "Versailles Illustré," 20th January, 1901, pp. 115-119.

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is on the point of escaping from her fingers. She has a letter in her pocket, but does not think of pulling it out. The man in a large cloak bows down to the ground and kisses the hem of her skirt. Nicole murmurs, she does not know; she has never been able to say what. The cardinal, who is not less moved, thinks he heard these words: "You may hope that the past will be forgotten."

He bows again with expressions of gratitude and respect, of which Mlle d'Oliva trembling more and more, does not understand a word. Suddenly some one arrives like a gust of wind, whispering, "Quick, quick! Here come Mme and the Countess of Artois!"

This was once more Rétaux de Villette. Mlle d'Oliva is taken away by the Count de la Motte, and the cardinal retires, followed by the countess. Such was the famous scene known as "the scene of the grove."

Young Albert Beugnot was that same night in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles waiting for the mistress of the house, in the agreeable company of her reader and companion, Mlle Colson, who, he writes, was both witty and sarcastic.

"Their highnesses," she said to me, "must be occupied with great projects. They pass their life in secret councils, to which the first secretary (Rétaux) is alone admitted. His reverence, the second secretary (Father Loth), is reduced to the position of having to listen at the door; and he makes three journeys a day to the Rue Vieille-du-Temple without understanding one single word of the messages entrusted to

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him. The monk is in despair, for he is as inquisitive as a pious old maid."

"Between midnight and one in the morning," continues Beugnot, "we at last hear the sound of a carriage, from which get out M. and Mme de la Motte, Villette, and a woman from twenty-five to thirty years of age, fair, very beautiful, and with a remarkably good figure. The two women were dressed with elegance but, simplicity. The two men were also in holiday attire, so that they seemed to be returning from some country outing. They began by inevitable pleasantries on the subject of my prolonged interview with Mlle Colson. They talked nonsense, laughed, sang, so that one scarcely knew whether they were on their heads or their heels. The lady I did not know shared in the general hilarity, but was timid and kept within bounds."

Beugnot, feeling that his presence incommoded the joyous companions and prevented them speaking freely of what had put them into such high spirits, got up to go without being pressed to stay. He was asked to take charge in the carriage of the unknown young woman.

"Certainly, with the greatest pleasure," he replied.

"The face of this woman," says Beugnot, "had from the first thrown me into that sort of restlessness which one experiences in the presence of a face that one feels certain of having seen before without being able to say where. In the carriage I addressed several questions to her, but without being able to get anything out of her. I put down the silent beauty

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in the Rue de Cléry. What had puzzled me so much in her face was its perfect resemblance to that of the queen."[1]

[1] As to this resemblance all contemporaries are agreed. "It is not surprising to me that in the darkness the cardinal should have mistaken the girl d'Oliva for the queen—same figure, same complexion, same hair, a resemblance of physiognomy of the most striking kind." Target's notes, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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XVIII

FIRST EFFECTS OF THE GOOD GRACES OF THE QUEEN

Rohan was at the proper time to say for himself, through the medium of his advocate, Maître Target, in what state the scene of the grove had put his mind. "After this fatal moment the cardinal is no longer merely confiding and credulous, he is blind, and makes indeed of his blindness an absolute duty. His submission to the orders received through Mme de la Motte is enchained to the feeling of profound respect and gratitude which are to affect his whole life. He will await with resignation the moment when her reassuring kindness will fully manifest itself, and meanwhile will be perfectly obedient. Such is the state of his soul." Mme de la Motte did not delay turning the state of his soul to her own account. Only a few days have passed since the interview in the grove, when she informs the cardinal that the queen desires an immediate advance for a family of unfortunate gentle-people. Jeanne is anxious. Will the prince give the money?[1] Rohan is happy that the queen deigns to have recourse to his humble services. As he has not the sum in hand, he borrows it from the Jew, Cerf-Beer. "Your good offices," he says to

[1] M. de Target, in the Bette d'Etienville "Collection," iv. 28, 29.

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him, "insure you protection of the highest importance for you and for your nation."[1]

On 21st August, at five in the afternoon, Father Loth was in the countess's dressing-room—literally in her dressing-room. Jeanne was dressing for dinner, and the good monk was keeping her company. Meanwhile, he saw that there was something restless about her.

"Some trouble?" he asked.

"I am expecting fifty thousand livres from a person who ought even now to have brought them to me; and the delay makes me fear that the thing will not come off, which would vex me exceedingly."

The next day Father Loth learned that the fifty thousand livres had been really brought. Jeanne could not conceal her joy. "You had scarcely left the place yesterday when Baron de Planta arrived with the good news." And as the Minime repeated his congratulations:

"It is the queen who ordered the cardinal to pay me this sum, and he is ordered by her Majesty to make me additional payments up to fifty thousand crowns."[2]

That was the figure fixed by Jeanne herself. Meanwhile, she thought it advantageous to get the prince out of the way for the moment. A note with a blue border arrived just at the proper time to advise him to retire for a little while to Alsace. Before leaving,

[1] Georgel, ii. 43.

[2] Target's Notes in accordance with the indications of Father Loth, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve; deposition of Father Loth, 14th September, 1786, Arch. Nat., X^2, B/1417.

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Rohan recommended Planta, who had remained at Paris for the sake of the blue-border correspondence, to remit to Mme de la Motte for the queen whatever money she might require, adding that if the sum was too large, and the needs pressing, he must sell objects of art and valuable furniture. A new demand was in fact made, but, as it was not urgent, the cardinal waited until November, and then sent from Saverne to the countess a second sum, this time of one hundred thousand livres, which, as before, was brought by the Baron de Planta.[1] We have seen in what frightful poverty Jeanne de Valois found herself in June, 1784, at which date she had alienated not only her pension of fifteen hundred livres, but also that of her brother the sailor, which had been made over to her. It was then that Father Loth negotiated for her a loan of three hundred livres to enable her to pay her rent. Now, in the month of August, 1784, when the first payment of fifty thousand francs was made to her, Jeanne places thirty-nine thousand livres with various private persons. In September she charges her man of business, the Minime father, to convert

[1] The receipt of the one hundred and fifty thousand livres sent by the cardinal was afterwards denied by Mme de la Motte. It is proved, however, not only by the declarations of Cardinal de Rohan, but by those of Baron de Planta, who brought the sum; by those of Father Loth, by those of Rétaux, who wrote the pretended letters from the queen asking for the money. Mme de la Motte said to Father Loth and to Rétaux that the sums she had been expecting had been remitted to her. The fact is proved, moreover, by the investments made at this time by Mme de la Motte in public securities and in houses, also by the luxury in which the de la Mottes began to live just then.

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into money twelve black notes of one hundred livres each of the discount bank.[1] In November, after the second payment, she buys a house at Bar-sur-Aube—a mansion with two wings and a court-yard; an independent structure in the very centre of the town. From the windows the country may be seen. The sinuous course of the Bresse and the Aube between clumps of trees where willows join their pale green tufts to the sombre masses of the alders beneath the long poplars; the river breaks its waters against the mossy piles of the old bridges and sparkles amid the rich verdure of the meadows at the foot of the slopes of Sainte-Jermain, where the sparkling wine ripens.[2] And at Charonne, near Paris, arranges for herself a pretty country retreat in an attractive locality for picnics. "The appearance of the house," says Rosalie, "was much improved by the introduction of new furniture, ornaments, and plate. In the month of November, Mme de la Motte ordered several sets of diamonds, which were duly brought to her by

[1] This is from the avowal of Mme de la Motte: Statement of Maître Doillot, "Complete collection," i. 60, and interrogatory of Mme de la Motte, published by Campardon, p. 277. Mme de la Motte places, it is true, the purchase of the securities in July; but, as she also places the scene of the grove in July, the facts remain in accordance.

[2] This house was bought 10th Thermidor, year V. (28th July, 1797), from Count de la Motte by Nicolas Armand. The body of the house disappeared by reason of the construction of the Rue Armand, which ran through it. The left wing forms now the houses numbered 1, 3, 5 of the Rue Armand and 37 of the Rue Nationale, formerly Rue Saint-Michel; the right wing, Nos. 2, 4, 6 of the Rue Armand and 39 of the Rue Nationale.

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M. Régnier." The ready money which she lays out in buying certain articles enables her to buy others much more costly. As to paying for these the future will provide. Her friends meet her in the galleries of Versailles very much dressed, and she says that her circumstances have improved, thanks to the benefits she has received from the royal family.[1] Little by little the tone of the society in the house of the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles improves, and now the Count de la Motte exhibits his talent on the harp, and Rétaux the beauty of his voice before well-dressed connoisseurs.

"I met in those days at the countess's," says Beugnot, "the Marquis Saisseval, the great gambler, rich, and a hanger-on at the Court; the Abbé de Cabres, Counsellor at the Parliament; Rouillé d'Orfeuille, Intendant of the Province of Champagne; Count d'Estaing; a Receiver-General named d'Orcy, and Lecoulteux de la Noraye." It was the aspiration of the last-named to replace Father Loth as the countess's major-domo; while to the monk was to have been left the duty of saying mass to her.

We can reproduce exactly the appearance of Mme de la Motte's drawing-room.[2] A lofty room in white wood lighted by two windows carried up to the ceiling, one looking out on to the street, the opposite one on to the court-yard. The enormous beam which supports the second storey stands out. The cornice is

[1] Evidence of Count d'Olomieu in his interrogatory of the 14th April, 1786, Arch. Nat., X^2, B/1417.

[2] After the room itself, which is still preserved, and the inventory of the furniture made 9th, 10th, 12th September, 1785. Arch. Nat: X^2, B/1417.

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adorned with mouldings in little squares, characteristic of the style of the period. The military celebrities of the great century, Turenne and Tourville, are represented by busts in bronze, on pedestals of marble with ornaments of copper-gilt. Before the chimney-glass—a glass in two pieces, with a narrow gilt frame carved and ornamented with pearls—a clock marking the seconds, the hours, and the day of the month, in white marble, bearing a statuette of "Sensibility" between two vases of Sèvres on feet of alabaster.

The walls are hung with large pieces of tapestry representing figures, with smaller ones in the recesses depicting country scenes. The furniture comprises a sofa and six arm-chairs in tapestries representing the fables of La Fontaine, and chairs with oval backs, covered in striped satin adorned with bouquets, the true Louis XVI. style. At the corners triangular cabinets in polished wood, painted in sea-green, with flowers; the floor covered with a large Aubusson carpet, and for lighting-up the room two columns of stucco, "on which are figures of bronze, holding each a girandole, with three branches of copper gilt." Mme de la Motte, lively, alert, charming, passes among her guests, from one to the other, dressed in a so-called "Anglaise," the colour of a pigeon breast, with a skirt of pink silk.

Our little Baroness d'Oliva continues to appear for some time at Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles; but they soon get tired of her. Mme de la Motte does not find her sufficiently good style. She reproaches her with not having behaved in a becoming manner at the house of

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Baron de Lilleroy, officer in the guards, where they went to lunch together, and with having uttered improprieties at the house of Mme de la Fresnaye, who had invited them to dinner. As for the fifteen thousand livres promised to Nicole, Mme de la Motte has only given her four thousand, and does not wish to give her any more.

Jeanne is trying to find a husband for her sister Marie-Anne. "Very fair, very dull, very stupid," says Beugnot, "and very proud, like Jeanne herself, of being a descendant of the Valois." We have seen her running away gaily with her sister from the Abbey of Longchamp; but since then she has retired to the convent of Jarcy, near Brie-Comte-Robert, where the abbess, Mme de Bracque, has taken a fancy to her. Mme de la Motte has found her a match in Count de Salivet de Fouchécourt, and writes about him to Mme de Bracque. But Marie-Anne must first come and stay some time with her. "It appears," she writes, "that my apparent wealth has made my sister form suppositions very offensive to me. It would be easy for her to satisfy herself as to the honourable source from which it proceeds."

Meanwhile Jeanne continues to represent herself to the cardinal as reduced to indigence, and still obtains from him now and then a few louis.[1]

What an advance has been made by the little beggar-girl whom Mme de Boulainvilliers listened to on the steps of her carriage—thanks to her energy, her will, her genius for intrigue! Why has she not known how afterwards to employ the fortune she has

[1] Dossier Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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managed to gain? It is true that money acquired by such means turns to no good. What comes to the sound of the fife goes away to the sound of the drum. The money is thrown out of windows. Besides, her ambition knew no bounds. Mediocrity, even gilded mediocrity, would not suit the blood of the Valois. New resources are constantly needed.

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XIX

A DELICATE ENIGMA

Already no doubt the question has been asked what was the nature of the relations between the cardinal and Mme de la Motte? All historians—until now—have been agreed on this point, and we are going to place ourselves in contradiction with all of them. To prove that the cardinal desired and obtained from Mme de la Motte her most precious favours, two witnesses are invoked—the first is Mme de la Motte herself before the examining judges of the Parliament; the second is Beugnot, to whom the countess ended by showing a packet of letters said to have been addressed to her by the cardinal.

We reject Mme de la Motte. She had an imperious interest in making such statements before the Parliament. She had no other means of defence.

When, at the trial, the examining judges want to know the origin of the prodigies which suddenly had sprung up beneath her feet, "I was," she replies, "the mistress of the cardinal."

This was a mania, moreover, of Jeanne de Valois. One cannot imagine the number of men whom she accused of having been her lovers, or of having wished to be so by fair means or foul. If anyone stood in her way, or displeased her, or contradicted her, she

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had one invariable remark to make: "You were, or you wished to be, my lover." The cardinal's denial is marked by so much dignity, moderation, and power, that it is impossible to hesitate between the two testimonies. There is something more. Being so greatly interested in establishing the fact, Jeanne cannot bring forward the slightest corroborative evidence. The depositions of the servants were all against her. Rosalie, confronted with Rohan, admits that the cardinal did not come altogether, from beginning to end, to Mme de la Motte's more than four or five times at Paris and two or three times at Versailles:[1] visits made for the most part before witnesses, never in the evening or at night.[2] Rosalie added—

"When the cardinal visited madame, the door was never quite closed." Their meetings, it may be said, took place elsewhere. But it was precisely at her own house that Mme de la Motte declared that she loaded the cardinal with her favours, "and very often."

Another proof, not less conclusive, is furnished by the sums of three, four, or five louis which Rohan was accustomed to give to Mme de la Motte from May, 1782, until they were arrested. Jeanne, who feels the force of the argument, wishes to deny the facts. But the evidence of her familiars, of Father Loth, and Mlle Colson, are quite decisive. Father Loth adds, "That Mme de la Motte conceived the idea of telling Rohan that she had received from the queen a gift of one thousand crowns in the hope of obtaining from

[1] Confrontation du 21 Mars, 1786. Arch. Nat. X², B/1417.

[2] Confrontation de Rohan à Bette d'Etienville. Arch Nat., X², B/1417.

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him assistance on a larger scale."[1] If Jeanne had been the mistress of the prince, can it be supposed with his immense fortune, his generous character—prodigal to excess, considering her at the time as a woman of the best society, and a particular friend of the queen—that he would have reduced her to accepting alms?

As for the pretended correspondence which Beugnot was to see in the hands of Jeanne de Valois at Bar-sur-Aube, he speaks of it in these terms: "It is fortunate for the memory of the cardinal that these letters have been destroyed, though it is a loss for the history of human passions. But what then was this century in which a prince of the church did not hesitate to sign, to write, to address to a woman, whom he knew so little and so badly, letters which in our days a man who respects himself in any degree might begin to read, but certainly would not read to the end."

This testimony destroys itself. The Prince de Rohan was not a man to write in such style. Is there any use in continuing the argument? Jeanne, with her imagination always on the boil, passed her life in constructing stories, forging letters, and in introducing into them all kinds of improprieties. One can recognise her fingering in the letters referred to by Beugnot. Why did she burn these letters—in circumstances which rendered them so important for her defence? Because they were forgeries. And why did she get Beugnot to read them beforehand, when a few days afterwards she begged him to act as her advocate—simply that he might testify to their

[1] Déclaration du 14 Septembre. Arch. Nat., X^2, B/1417.

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contents when it would be no longer possible to refer to them. It will be observed, moreover, that if these letters had been written by Rohan, he could never have exposed himself to the risk of receiving before the assembled Parliament the lie direct that would have been given to him when he solemnly denied all intimate relations with the countess, for he did not know at that moment that the letters attributed to him had been burnt. Accordingly, when Rohan replied to his accuser with as much haughtiness as force, Mme de la Motte, who shrank nevertheless from no means of defence, did not venture to refer to this correspondence.

"I have hesitated until now," said Rohan, in his confrontation with Jeanne de Valois, 24th April 1786, "from replying, through a very natural repugnance, to all that Mme de la Motte has said in words with double meaning about her relations with me. If she does not respect herself enough, and wishes to make people believe about her even what is not true, I repel, as I am bound to do, the suspicions which she wishes to get accepted. I cannot, however, from what I owe to myself, insist any more on this point. Here then is a new atrocity, which, accompanied by all sorts of improbabilities, produces upon me the same horror which I before expressed when Mme de la Motte again and again endeavoured to fasten upon me her odious insinuations. Improbability renders impossible what she wishes to present as true. I can but turn away my looks and my thoughts from such an accusation. Besides, I notice that Mme de la Motte made us wait a very long time for the calumny

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she was preparing in order to excuse her falsehood when she found herself no longer able to support it."

So far as the answer to such a question can be regarded as certain—for some say that with women one can never tell—we are disposed to back the statement of the cardinal. But such is the power of calumny that no sooner had the trial blazed into publicity than pamphlets spread themselves broadcast, to be hidden under the cloak of each recipient, and paid for at their weight in gold, in which the amours of the countess and his Eminence were recounted in unheard-of terms, with the coarsest details. Comparatively serious accounts, such as the "Secret Correspondence," related anecdotes which a self-respecting pen refuses to notice. Protestant nations applauded this proof of the corruption of the French clergy, the populace flocked to sing ribald verses to the prisoner even under the walls of the Bastille. History will accept the popular verdict, and we are content to leave the question, convinced that we are powerless to reverse the general opinion.

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XX

THE NECKLACE

THE jeweller of the crown and of the queen's household was at this time a Jew from Saxony, a man of great activity, boldness, and intelligence. His shop was in the Rue Vendôme. He had taken as partner another Jew from Leipzig, Paul Bassenge, and for some years these two had purchased throughout Europe the most beautiful diamonds that they could get, in order to make a *rivière* exceeding in worth and splendour all the jewels that were known. The Böhmers, as they were called, from the name of the senior partner, had in this way made a grand necklace, which they had hoped that Louis XV. would be induced to buy for Mme du Barry. But the king had unfortunately died. Then they sent the design of the necklace to the Court of Spain, who were frightened at the price. After the accession of Louis XVI., the jewellers, knowing the new queen's passion for jewellery, and reckoning on the character with which Marie-Antoinette was credited as to love of dress and general extravagance, submitted the necklace, in 1774, to the king. Louis XVI. spoke of it to Marie-Antoinette. But the queen, like the Spanish Court, was frightened at the enormous price—one million six hundred thousand livres, as valued by the jewellers Maillard and d'Oigny—and made the

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celebrated reply, "We have more need of a ship of war than of a set of jewels."

The next year Böhmer returned to the charge. He would offer the most advantageous terms. Gradual payment should be accepted at various dates, part payment in annuities. He begged the king to make the purchase; his entreaties were all the more urgent inasmuch as, to make the necklace, he had borrowed eight hundred thousand livres from the treasurer of the navy, Baudard de Sainte-James. The interest which he found himself obliged to pay became a weight more and more onerous, until in time it was to bring about his complete ruin.

The king spoke of it to the queen before Mme Campan. "I remember," writes Mme Campan herself, "the queen's words, that if the price was really not too exorbitant, the king could purchase the necklace and keep it for certain occasions, such as the marriage of his children, but that she would never wear it, not wishing that anyone should be able to reproach her with having desired an object of such an excessive price."

As the children were still young, Louis XVI. did not wish to tie up for so many years such a large sum, and he refused definitely the proposition made to him. Böhmer redoubled his complaints. He uttered them to everyone who came near him. Two years later, in 1777, addressing Marie-Antoinette in a direct manner, he threw himself at her feet. Her Majesty was entreated to buy the necklace; if not, he would go and throw himself into the river. He shed tears and his sobs nearly stifled him.

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"Get up, Böhmer," said the queen, severely; "I do not like such exclamations, and honest people do not find it necessary to supplicate on their knees. I have refused the necklace. The king wished to give it me, and I refused it again. Don't say anything more about it, then. Try to break it up and sell it, and don't drown yourself about it."

Böhmer knew the procurator-general at the Court of Request, Louis-François Achet, whose son-in-law, Maître Laporte, we have seen visiting at the house of the Countess de Valois. Maître Laporte was interested in the affairs which Jeanne undertook, and as the countess had shown to him, as to others, letters said to be from the queen, he entertained a high idea of her influence. On the 29th November, 1784, as they were talking in the drawing-room of the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, and the conversation turned to jewellery, Laporte said to Jeanne, without appearing to attach much importance to his words, "that since she was in such great favour with her Majesty, she might really try to facilitate to the poor jewellers, Böhmer and Bassenge, the sale of their necklace. It was a heavy burden to these merchants to have so long on their hands an article of such value."

"And have you seen this necklace?" asked Mme de la Motte.

"Yes; and it is really a marvel," replied Laporte. "The jewellers of the crown have worked at it for years; and if it were only a question of the value of the stones, it would be a treasure." He offered to bring the Böhmers with their necklace to see her. Mme de la Motte accepted. In the first days of

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December, the father-in-law, Achet, said on his side to the jewellers, "that his son-in-law knew a countess who had access to the queen," and the jewellers replied "that they would give a thousand louis to anyone who would find a purchaser for the necklace." Now Laporte was eaten up with debt.

Cardinal Rohan was at this time in Alsace. Achet and Bassenge arrived, according to their promise, at Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles on the 29th December with the precious treasure; and it was opened before Jeanne. What a surprise! What a sparkling of luminous points playing at the angles of the limpid stones; thousands and thousands of little multi-coloured flames darting like flashes of lightning and called forth by the slightest movement.

The cardinal came back from Saverne on the 3rd January, 1785. On 23rd January, the countess had her last interview with the jewellers in the presence of Maître Achet. She told them "that the necklace would perhaps be sold in a few days. The purchase will be made by a very great nobleman." She adds and insists on this point—note the prudence!—that she advises them in the most urgent manner to take with them, in the most direct manner, all possible precautions in connection with the arrangements that might possibly be proposed to them. As for herself, she did not wish to be in any way mixed up in the affair. Her name must not be mentioned. The jewellers offer her a precious stone in recognition of the services rendered, but she will not accept the present. Her only wish is to oblige them. She objects even to their looking upon her as an intermediary.

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On 24th January, at seven in the morning, Jeanne returns to the jewellers with her husband, to announce the visit of Prince Cardinal de Rohan. "It is with him," she insists once more, "that you will make all your arrangements and take all necessary precautions. Mind you do not say that I have anything to do with the matter. If it has been in my power to be of any service to you, that in itself will be my recompense," and she went away.

Soon afterwards arrives the cardinal. Mme de la Motte has made him believe that the queen wishes to buy the necklace without the king's knowledge and on credit, being for the moment short of money.

"The queen will pay by instalments," says Jeanne de Valois, "at intervals of three months. But for this arrangement she must have an intermediary, who personally, and with a high consideration enjoyed by him, will be a guarantee in the eyes of the jewellers, and the queen at once thought of the cardinal." "To make me decide," writes Prince Louis, "Mme de la Motte brought me a supposed letter from the queen, in which her Majesty showed herself anxious to buy the necklace, and pointed out that, being without the necessary funds for the moment, and not wishing to occupy herself with the necessary arrangements in detail, she wished that I would treat the affair and take all the steps for the purchase, and fix suitable periods for payment."[1]

How could the cardinal believe in the reality of such a commission? A pamphleteer of the time says very justly, "People are so easily persuaded as to the

[1] Dossier Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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truth of what they desire. No such mistake would have been made by an ordinary man, who sees his reflection only in calm water, accustomed to calculations for which nothing but the exercise of common sense is necessary, whose slow and measured ideas spring up with each step he takes. But it was such a mistake as might easily be made by a man with a lively, agitated mind like that of the cardinal, who was pleased, delighted, even, with an arrangement which fed some sentiment, some new view in the endless labyrinths of his imagination."[1]

Rohan then was at the Böhmers on 24th January, 1785. The design of the necklace does not please him; it is too heavy and massive. He is astonished that a woman of such artistic taste as Marie-Antoinette should have taken a fancy to such a thing. But, since such is the wish of the queen, the bargain is concluded. On the 29th January the jewellers are received at the Hôtel de Strasbourg, and Rohan fixes the terms on which the necklace is to be delivered: one million six hundred thousand livres, payable in two years by quarterly instalments, one every six months; the first instalment of four hundred thousand livres to be paid by the queen on the 1st August, 1785. The necklace is to be delivered on the 1st February. The cardinal puts the terms down on paper, and communicates them to Mme de la Motte in order that they may be submitted to the queen and ratified by her. On 30th January Jeanne sees him again. Her Majesty approves of the arrangement,

[1] Lettres sur la Détention de S. E. M. le Cardinal, pp. 14, 15.

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she says, but prefers not to give her signature. Rohan, however, insists. The affair, he says, is an important one, and he must have a word in writing. Finally, on 31st January, the countess brings to him at the Hôtel de Strasbourg the ratification of the agreement on the very sheet which bears the cardinal's handwriting, with the signature of the Böhmers. In the margin of each clause the word "approved" had been written, and underneath, by way of signature, "Marie-Antoinette de France."

Jeanne de Valois added on her own account: "The queen, who is doing this without the knowledge of the king, still annoyed at her love of expenditure, has particularly requested that this note should not leave your hands. Do not show it to anyone."

The evening before, Cagliostro had come back from Lyons; and the prince now hastened to consult him about the business which he had taken in hand. "This Python," writes Abbé Georgel, "ascends his tripod. The Egyptian invocations were made during a night illumined by a great quantity of wax candles in the cardinal's own drawing-room. The oracle inspired by his familiar demon declared that the negotiation was worthy of the prince, that it would have entire success, and that it would put the seal on the queen's good will and hasten the happy day which would make manifest, for the happiness of France and of humanity, the cardinal's rare talents." Quite re-assured, Rohan, on the morning of the 1st February, wrote to the jewellers pressing them to deliver the necklace. They hasten to do so, and when they bring the box of jewels are told that the necklace

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is for the queen, the cardinal not thinking that he infringes the wishes of the sovereign by showing to them for their satisfaction the paper signed: "Marie-Antoinette de France." For Rohan was very kind-hearted. He felt happy, and in his kindheartedness wished his happiness to be shared. The same day, Mme de la Motte, all impatience, calls on the cardinal.

"The necklace?"

"Here it is."

"Her Majesty expects it this very day."

"This very day I will take it to her. But the interest on the sums coming due until the day of payment?"

"The queen will pay it," replies Mme de la Motte, and she goes out after making an appointment with the cardinal for the same evening at Versailles. Before getting into the carriage, Prince Louis writes once more to the Böhmers to inform them that they will receive the current interest until the different payments are made. Then taking the necklace with him he sets off. He is accompanied by his valet Schreiber, who carries the precious burden. The dusk of evening is falling on the broad avenues of the town when they reach the countess's lodging on the Place Dauphine. At the door Rohan sends away his valet, and taking the box goes upstairs with it to the first floor. Mme de la Motte is at home; she has arranged everything as for a comedy. Rohan is introduced into a room which has an alcove and communicates with a little cabinet by a glass door. The room is dimly lighted. Mme de la Motte perceives in

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the hands of the prince the object of her covetousness, but she contains herself.

"The queen," she says, "is expecting the necklace."

A few minutes pass. Then are heard the steps of a man, who is thus announced—

"From the queen!"

From discretion, the cardinal retires into the alcove. But he has had a glimpse of the visitor—a tall, young man, dressed entirely in black, with slender features, pale complexion, and a long face, deep eyes, and black eyebrows. By his general style he recognises the same man who in the month of August had called out in the bosquet that Madame and the Countess of Artois were coming. It is, in fact, Rétaux de Villette, who has got himself up for the occasion. He delivers a note. The countess makes him leave the room, and then going up to the cardinal reads a letter to him. The queen gives orders that the necklace is to be delivered to the bearer. The cardinal hands the case containing it, and Mme de la Motte passes it on to the messenger whom she calls in. Rétaux takes it and starts off. The countess going herself to open the door for him, Jeanne tells the cardinal that this person was attached to the king's band and to the queen's chamber.[1] Then

[1] Some days afterwards Mme de la Motte said to Rohan that this man's name was Desclaux. She borrowed the name of the young man attached to the queen's chamber with whom she had dined some years before. Desclaux, in fact, was the only person who was attached at once to the queen's chamber and to the king's music (grand choir, symphony, and violins). This is one of the points in the story which

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in his turn the prelate wished good-bye. The same evening, on his return to the Rue Saint-Gilles, Jeanne de Valois received the necklace from the hands of her lover.

admits of precise demonstration. Mme de la Motte will appear innocent or guilty, according as Desclaux or Rétaux received the necklace—Desclaux to carry it to the queen, Rétaux to bring it back to Mme de la Motte. Now all evidence is to the effect that it was Rétaux de Villette who received it; that of the cardinal who recognised him at the scene of the grove in which Rétaux confessed to have taken part; that of Rosalie the maid, who declared that at the critical moment she opened to Rétaux the door through which he alone was admitted; the evidence of Desclaux himself, who asserted that he had never taken to Mme de la Motte a letter from the queen, and that Mme de la Motte had never given him a case of diamonds to take to the queen. "The truth is," he said in his interrogatory of the 2nd December, 1785, "that for the last three years and a half I have never spoken to Mme de la Motte." Finally, at her confrontation of 23rd March, 1786, Mme de la Motte was obliged to confess "that the deposition of Desclaux contained the exact truth," and in her confrontation of the 22nd April with the cardinal, that Desclaux had never come to her house, and that it was false that anyone came to ask for the necklace on the part of the queen, which did not prevent her later on from repeating, in her "Memoirs," that it was Desclaux who took the necklace to the queen ("Life of Jeanne de Saint-Rémy," i. 361). All the documents in the Archives Nationales referring to the case.

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XXI

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS

How much we must regret that no document reveals to us what took place at the abode of the Countess de la Motte, Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, in those early days of February, 1785. The marvellous piece of jewellery had been clumsily taken to pieces with a knife[1] on the table, with closed windows and curtains drawn between two candles furnished with shades. The count, the countess, and Rétaux de Villette are gloating over riches which they bury at the bottom of drawers on the approach of servants.

On Ash-Wednesday, 9th February, Jeanne entrusts Rétaux de Villette with the disposal of fragments of the necklace. On 15th February, he is arrested with his pockets full of diamonds. The historians of the case have not yet noticed this fact, which is sufficient in itself to point out the thieves beyond all possibility of doubt. On 12th February, a Hebrew jeweller at the Petit Carreau, named Adan, had gone to look for the police inspector of the Montmartre quarter, J.-Fr. de Brugnières, to tell him that a man named Rétaux de Villette was carrying about brilliants to the dealers and the Jews, and offering them at such a low price that no one would buy them, suspecting them to be

[1] Declaration of the English jewellers to whom the diamonds were sold.

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stolen. This man, said Adan, had himself a very suspicious look, and he was about to start directly for Holland with the broker Abraham Franc, in order to sell diamonds there.

Adan added that Rétaux had promised him, if he bought these first stones, to procure others for him of a like kind, among which there would be some very fine ones.

Brugnières searched the abode of Mme de la Motte's friend on the fifth floor of a house in the Rue Saint-Louis in the Marais, and obliged him to make a declaration before the commissary of the quarter. Hesitating and confused, Rétaux ended by avowing that he had received the diamonds from a lady of quality, a relation of the king, named Countess de Valois la Motte. If he had made some difficulty about giving up the name that was because the lady had begged him not to mention it. He objected, moreover, to the name he had given being put down in writing. It has been previously mentioned that Jeanne had been under the surveillance of the police. They knew that she was mixed up in "affairs," and, as they had received no notice concerning a theft of jewellery, they thought she was still occupied with one of those affairs of which for a consideration she sometimes took charge.[1] Nothing came of it for the moment to Jeanne de Valois but a severe fright. It opened her eyes, however, to the danger of negotiating the sale of diamonds at Paris in too great quantities. She decides that her husband shall go and get rid of the greater part of the necklace in England, while on

[1] Deposition of Inspector de Brugnières, 11th April, 1786.

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the other hand she wishes Rétaux to sell all he can of them in Holland, but he cares no more for the job.

La Motte started for London on the 10th or 12th April[1] in company with an Irish captain in the service of France, Chevalier John O'Neil. An Irish Capuchin, Father Bartholemew MacDermott, who had resided in the house of his order at Bar-sur-Aube, where the count had known him, and who was now chaplain to the French Embassy in England, rendered him great services. La Motte said that his diamonds came from a buckle which had been a long time in his family; it was now out of fashion, and he wanted to get rid of it. He now entered into relations with some of the principal jewellers of London: Robert and William Gray, in New Bond Street, and Nathaniel Jefferys, jeweller in Piccadilly, who in due time were to send their declarations to Paris for the trial. The count presented himself with his hands full of diamonds of the greatest value. Some of them, said the jewellers, were damaged, as if they had been extracted violently from the setting by a hasty and clumsy hand with a knife. They were, of course, the diamonds of the necklace, and the jewellers recognised them later on from the drawings transmitted to them by Böhmer and Bassenge.[2]

[1] He called upon the jeweller Jefferys, 23rd April. Deposition of Jefferys, 19th December, 1785. Pamphlet in 12mo, p. 34.

[2] It was by means of these drawings representing each stone of the necklace in the original size that M. de Bluze was able in our time to reconstruct in rock crystal the necklace of the queen, which has enabled us, thanks to the kindness of M. de Bluze, to give in this volume a representation which conveys an exact idea of it.

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La Motte offered them for so much less than their value, that in their turn the English jewellers suspected they must be stolen. They made inquiries at the French Embassy, but, as there was no question anywhere of a theft of diamonds, the jewellers were willing to negotiate. They bought from La Motte brilliants to the value of two hundred and forty thousand livres, payable part in ready money, part by a bill of exchange on Perregaux, banker at Paris. Others again, representing a sum of eight thousand pounds sterling, were hastily exchanged for objects of the most varied kind, of which the list has been preserved. An assortment of watches with their chains, ruby buckles, snuff-boxes with miniatures, pearl necklaces, a water-boiler with lamp, a funnel, and a glass, two very beautiful steel swords, four razors, two thousand needles, a corkscrew, a clasp, a pair of asparagus tongs, a silk portfolio, a purse, a carving knife and fork, a syphon, cases for toothpicks, etc., a mixed collection of pearls and other jewels, a necklace of one row and a pair of girandoles, given by the jeweller Gray, are estimated at three thousand pounds sterling, and the mixed collection has a like value.[1]

If one allows for the depreciation which the diamonds had undergone from having been removed from the setting, from having been damaged by the person who extracted them, and from the rebate con-

[1] Confrontation of Victor Laisus, valet of Count de la Motte, with Cardinal de Rohan, 17th April, 1786. Arch. Nat., X^2, B/1417, and interr. MacDermott. Dossier Target, MS. de la réserve.

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sented to by La Motte in his haste to get rid of them, one sees that the greater part of the necklace was sold, exchanged, or deposited at the shops of the jewellers Gray and Jefferys.

On her side, Mme de la Motte sold diamonds at Paris in March, 1785, for thirty-six thousand livres to a jeweller named Pâris. In April she profited by the presence at her house of a M. Filliau, of Bar-sur-Aube, to get him to sell to a jeweller, one of his cousins, diamonds to the value of thirty thousand livres.[1] She owed twelve thousand six hundred and fifty livres to Régnier, her jeweller, whom she now pays, not in cash, but in diamonds. Moreover, she sells him diamonds to the figure of twenty-seven thousand five hundred and forty livres, and leaves with him diamonds to the value of fifty thousand livres, to be set in various ways. In the month of June she takes him diamonds worth sixteen thousand livres, telling him this time that she has undertaken to sell them for one of her friends. She liberates herself with diamonds from a debt contracted towards M. Mardoché, Rue aux Ours. She buys (paying always in diamonds) horses, carriages, liveries, two clocks, for which the clockmaker Furet receives two thousand seven hundred livres in the form of two brilliants and two vases furnished by a Jew. And in spite of all these diamonds scattered about everywhere, Régnier sees her still with a case of diamonds which he values

[1] Note in Mme de la Motte's handwriting on the back of a washing bill given to her laundress on the 15th August, 1785. Arch. Nat., X², B/1417.

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at one hundred thousand livres at least, while the Count de la Motte preserves on his side diamonds worth thirty thousand livres.[1] We can thus follow the entire necklace in its dispersion by Jeanne de Valois and her husband among the dealers of Paris and London, what is left over remaining in their own hands.

It is not astonishing that Mme de la Motte should have thought the time had come for a new absence on the part of the cardinal. Accordingly, another little blue-edged note arrived. "These notes," says Georgel, "were, in the hands of Mme de la Motte, the magic wand of Circe."

"Your absence," the queen was made to say, "becomes necessary, in view of the measures I am about to take, in order to place you where you ought to be." In another direction Jeanne was preparing her friends for her sudden change of fortune by informing them all that her husband was returning from England with large sums of money gained on the racecourse.

The husband comes back from London on the night of the 2nd June, and suddenly, as if from out of the earth, they are surrounded by horses, carriages, lacqueys, furniture, bronzes, marbles, crystals, luxury of the most dazzling kind. Visitors to the Rue Saint-Gilles were much amused by an automatic bird which flapped its wings and crowed. The countess had got it in exchange for a diamond quoted at fifteen hundred livres. An immense quantity of

[1] Confrontation of Father Loth with Cardinal de Rohan, 16th March, 1786. Arch. Nat., X², B/1417.

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furniture was now sent to Bar-sur-Aube, and forty-two vans arrived there one after the other. The packing of the furniture and its despatch had been directed by Father Loth. Texier, upholsterer of the Rue Saint-Louis, has furnished the stuffs, brocades, and carpets to the value of fifty thousand francs. Gervais, Fournier, and Héricourt, from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, have supplied the house furniture; Chevalier the bronze statues; Adam the marbles; Sikes the crystals. A bed of crimson velvet embroidered in spangles and pearls and trimmed with gold brocade was much admired. The La Mottes had at Bar-sur-Aube six carriages and twelve horses. Jeanne was particularly pleased with "her light cabriolet made in the form of a balloon, and raised more than ten feet from the ground."

She had made her entry into the little town preceded by several outriders, seated on the right of her husband, in her English carriage painted in pearl grey with armorial bearings, lined with white cloth, the cushions and apron in white silk, the coat-of-arms displaying those of the Valois, with this motto: *Rege ab avo sanguinem, nomen et lilia* (from the king, my ancestor, I have blood, name, and lilies). The team was composed of four English mares with cropped tails, lacqueys behind, and on the step, ready to open the door, a negro covered with silver. More astonishing still was the jewellery of the lady, in which the elegance of her topaz ornaments vied with the brilliancy of her diamonds and richness of her wardrobe—especially remarkable for some beautifully embroidered Lyons gowns. This is the description of

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one of them from the inventory of a sheriff's officer, who does not condescend to poetical exaggerations:

"White satin, embroidered in gold, silver, and silk of different colours, with garlands and ears of corn, and the said garlands surrounded by black velvet and feathers, and bordered with blonde (lace) adorned with detached bouquets of different-coloured silks."[1]

As for the count, he wore on all his fingers rings of rubies and emeralds, and walked about with three or four watch-chains on his stomach. His wardrobe was thus composed: a satin coat, waistcoat, and breeches, spotted with white; another suit for all seasons in velvet; another for spring and autumn in velvet, with diamond buttons; coat and breeches of crimson velvet with Lyons embroidery spangled with gold, buttons in chiselled gold, satin waistcoat embroidered similarly in gold; a dress-coat of light silk varied with different colours; a toad-coloured coat with gilt buttons in the Turkish style; a dress-coat of striped silk with silver buttons, sun-shaped, with diamonds all round; a dress-coat of cherry-coloured silk; a dress-coat of pistachio-coloured cloth; a black coat in cloth of silk, with Brandenburgs of silk and buttons the same; waistcoat and breeches the same; a coat of muslin in striped and varied silk, buttons the same; a coat of camelot silk, with Brandenburgs, buttons the same; a coat of green cloth trimmed with gold and silver, lapels and collar of crimson velvet, buttons in stag-horn; a sea-green coat with buttons of yellow copper; an evening coat of cloth striped with brown, lined

[1] Arch. Nat., X^2, B/1417.

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with silk, buttons of copper gilt; a coat of light colour embroidered in silk, with waistcoat and breeches to match; a blue evening coat in striped silk; a coat of cotton cloth with trimmings—this without counting the clothes which Count de la Motte had taken with him to England, and which are not put down in this list, and without counting the cambric handkerchiefs trimmed with Malines lace, sleeves and frills in English point, the shirts in fine linen, all accessories of dress, and all ordinary garments, clothes for the house, dressing-gowns, etc.[1]

The count and countess gave fêtes upon fêtes, receptions on receptions. They kept open house. People dined at their place even when the hosts were not there; the abundance of plates and dishes and of servants was such that the inhabitants had never seen anything like it; but they had known the abject poverty of Nicolas de la Motte and of Jeanne de Valois. Accordingly, as Beugnot, who was just then at Bar-sur-Aube, observes, people never met in the streets without asking one another what was the meaning of this additional chapter to "The Thousand and One Nights."[2]

[1] Inventory of the things left in their house at Bar-sur-Aube by Count and Countess de la Motte, made the 9th, 10th, and 12th September; Nat. Arch., X^2, B/1417. This inventory is valuable not only from the details it gives, but because it enables us to contrast the descriptions—perfectly exact—which Beugnot gives in his "Memoirs," where he relates at this date the life of the La Mottes at Bar-sur-Aube.

[2] These facts are according to Beugnot and the author of the "Authentic History," who both found themselves just then at Bar-sur-Aube, and according to the information

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These facts help to make us understand Jeanne de Valois. However great might be the sum of money she had just procured, her expenses were altogether beyond measure. Did she ever think of current expenses, of the day afterwards? Would a bracelet worth a million livres fall into her hands every month? We here see the beggar passing immediately from destitution to luxury without bounds. Of proportion, order, measure, she could have no idea; no education, no habits of family life ever having given her any.

In her turn, then, she is seated in the midst of blue satin cushions in a carriage with six horses, the little beggar-girl who formerly, shivering with cold, followed with big wistful eyes the ladies clad in silk and lace whom she saw carried in their brilliant rattling equipages along the king's high road.

collected for his speech by Maître Target (Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve), and controlled by the inventory of the 9th to 12th December (Arch. Nat., X², B/1417). Nor is this inventory complete, a great part of their property and the most valuable having been entrusted for safety by the La Mottes to the relations at Surmont, while another part was taken by the count to England.

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XXII

BETTE D'ETIENVILLE, CITIZEN OF SAINT-OMER[1]

MME DE LA MOTTE had been in possession of the necklace since the 1st February, 1785.

Some days afterwards, on the 8th or 9th of the same month, a certain Bette d'Etienville arrived from Saint-Omer to solicit the privilege of publishing almanacks with songs. He was a man who cultivated in the newly-started clubs the society of journalists and news collectors, and he was addressed at the Café de Valois in the gardens of the Palais-Royal by an individual who said his name was Augeard, and that he was the secretary of a lady of quality. "His fair hair," says d'Etienville, "was beginning to turn white. He was not very stout. He had blue, straightforward eyes, and was rather above the ordinary height. This was Rétaux de Villette." [2]

[1] See the numerous records drawn up for Bette d'Etienville, Baron de Fages, Count de Précourt, the Abbé Mulot, and against them in favour of Loque and Vaucher; then the interrogatories and confrontations of the witnesses and defendants in Arch. Nat., X^2, B/1417, and the declarations of Bette d'Etienville which are contained in the Dossier Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

[2] Mme de la Motte's maid, Rosalie, in her confrontation with Cardinal de Rohan, traces the portrait of Villette in these terms: "Of middle height, fair hair, slightly grey, though he is not more than thirty-four or thirty-five; much colour in his cheeks, and blue eyes." The description cor-

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They soon became acquainted with one another, and after obtaining promises of unlimited confidence and the greatest possible discretion, Augeard declared to his companion that he would enable him to make his fortune. The companion was in need of it,

Jean-Charles-Vincent Bette, who described himself as "de Bette d'Etienville, citizen, living like a gentleman on his property in the town of Saint-Omer," was a young man of twenty-seven years of age, and son of a stonemason who had never had a *sou*. After studying surgery at Lille—to what extent is already known his studies were quite rudimentary—he obtained the rank of sub-assistant major in the hospitals of the army. The story is already known of his marriage with an old maid. The day was fixed, when Bette, going to the theatre, saw "Nanine" performed. The part of Baroness d'Olban struck him.

"If I were to marry a Baroness d'Olban?"

The self-posed question filled him with dismay.

He hides at a friend's house and starts the next morning for Lille. But his bride, having learnt what he was about, had taken a place in the diligence, so that daybreak found the betrothed at his side. The matter was easily arranged. One of them was afraid only of marriage, while the other was quite ready to dispense with the ceremony. They arrive together at the house of Bette's mother, say they are married, and live together. Now, the lady was really a little

responds exactly with the one given by d'Etienville. Later on, when d'Etienville saw what a bad turn Mme de la Motte's affair had taken, he denied the identity of Rétaux with Augeard, so as to disengage himself from all complicity.

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in the style of the Baroness d'Olban. She grumbled, the mother complained, and Bette, to get rid of her, revealed the mystery. But the mother was scrupulous, and made them get married.

The gentleman remained with his wife for eighteen months, "living like a gentleman on her property." One day she refused to let him sell the little that remained, on which Bette at once placed her in the convent of Sainte-Catherine at Saint-Omer while he went to seek better luck at Paris. He was living there in the Rue du Petit-Lion with a dealer in vinegar named Lefèvre, when Rétaux de Villette met him in the character of M. Augeard, secretary to a lady of quality. He had just been liberated by public charity from the Hôtel de la Force, where he had been imprisoned for some rather flagrant cases of debt. Augeard then proposed to d'Etienville to make his fortune.

"Your project," replied d'Etienville, "suits me to perfection."

"It is only a question," said Augeard, "of finding a gentleman with a title who will marry a lady still young and pretty, with a nice figure and a charming disposition, enjoying an annual income of twenty-five thousand livres, and in whose fate a prince, one of the greatest noblemen of the kingdom, takes a particular interest. You will have to tell the gentleman," coninued Augeard, "that he will not be able to see his bride until the day of the marriage, and you will do your best to inspire him with confidence. You will inform him, moreover, that if by the marriage contract separate estates are stipulated for, he will

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be compensated by an annual allowance of six thousand livres, and he will receive, moreover, a handsome present on the day of the marriage; that his debts wil be paid; and that if he is in the army, whatever post he wishes for will be given to him, even if it is already occupied." One condition alone was required in return; that the gentleman should be of noble birth and ready to show his titles, so that they might be examined before further steps were taken.

"I accepted," says Bette, "these propositions with transport;" and he began his campaign the same day, addressing himself first of all to Count Xavier de Vinezac, captain of infantry, attached to Marshal de Mailly, but who did not furnish the necessary proofs. He was not more fortunate with M. de Laurio-Vissec, advocate at the Parliament, who, being already sixty years of age, may have seemed somewhat ripe for matrimony. The astonishing tale was meanwhile spreading abroad. Louis Cardinal de Beaurepaire, formerly one of the gentlemen in the service of the queen, had made known the conditions of the marriage to the Abbé de Saint-André, chaplain of the Prince de Condé, who by letter of 22nd May, had informed Roger-Guillaume, Baron de Fages-Chaulnes, in the Garde du Corps of Monsieur. Baron de Fages, of a Gascon family, full of boasts and of debt, seemed the man for the situation. That, too, was his own opinion, for he lost no time in calling upon the Abbé Mulot, canon and prior of Saint-Victor, who had taken an interest in Bette when he was in prison. The Abbé Mulot put the baron in communication with the citizen of Saint-Omer. The

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two men understood one another perfectly, and Bette, in the gardens of the Palais-Royal, was able to assure Augeard that the gentleman was found.

Yes, the gentleman was found. "He was a poor man, but a man of feeling," to quote the baron's own account of himself. It is not self-interest that decides him, but the portrait of the bride. "Natural gifts, agreeable talents, qualities of mind and heart, illustrious and clearly-established birth, influential connections, property in her own hands bringing in twenty-five thousand livres a year, and sure to become five times as valuable." It is evident that amongst so many reasons for marrying her the bride's fortune did not count.

"One fault, it is true, casts a shadow on this eulogism." The lady "is the victim of a weakness which certain persons never forgive." These are still the baron's own words. The fair one has a child of fifteen, the offspring of a great nobleman; and the child has to be taken care of as well as the mother. But the baron has a large heart. He "does not think that a fault which tears of repentance may have effaced should be regarded as an unpardonable crime. If the portrait is a true one (and why doubt it if the money is punctually paid into the notary's hands), he will not hesitate to unite his fate to that of a woman whom he believes to be as worthy of respect as she is unfortunate." Noble disdain of old-fashioned prejudices!

On 3rd April Augeard informs the citizen of Saint-Omer that he is very pleased with his friend's good offices, that he may look upon his fortune as

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made, and that the very next day he shall be presented to the lady. In fact, on 4th April, at ten in the evening, in a hackney carriage with the blinds down, Augeard takes his friend to a house as to whose identity he is forbidden, under the most serious penalties, even to inquire.

"If you endeavour to find out where I am taking you you are a lost man."

They go in through a low gateway, of which the folding doors are immediately closed after them. On the first floor there is a drawing-room, where d'Etienville is presented to a charming woman quite alone, who receives him in the most gracious manner.

She was about twenty-four years of age, with rather a full figure, a beautiful face, and black eyes. Her conversation was as full of wit as of friendly feeling, and she inquired with much interest about Baron de Fages.. All that d'Etienville said about him received her full approbation. It was late at night before they separated, and the citizen of Saint-Omer was driven back to the Palais-Royal as he had come, in a hackney coach with the blinds down. It had been agreed that the friends should meet again on the morrow.

Ulterior researches enabled d'Etienville to discover the mysterious domicile to which he was driven with such precautions in the darkness of the night. It was No. 13 in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, the house of Mme de la Motte. As to the charming woman whom he met there we are able to identify her. It was that other Mme de la Motte, Marie-Josèphe-Françoise de Waldburg-Frohberg by her maiden name, who had been put into the Bastille for various swindles in

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which she had compromised the names of the queen, the Countess Polignac, and the Princess de Lamballe; afterwards transferred from the Bastille to the house of one Macé, who kept at La Villette a boarding-house for prisoners detained in virtue of *lettres de cachet*, from which she ran away soon afterwards. She went first to Germany, but afterwards returned to France.[1]

Etienville must have thought he had made a good impression, for on 5th April, at the second nocturnal meeting, he was treated with the most unreserved confidence. The great nobleman in question, protector of the lady for whom a husband was needed, was no other, it was said, than the grand almoner of France, Prince Louis, Cardinal-Bishop of Strasburgh. The unknown beauty was Mella de Courville; but this name, she said of her own accord, was a borrowed one. She afterwards told d'Etienville that her real name was Baroness de Salzberg, formerly canoness of the convent of Colmar, in Alsace, where, when she was a young girl, Rohan had seduced her, afterwards taking her with him to Vienna, Paris, and Strasburgh. It was a question now of securing a future for the child.

In the society of Mme de Courville, Etienville met a third personage, who said that his name was de Marcilly, and who was familiarly called the magistrate or the counsellor; a little man of about forty years of age, wearing a wig tied at both ends and a

[1] Report dated 28th January, 1786, to the lieutenant of police. Arch. Nat., O[1]/424, and Bastille dévoilée, Fasc. VIII., pp. 133-34. At the Bibl. Nat. (Nouv. acq. fr. 6578) is preserved a collection of autograph letters from Mme de la Motte, née de Waldburg-Frohberg; but there is a gap in the correspondence at the very period which interests us.

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black coat. The description betrays Count de la Motte. This magistrate, who seemed fully in the confidence of the lady, recommended the greatest prudence and absolute silence. In the course of this second interview, Marcilly having retired, Mme de Courville showed to our sub-assistant-major in the medical service of the army a set of brilliants, unmounted, in a common little box. She said they had been valued at four hundred and thirty-two thousand livres.

"I never saw anything so magnificent," writes d'Etienville, "both for brilliancy and for size; and as my astonishment was extreme, she told me that these diamonds were from a necklace which had been given to her by the cardinal, but that this style of ornament being no longer in fashion she had decided to realise it before her marriage. She even gave me to understand that I seemed to deserve her confidence to such a point that she should be delighted if I would accept a commission from her to go and sell them in Holland. But I replied that I could not undertake it, knowing nothing about diamonds. She then said no more about it." If Mme de la Motte had not later on herself admitted the part taken by her in Mme de Courville's intrigue, these lines from Bette d'Etienville would suffice to prove it.[1]

The mysterious history of the betrothal of Mme de Courville to Baron de Fages is interesting to follow as showing the sort of intrigue in which Jeanne de Valois delighted. Rétaux discovers in the Palais-Royal Bette d'Etienville as La Motte had discovered in the same place the Baroness d'Oliva. We meet with

[1] Confrontation with Cardinal de Rohan, 1st May, 1786.

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the same nocturnal scenes, arranged like comedies, in which Mme de la Motte makes the various personages act according to the part she has assigned to them. They are all counts and counsellors, ladies of noble birth, to whom their imagination lends a fugitive reality in which, fictitious as it is, Jeanne seems to take infinite pleasure. Mme de la Motte's motive in getting up this new intrigue is explained later on by Baron de Fages himself. "The quantity of diamonds held in a single hand could not be got rid of without some difficulty, and it would have been easy enough to trace them. It was necessary to employ intermediaries, fantastic go-betweens, who, being impossible to identify, would render equally impossible the discovery of the truth. A woman for whom a husband had to be found, a woman of a rank and condition to justify great sacrifices on the part of a just and generous man, in proportion to his fortune and his dignities—that was the phantom it was necessary to create; and d'Etienville, less likely to be suspected, inasmuch as he was isolated and unknown, was just the man to take charge of the phantom." Mme de la Motte, moreover, in view of the day when the theft of the necklace would become known, and the culpability fall upon the cardinal, was preparing facts to explain his urgent need for appropriating it in order to turn it into money without delay. In accordance with this project, we shall find her saying in the course of her interrogatories, "I saw this Mme de Courville loaded with diamonds at the house of Cardinal de Rohan during the Holy Week,"[1] and

[1] 20th-25th March, 1785.

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again, "The cardinal wished to get her married and to give her five thousand livres. He pressed me in the month of April to write to my husband and bring him back from London, with a view to the necessary funds." Finally, she hoped to find in d'Etienville a useful auxiliary for the sale of the brilliants.

At the end of this first week of April, Etienville calls to tell his newly-made friend, the Baron de Fages, that the marriage would take place that same day, in the chapel of the Palais Soubise, Rue des Francs-Bourgeois, at eleven o'clock p.m., each side bringing its own witnesses only. Fages accordingly put on his best clothes and awaited further notice. While he remained in expectation at 137 Rue du Bac, Etienville was at the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles in company with the bride, with M. de Marcilly, and with a personage wearing a grey cassock and a round hat with a cord and tassels of gold, and to whom every one spoke with the most profound respect. It was—d'Etienville had not a moment's doubt on the subject—Prince Louis, Cardinal de Rohan.

The cardinal was affable, charming, and full of gratitude towards the citizen of Saint-Omer for all he had done, which he assured him he should not forget. "But," he added, "for important reasons, the marriage cannot take place before the 15th July."

"And Baron de Fages?" cried d'Etienville.

"A letter will be sent to him," said the cardinal; but d'Etienville replied that this delay would cause some suspicion. Thereupon a forfeit of thirty thousand livres was promised in writing and formally signed in case the marriage should not take place.

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The document was dated 26th April, on which day the forfeit became payable.

The next day d'Etienville found his friend de Fages in the greatest anger. But when he was told about the forfeit his rage disappeared, and on the 26th April, Bette shows him an envelope sealed with five seals of pink wax, in which he says the precious paper is enclosed.

The paper is so precious that our two friends take the precaution of depositing it in the hands of the Abbé François Mulot, regular canon and prior of Saint-Victor. The abbé receives the sealed envelope, and has no doubt but that it contains a forfeit of thirty thousand livres, since a man of noble birth and a citizen of Saint-Omer, neither of whom had seen the contents of the envelope, declare such to be the case. He promises to take great care of it. It will be seen how the two companions will turn this incident to account.

We now arrive at the most improbable moment of this improbable but true story, which was received throughout Paris, when it came to be known, with the most hilarious incredulity. At the end of May, Mme de Courville informed our sub-assistant surgeon-major that she was going into the country to her estate, which she did not name, and proposed, as soon as she was settled, to send for him, that he might spend a few days with her, giving himself a rest and, she hoped, a pleasant change. D'Etienville accepted. The same mysterious conditions as before were imposed—a night journey in a closed carriage, with positive injunctions not to inquire where he was

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going. Agreed, replied d'Etienville; and everything took place as pre-arranged. Augeard, who came for him, did not leave him for one moment during the whole of the journey, the visit, and the return journey. The night travelling occupied some three or four hours; the château was a very fine one. An immense park communicated with a river, which d'Etienville, for exactness, declared to be the Seine, unless it was the Marne. What struck him most was the boudoir, with glasses and gilding on all the walls. The society consisted of the beautiful Mme de Courville; Marcilly, the magistrate; the secretary, Augeard; a gentleman called "the Baron"; a lady, the widow of a counsellor, and a young man of fifteen with his preceptor. This young man, whom everyone called the little chevalier, was the alleged son of Mme de Courville and the cardinal. D'Etienville passed several charming days at the château, and returned on the 3rd or 4th of June, absolutely enchanted. It was no use telling him afterwards that all his story was absurd and incredible; he stuck to it. In his interrogatories and confrontations, in the pleadings and consultations of his advocates, d'Etienville does not give up his fairy-like castle, where in the society of the charming Mella de Courville he had passed such enchanting days. Given Mme de la Motte, the thing is possible. On the other hand, Bette was a novelist of fertile imagination, who published a certain number of love stories, each of them in several volumes. It is for the reader to decide. After his return to Paris, on the 4th June, d'Etienville wrote to Baron de

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Fages to tell him of his visit. He added that the lady would have an income of one hundred thousand crowns, which would come to her soon after the marriage, and that in connection with this she wished to make a journey to Germany with her husband.

D'Etienville and his friend the baron were in this way kept in breath. Now the citizen of Saint-Omer was astonished by the magnificence of the lady's jewels, destined as they were for her future husband; now he was reassured by the promise that the ceremony would take place in the middle of July, without any further delay. On the 1st July, Baron de Fages solicited and obtained from his captain, M. de Chabrian, the necessary authorisation for his marriage. Cardinal de Rohan declared M. de Marcilly was remaining in Paris only for the nuptial ceremony, refusing to go to Saverne, where he ought to have been in order to receive the Prince de Condé, who had gone to Strasburgh to hold a grand review.

But 15th July passes and the marriage does not take place. On 18th July, there was a fresh interview in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles between d'Etienville, Mme de Courville, and the cardinal. His Eminence was dressed this time in a cassock of dark violet. The citizen of Saint-Omer testifies his impatience, and the cardinal tells him that it is all the fault of Mme de Courville.

"I have promised her," he says, "five hundred thousand livres, and she will not contract the marriage before the money is paid."

"I did not conceal from Mme de Courville," said Bette d'Etienville, "that if she was the owner of the

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large diamonds she had shown me, telling me they came from a necklace she no longer cared to wear, she was rich enough to get married without waiting for the important sum about which she seemed to be pressing the cardinal; but she replied that the sale of the diamonds was a difficult thing to manage for reasons which she could not communicate to me."

The marriage then was fixed for the 12th August. To tranquillise his friend de Fages, d'Etienville told him that the cardinal meant to make him a superb present, a magnificent carriage with two chestnut horses. The Abbé of Saint-André was to have a fine abbey, that of Saint-Vaast no doubt, which was in the gift of the cardinal. As to the presents which Mme de Courville proposed to make to her future husband they were to be a superb dressing-bag of vermilion leather; a watch and chain, each enriched with diamonds; two rings adorned with precious stones; and a snuff-box with her portrait, a marvel of richness and of art. All these d'Etienville had seen. He had also seen a princely service of plate, estimated at sixty thousand livres, which the cardinal had given to the lady, and a portfolio containing the hundred thousand livres in black notes of the Discount Bank, which Mme de Courville was to give to her husband on her wedding-day. Fages listens, finds it all very fine—indeed, finer and finer; but he also finds it longer and longer in coming.

What renders the intrigues of Mme de la Motte interesting is not only the boldness of her original conceptions, but the marvellous complications which she brings about as she goes on, and the number of

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personages she introduces, inventing for each a well-defined part, and making them all manœuvre in such a manner as to bring each of them to the proper point at the proper moment, with astonishing precision, with a knowledge of character which the best dramatists have not surpassed.

But while in little Nicole Leguay, who played so prettily the part of the Baroness d'Oliva, Jeanne had found a confiding, timid, tranquil child, she had in the person of Bette d'Etienville put into movement a lively young fellow, who hastened to surround himself with four or five others of the same kind, and who, with a spontaneity which Mme de la Motte certainly did not bargain for, will now carry on things in their own fashion, boldly, briskly, in devil-may-care style, making of the beautiful Mme de Courville, whether phantom or reality—that indeed being the least of their cares—a fairy adroit at filling empty money-bags.

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XXIII

THE BETROTHAL OF BARON DE FAGES[1]

Baron de Fages was not a man to let things stagnate. Hardly had Bette spoken to him on 5th April, of the project of marriage, than he went in company with the Abbé de Saint-André and of Colavier d'Albissy, formerly director of French Louisiana, to order jewellery from Loque, the dealer on the Pont-Notre-Dame.[2] The baron has not a *sou*; but he is about to get married, and what a marriage! Ten thousand livres in ready money, an order for thirty thousand livres, and one hundred thousand livres a year. The abbé and the former governor of Louisiana confirm the story. At their first visit some jewellery is ordered, but none taken away.

From the moment that the marriage was decided on, the baron could no longer inhabit in sordid style his bachelor's quarters of the Rue du Bac. He moves to the Rue du Mail, Hôtel des Indes, on the first floor, where he occupies a sumptuous set of rooms.

His friends spread abroad the news of his approaching splendour. The baron surrounds himself with servants. He has a valet and a courier. He visits the shops of the principal tradesmen in an imposing

[1] Same sources as for the preceding chapter.

[2] M. d'Albissy "was engaged in running the diligences; he had several lawsuits in connection therewith; he failed, and was for a long time established in the Temple." Target's Notes.

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equipage, taking with him Bette d'Etienville, to whom he gives linen and clothes, and who attests solemnly the veracity of the baron's declarations. On 12th April, accompanied by the Abbé Saint-André and the former governor of Louisiana, Fages returns to the jewellers to take away the things he has ordered; they are of the value of ten thousand francs. That very day, that they may not go astray, the baron makes a point of taking them—and of receiving money in return—to the Mont-de-Piété. On the 13th the three friends return to Loque and take a new supply up to the value of twelve thousand francs. "The first jewellery had been given to the relations of the bride; these were for the relations of the bridegroom, and the family was numerous." They reached the same destination. The jewellery had been supplied on the security of the expectant bridegroom. A first promissory note for twenty-seven hundred livres was payable at short date, and it was paid. Having gone to Vineuil, near Chantilly, towards the end of May, the baron writes to the jeweller, pressing him to execute some other orders about which there has been some delay. He adds, "And you, sir, how are you and Mme Loque? and Mme Loque's thigh, is it quite restored? I hope so, for it is impossible not to take interest in her, when one has the advantage of knowing her. She inspires sentiments worthy of her, and above esteem. Such is the effect she produces upon me, and I congratulate you more and more upon so happy a choice. And now let me ask for news of my box for my brother the abbé."

The first instalment had been paid, the second was

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not; it was for a more important sum. The reason given by the baron was that the marriage had been unexpectedly delayed; and, to reassure the dealer, he sent him to Dom Mulot, Prior of Saint-Victor, who seriously showed the envelope closed with five seals of pink wax, which ought to have contained the forfeit of thirty thousand francs. In addition to this, the citizen of Saint-Omer, who has not enough money to pay his rent, proposes to transform the acceptances of Baron de Fages into a notarial act, with himself as security. Loque is reassured.

While these things are taking place on the Pont-Notre-Dame, they are being repeated in the Enclos Saint-Germain. Fages had been indebted for thirteen or fourteen years to a merchant named Bernard for a sum of fifty crowns, which he had never been able to pay. He profits by this to give his creditor an enormous order for stuffs, linen, and jewels; and as Bernard assumed a doubtful attitude, he was sent, like Loque, to the Abbé Mulot. "He found him in the sacristy, about to say Mass; the time and place are remarkable. The Abbé Mulot assured his visitor that he held in his hand a forfeit of thirty thousand livres; that the Baron de Fages was about to contract a marriage of the greatest importance, and that he had nothing to fear in regard the payment of his goods." Thereupon Bernard supplied what had been ordered from him to the value of thirteen thousand francs, and the goods went to keep company with those of Loque at the Mont-de-Piété.

To M. Thiébault, his tailor, in the Rue Saint-

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Nicaise, the Baron de Fages and the citizen of Saint-Omer speak of a marriage which will bring in three hundred thousand livres a year, and declare that the forfeit in the hands of Dom Mulot is for more than thirty thousand crowns. From Vineuil he writes to him: "Good-morning, M. and Mme Thiébault. I desire most sincerely that my letter may find you in good health, for I am singularly interested in you by reason of all the feelings with which you have inspired me in your favour, and which will last for ever. Count on the lively interest which I take in your health, and on the widest gratitude for all the kindnesses which you have had for me until now, and which I shall know how to acknowledge when the time comes; meanwhile, I remain as much your servant as your debtor."

The affection of Baron de Fages for his tailor, and the kindness of the tailor for Baron de Fages, said later on the advocates of the unhappy tradesmen, recall the scene from Molière, in which Don Juan in similar style addresses M. Dimanche: "M. Dimanche! the best of my friends! I know what I owe you. You have an admirable fund of health. I insist on your being escorted. I am your servant, and moreover your debtor." It is to the tune of such music that Baron de Fages and his friend, Bette d'Etienville, procured for themselves in the course of May, that is to say, with the shortest delay possible, fifteen coats, the bill for which came to more than two thousand crowns (£240).

In the same month, deceived by the same means, Vaucher, clockmaker in the city, delivered to the

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baron twelve watches enriched with precious stones, and thirteen gold chains. D'Etienville was again the intermediary in this new affair, and the citizen of Saint-Omer ate his soup with the clockmaker into the bargain "in a friendly manner," indeed in a very friendly manner, for he brought his friends with him. D'Etienville took the clockmaker to the Hôtel des Indes, where his friend the baron lived; they found him on the first floor in his vast, magnificently-furnished rooms, giving orders to several servants at the same time as they all pressed round him. "This comedy was perfectly played. After presenting to M. Vaucher a list of the things he wished to buy, Baron de Fages seemed to occupy himself with him and his affairs but superficially. To all the clockmaker's questions he had but one reply: 'D'Etienville will explain it to you,' or 'd'Etienville must have told you.' He affected at the same time that easy indifference which reveals the certainty of resources, and that noble carelessness which disclaims attention to petty details. Vaucher supplied a number of admirable things: a repeater enriched with diamonds on a blue ground (stars of brilliants), with gold chain, blue enamel with one row of pearls, worth nearly four thousand francs; a repeater, English case, with gold chain; a watch enriched with two rings of pearls, blue ground, gold stars, with chain of gold; a plain watch, hands pointed with diamonds, with gold chain; a watch with secret spring, double ring of pearls; watch with Arabic figures, with gold chain; blue enamelled watch with white border, and blue enamelled chain with pearls;

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watch enamelled in pigeon-breast colour with two rings of pearls; moreover, a man's gold box, oval, with portrait; another one round; three similar boxes for lady's use; gold enamelled case, royal blue ground; another one, pale blue enamel; another of plain gold. Finally, a soup-tureen with its cover and with soup-plate all in silver." [1]

The two friends made in this way a booty of sixty thousand francs. Now, on the 7th August, as he was returning from Chantilly, where he had been received by Baron de Fages, d'Etienville saw Augeard arrive, who asked him to come directly to see Mme de Courville. He found her in the greatest agitation. She begged him to give back the famous forfeit of thirty thousand livres which had been deposited in the hands of the Abbé Mulot, exclaiming:

"This unhappy document ruins everyone."

Bette d'Etienville hesitates.

"You doubt me then, you doubt the cardinal?"

He, d'Etienville, doubt Mme de Courville? doubt the cardinal? He goes at once to Dom Mulot, gets back the envelope, and brings it to Mme de Courville. But scarcely has it been placed in her hands, when she tears the paper into a thousand pieces and throws them into the fire. D'Etienville says that he renounces the idea of painting his stupefaction. Let us do the same.

This envelope, which was thought to contain a

[1] Mémoire pour les sieurs Vaucher, horloger, et Loque, bijoutier, contre Bette d'Etienville et le baron de Fages, éd. orig., pp. 65, 66.

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document which no one in the world had ever seen, had been the only guarantee for the tradesmen, and it no longer existed. But what had happened to throw Mme de Courville into such agitation? We must now return to the source of her despair, to Mme de la Motte.[1]

[1] The following lines, written by Hardy in his journal at a time when all Paris was occupied with the affair of the diamond necklace, showed what a powerful action the manœuvres of a handful of swindlers could have on public opinion, and from another point of view that Mme de la Motte had not given to her new combination an improbable character. "It was said that Cardinal de Rohan had withdrawn from his notary (think of Dom Mulot) a sum of one million two hundred thousand livres (the forfeit of thirty thousand livres) to procure the establishment of one of his natural daughters (the son of Mme de Courville), whom a member of the body-guard of the Count of Artois (Baron de Fages) had promised formally to marry at the solicitation of his Eminence, in virtue of the said deposit, which he now demanded back, threatening to proceed against the notary who had improperly given it up." Bibl. Nat., MS. Franc., 6685, p. 203.

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XXIV

THE THUNDERBOLT

The cardinal had placed the necklace in the hands of Mme de la Motte on the 1st February, 1785. The next day he ordered his valet to accompany Gherardi, officer in the regiment of Alsace, to the king's dinner. in order to observe how the queen was dressed. It is known that the king and queen made it part of their royal duty to dine in public. The same day Bassenge had been to Versailles in the hope of seeing the queen wearing her necklace. She wore nothing of the kind; but neither the cardinal nor the jeweller thought anything of that. On the next day but one, 3rd February, meeting at Versailles the jeweller Böhmer with his wife and his associate, Bassenge, Prince Louis said to them with eagerness:

"Have you offered your very humble thanks to the queen for having bought your necklace?"

"No, not yet," was the reply. As the jewellers had more than once importuned the queen on the subject of the necklace, and as the last time she replied to them with impatience, they were awaiting a favourable opporunity for expressing their gratitude, but no such opportunity presented itself. Months passed. Meanwhile, they are not troubled in their mind, nor

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Prince Louis either.[1] The cardinal's advocates were right in insisting before the Parliament on this conversation between their client and the jewellers on the 2nd and 3rd February. It places the good faith of Rohan beyond question. On the 3rd February, on the other hand, the Böhmers had entertained the Countess de la Motte to dinner. The next day, on the 4th, they called to thank her again. They were overflowing with gratitude. On the 6th it was the Böhmers who were entertained at the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles. In connection with the cardinal, Jeanne continued meanwhile to bewail her poverty, soliciting and receiving the same help as of old, that is to say, three or four louis at a time, which were taken to her either by Brandner, the valet, or by Fribourg, the porter at the Strasburg mansion, or by a commissioner named Philibert. The two or three occasions on which Rohan came to see her, he was received in a room upstairs poorly furnished.

Jeanne did better still. With her hands full of gold from the proceeds of the sale of the diamonds, she nevertheless constrained the cardinal to meet in due place and time the bills for five thousand livres which she had given in 1783 to Isaac Beer, the Jew of Lorraine. The cardinal had become security for her, and now had to pay.[2] The incident was a droll one.

On the 12th May a note with blue border ordered Prince Louis to Saverne.

As the advocate Laporte, who had been mixed up

[1] Statement of the jewellers for Marie-Antoinette, "Collection complète," i. 18. Mémoire de Maître Target, ibid., iv., 53.

[2] Dossier Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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with the negotiations about the necklace, expressed his astonishment at the queen not wearing it, "Her Majesty will only wear it when she goes to Paris," replied Jeanne; and another time: "when it is paid for." She herself went meanwhile to Bar-sur-Aube, where she made the sensational entry we have spoken of. She at once occupied herself with furnishing and decorating her house in the parish of Saint-Macloux from yard to garret. Everything was transformed, renovated, embellished. We have details about the library, and they are curious. On shelves of rosewood with green silk curtains to each row, and busts of Voltaire and Rousseau on the summit, one's eyes were first attracted by the great "Genealogical and Chronological History of the Royal House of France," by Father Anselm, nine volumes in folio. This was evidently the first acquisition in the way of books that a daughter of the Valois would make. Then came seventeen volumes of the "Illustrious Men of France," and twelve of the "Illustrious Men of Plutarch"; a "History of France," in three volumes; "The Voyages of Captain Cook"; "The Tour of the World," in six volumes, and the "Southern Hemisphere," with an atlas. In the way of general literature: Rousseau in thirty volumes, Mme Ricoboni, Crébillon, Rácine, Boileau; books of piety, including "Meditative Commentaries on the Love of God," a volume on the "Miserere," a "Holy Week," a work on the "Dignity of the Soul," and, finally, two books of practical utility: a French-English and English-French dictionary, which will be of use during a contemplated voyage across the

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Channel, and, finally, the royal Almanack of the year 1781—the year of the first great intrigues and vast expectations of Jeanne de Valois.

Towards the end of May, Mme de la Motte made a journey from Bar-sur-Aube to Saverne disguised as a man. Her costume, preserved in her wardrobe, was as follows: a cassock in dark-blue cloth with waistcoat and breeches in nankeen. The object of the journey was to inform the prince that she had obtained for him an audience from the queen on his return. She had decided, and was not wrong in doing so, that a journey of two hundred and twenty leagues made expressly in order to give him this good news would greatly improve her position with him, and that, if the cardinal should be at all uncertain in his mind, nothing would be more likely to give him confidence.[1]

The cardinal returned from Saverne to Paris on the 7th June. July arrives, and the fatal 1st of August is imminent—the day on which the jewellers should receive their four hundred thousand livres as first instalment of the one million six hundred thousand livres for which the necklace was sold. Jeanne sees the cardinal at the beginning of July, when he expresses his astonishment at the queen never wearing the necklace. . Had some feeling of mistrust entered his mind? The ingenious Jeanne had in any case her answer ready.

"The queen," she says, "finds the price of the necklace too high, and asks for a diminution of two hundred thousand livres; otherwise she would give it back."

[1] Maur Méjan: "Affair of the Necklace."

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The first feeling of mistrust by which the cardinal had been visited now disappears. The queen does not look upon the necklace as definitely purchased. On the 10th July, Rohan sees the jewellers and speaks to them about the diminution. They naturally do not like the idea at all. They speak of their engagements and the interest on the money which has been accumulating. But in spite of all this they consent to the reduction; and before leaving them the cardinal urges them once more to go to Versailles in order to thank the queen. Bassenge then writes under Rohan's eyes a note, which the cardinal corrects, giving it the following final form:

"MADAME,—We are happy enough to be able to venture the thought that the last arrangements proposed, to which we have submitted with zeal and respect, constitute one more proof of our submission and devotion to the orders of your Majesty. And we have genuine satisfaction in thinking that the most beautiful set of diamonds which exists will be of service to the greatest and best of queens." [1]

On the 12th July, Böhmer, having to appear before Marie-Antoinette, in order to remit to her an

[1] It is interesting to reproduce Bassenge's original letter so as to show the concision, and at the same time the brightness and elegance given to it by Rohan. This is what the jewellers originally wrote:

"The fear we are in lest we should not be able to find ourselves fortunate enough to meet with the proper moment for testifying by word of mouth to your Majesty our respectful gratitude obliges us to do so by writing.

"Your Majesty, who fulfils all our wishes by acquiring the set of diamonds which we have had the honour to present.

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epaulette and earrings in diamonds which the king was presenting to her on the occasion of the baptism of the Duke of Angoulême, son of the Count of Artois, presented the note himself. Fatality would have it that at this moment the comptroller-general came in, so that the jeweller went away without receiving an answer. As soon as the comptroller-general had gone the queen read the note, and could make nothing of it. She gave orders that Böhmer should be sought for and called upon to explain the riddle, but he had already gone; and she still preserved a painful recollection of her last scene with him when he fell on his knees and threatened to throw himself into the river. "The queen," says Mme Campan, "read me this letter, and said that, having guessed that morning the riddles of *Le Mercury*, I should doubtless be able to find the answer to the one put forward by that madman Böhmer. Then, without giving any more attention to the matter, she burnt the letter in the wax candle which remained lighted in the library for sealing her letters." The queen added "that this man exists for my torment. He has always some mad thing in his head. Don't forget to tell him the first time you see him that I care no more for diamonds, and that I shall never buy another as long as I live."

This moment, in spite of its quite ordinary

"We have accepted with eagerness the last arrangements proposed to us in your Majesty's name. These arrangements being agreeable to her, we have much pleasure in seizing the opportunity of proving to your Majesty our zeal and our respect." [1]

[1] Dossier Böhmer, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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character, is, for those who know the continuation of our story, the critical one of the drama. Had the affair been at once explained—and it was only through a series of commonplace incidents that it was not—then Marie-Antoinette would have been for ever outside the intrigue. Her attitude—perfectly simple and natural at this single moment when she was brought into connection with the affair—has furnished matter for the only reproach her detractors have ever been able to bring against her; and we know what terrible consequences have been derived from it!

The result of her silence was to confirm the jewellers, not less than the cardinal, in the belief that the necklace was in her hands.

. . . . . .

Mme de la Motte saw the time approaching when the payment of the first instalment of four hundred thousand livres would have to be made. She had met, at the house of the cardinal, Baudard de Sainte-James, general treasurer of the navy, and knew that he was much attached to the cardinal, who was now taken up moreover with Cagliostro, and was in business relations moreover with the Böhmers.

"Sainte-James," says Mme Vigée-Lebrun, "was a financier in the full meaning of the term. He was a man of medium height, stout and fat, with a high colour, and that freshness which a man can still have at more than fifty years of age when he enjoys health and happiness."

In his mansion on the Place Vendôme, where the immense salons were entirely lined with looking-

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glasses, he gave dinners of fifty covers, where the nobility and literature were brilliantly represented. His magnificent property of Neuilly received from the people the name of "Folie-Sainte-James," on account of the unheard-of sums expended on it. Here he organised night entertainments, where plays were acted and fireworks displayed, and to which so many persons were invited that the place seemed like a public garden. Sainte-James was very ambitious, and always on the look-out for Court patronage. His dreams were not merely of red ribbon, but of red cordon. It was he who had lent to the Böhmers the eight hundred thousand livres with which they bought the diamonds of the necklace originally intended for the Du Barry, whose gratitude Sainte-James had already discounted.

Mme de la Motte told the cardinal that the queen seemed embarrassed about the instalment of 1st August. "She does not wish to worry you by writing about it; and I have thought of means by which you will be able to make yourself agreeable to her by setting her mind at rest. Ask Sainte-James. For him one hundred thousand crowns are nothing." Rohan spoke to the financier, and received this reply.

"Lend four hundred thousand livres in order to pay for the necklace? But the necklace is made out of eight hundred thousand livres which I have already lent."

Sainte-James would still have made the desired advance, but, rendered distrustful by what had happened to the Farmer-General Béranger, he desired that a letter in which the queen should ask for the

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money should remain in his hands. Nothing then could be done. It was now nearly the end of July. Mme de la Motte was getting agitated, nervous. How could she postpone the date of payment? "What was the meaning," Maître Target was to say to her later on, "of this trouble in your house? this agitation so manifest on 27th July, when you go out hurriedly from your house and return neither to dine, to sup, nor to sleep; when you take refuge with friends and travel only at night?" On that day, 27th July, she borrows from the notary Minguet, on depositing diamonds of immense value, a sum of thirty-five thousand francs. On the 31st she sends to the cardinal a letter signed Marie-Antoinette, in which it is said that the four hundred thousand francs promised for the next day cannot be paid until the 1st October, but that on that day a payment of seven hundred thousand francs, half of the entire sum, will be handed over in one lump.

This time the mind of the prelate was invaded by anxiety.

But the next day a maid calls and begs him to come at once to the countess, who with her insinuating words endeavours to restore him to calmness; and confidence returns when Mme de la Motte offers him a sum of thirty thousand livres, the amount of the interest to be paid to the jewellers for the seven hundred thousand livres of which the payment had been postponed until October. The cardinal, who still believed in Mme de la Motte's poverty, did not doubt but that this sum had been given to her by the queen. On 30th July he went to see the jewellers,

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who received with a very bad grace the proposition of a postponement.

They protest in the liveliest manner, and only accept the thirty thousand francs as part payment on the four hundred thousand francs, due to them forthwith.[1]

It is urgently necessary that they should be paid, they say. Sainte-James, their creditor, becomes pressing, and the interest they have to pay to him is crushing. The cardinal fears a crash. The attitude of the Böhmers did indeed render the situation extremely critical. The whole history of Mme de la Motte shows in her character an incredible recklessness, which constitutes, in fact, her daring and her strength. She never sees danger but when it is immediate, and then only seeks to ward it off. She hastens to bring her husband back from Bar-sur-Aube, where the count, with complete thoughtlessness, was leading a royal life, and then prepares a stroke so bold, denoting so clear an insight into the characters and situation, that once more it is impossible to restrain a cry of surprise in presence of such genius for intrigue. On 3rd August she sends Father Loth to fetch Bassenge, and says to him boldly, "You have been deceived. The written guarantee which the cardinal possesses bears a forged signature; but the prince is sufficiently rich, and he will be able to pay."

Among all the long complicated manœuvres, con-

[1] These facts are from the declaration of the jewellers, the interrogatories of the cardinal, the pleadings of Maître Target, and the notes collected by him and preserved in his dossier at the Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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ducted with so much order and with such a sure hand, this is the master stroke. Placed at this moment face to face with the brutal reality, terrified by the scandal of an inevitable lawsuit, by the ridicule and shame which would fall upon him from the scene of the grove, in connection with which the king's advocate could tell him that he had gone so far as to commit high treason, the cardinal, who had immense resources, could not hesitate to pay the jewellers and stifle the whole affair. And he would not have hesitated, and Mme de la Motte and her husband might have enjoyed tranquilly the fruits of their theft!

This is no mere hypothesis; we have the declarations of Prince de Rohan on the subject. "It was part of Mme de la Motte's scheme," he said, "to declare of her own accord that the signature was a forgery. She congratulated herself on having compelled me, by her skilful manœuvres, to pay for the necklace without even daring to complain; and I should certainly have decided to come to some arrangement with the jewellers, sacrificing my own fortune and obtaining the assistance of my relations."[1]

Unfortunately for him and for Jeanne de Valois, the jewellers were afraid to go and see the cardinal. Informed by his partner, Bassenge, of what Mme de la Motte has said, Böhmer, in the greatest alarm,

[1] Rohan's interrogatory published by M. Campardon, p. 223; Confrontation with the Inspector Quidor. Arch. Nat., X^2, B/1417. Mémoire de Maître Target, "Collection complète," iv. 177. The cardinal's first words on entering the Bastille were, "I have been deceived. I will pay for the necklace."

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hurries the same day to Versailles, and resolves at all hazards to obtain an audience from the queen.[1] He can only see the reader, Mme Campan, who says to him:

"You are the victim of a swindle; the queen has never received the necklace."

Now, at least, the jewellers will go boldly to the cardinal and inform him of the declaration made to them by Mme de la Motte. No; to the very end their conduct will upset all his calculations.

The same day, on 3rd August, Mme de la Motte sent for Rétaux de Villette, urged him to take flight, and handed him four thousand livres for his journey. Rétaux loads with his luggage a cabriolet, which he hires from Hinnet, saddler in the Rue Saint-Martin. The horse belongs to La Motte. He comes and sups at the Rue Saint-Gilles, and remains there gaily until midnight; and as the furniture of the house is already packed up, with the exception of the conjugal bed, Rétaux gets into his cabriolet, which he has had brought into the court-yard, and at two o'clock in the morning makes a start. He takes road for Italy by way of Switzerland. Finally, on this very day, 3rd August, Jeanne sends Rosalie to the cardinal to press him to come and see her. The cardinal had given orders that no one was to be received. But Rosalie insists, and the porter lets her go up. The cardinal proceeds to the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles.

"I have enemies," Mme de la Motte says to him.

[1] Declaration of Böhmer and Bassenge, Arch. Nat., F7/4445 B.

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"I am accused of being indiscreet and talkative; from one moment to another I may be arrested, and I have been given to hope that if I quit Paris no endeavour will be made to find out where I am concealed. I ought to have started before, but I am in such a fright. While my affairs are being settled here, and while my furniture is being removed, pray let me take refuge in your house."

Rohan, trustful to the last moment, said he was ready to receive both her and her husband.

That very day she had a dinner party, at which she received Count de Barras, her sister Marie-Anne, whom she had persuaded to come to Paris, a nephew, and other persons. It was necessary to conceal her emotion. But between eleven and twelve at night, when everyone had gone, she made the porter put out all the lights, and then softly, without a sound, opened the door and glided out like a shadow, followed by Rosalie.

"You trembled," said Maître Target afterwards, at the trial, "in every limb. The darkness of midnight is not enough to reassure you against the curiosity of observers. You fear even the candle of your porter, and you do not venture out until everyone has quitted his lodge and the light has been put out. The hoods of your cloaks will hide your faces one from the other; and thus you cross mysteriously in shadow the solitude of that part of the boulevard which leads to the cardinal's mansion, where you are about to take refuge." At the Rue Vieille-du-Temple Mme de la Motte and Rosalie found the count,

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and "M. de Carbonnières showed us to a room which had been occupied by the Abbé Georgel." By this last manœuvre Mme de la Motte wished to bind her fate definitely to that of Rohan, to establish her perfect good faith. If she had not been acting in good faith, would she have come and delivered herself into the hands of the prince?

On 4th August, the day after the double declaration made by Mme de la Motte and Mme Campan, Böhmer was called to the Hôtel de Strasbourg. Bassenge went in his place. He desires to have an explanation with the cardinal, but still does not venture to say frankly what has been troubling him—the declaration made to him as to the falseness of the signatures; he only asks if his Eminence is quite sure of the intermediary standing between him and the queen. Rohan sees the excited condition of the jeweller and is alarmed. He must be calmed, or he might be capable of going to the king and revealing the secret. Rohan proposes to place in his hands the paper containing the conditions of the purchase signed Marie-Antoinette de France. That will be his guarantee. But Bassenge at once understands that in case of fraud this sole guarantee has no value except so long as it remains in the hands of the cardinal, who is his security. In vain does the cardinal insist; he refuses to take possession of the note. Bassenge speaks again of his anxiety. His creditors are getting impatient. Sainte-James has advanced him eight hundred thousand livres towards the necklace. Prince Louis is in anguish. At all cost Bassenge must be reassured.

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"If I told you that I treated directly with the queen, would you be satisfied?"

"That would give me the greatest tranquility."

"Well, I am as certain as if I had treated directly."

In fact, did not Rohan see Marie-Antoinette at Versailles that evening in the grove? Had not the queen just remitted to him thirty thousand livres? Has he not received numerous letters from her?

Bassenge replies that he is still very anxious.

"The queen shall hear how injurious these delays are to your interests." Bassenge mistrusts the intermediary, and "Saint-James," he says, "is more and more pressing."

"I bind myself, then," says Rohan, "to obtain from the treasurer of the navy his promise that he will give you time." These words pacify the jeweller, and he goes away. At the end of this distressing interview, Prince Louis dictated to Liégeois, one of his valets, a memorandum setting forth his torments, which was found among his papers. Here it is, with the necessary indications for making it intelligible.

"Sent for B. [*Bassenge*], who suspects that it is to speak to him about the same object [*the necklace*]. He asked me what he was to answer. I told him that he was not to confide in anyone; that he must say that he had sent the object in question abroad, and that I recommended absolute secrecy, and to keep everything to himself. He declared to me, and repeated several times, that his life was now only a torment to him since he had taken the liberty of writing to . . . [*the queen*], and that he had been told by C. [*Madame Campan*] that the master [*the queen*] did not know what those people [*the Böhmers*] could mean, and that his head went round. All these things together could well

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turn mine, if it were not certain that the means proposed [*the arrangements with Sainte-James*] will settle everything for the present and the future. Moreover, *Sainte-James* is informed about everything, because the debtor [*the Böhmers*] could not do otherwise. Accordingly that changes nothing in the order of things, and, on the contrary, will bring calmness where there is now nothing but trouble and despair." [1]

The cardinal saw, in fact, Baudard de Sainte-James. He met him in society one evening. They took a walk together on the terrace among the guests. The cardinal begged the financier not to press the jewellers, and, in order to reassure him, confided to him that he had just seen written in the queen's own hand that she had seven hundred thousand livres for the Böhmers. Rohan was alluding to the pretended letter of Marie-Antoinette which Mme de la Motte had shown him on bringing to him the thirty thousand livres as interest on the sum to be paid later on.[2] Having taken possession with her husband of the little apartment in the Hôtel de Rohan on the night of the 3rd August, Mme de la Motte quitted it on the 5th, and on the 6th went back to Bar-sur-Aube. She took the road of her native province with a calmer mind. The storm in bursting would fall on Rohan, who would not hesitate to dissipate it by paying the jewellers. Had not the negotiation, moreover, taken place directly between the jewellers and the cardinal? There was no cause for alarm.

[1] Bibl. v. de Paris, dossier Target. This is the note concerning which Rohan declined to give explanations in the course of the trial, calling it "the informal note."

[2] The facts of the 3rd and 4th August, 1785, according to the interrogatories and confrontations of the trial. Arch. Nat., X^2, B/1147, and according to the notes of the Target and Böhmer dossiers. Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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When the commissaries of the Parliament objected later on to Rohan, that if Mme de la Motte had really got the signature of the queen imitated and had sold the diamonds for her own profit, she would not have moved, in the sight and knowledge of everyone, to go to Bar-sur-Aube, but would rather have retired to a foreign land, Rohan replied very justly: "The conduct of Mme de la Motte was not so inconsistent as it might at first seem. She thought she had so enveloped me in her artifices that I should not dare to speak; and in fact her manœuvres were complicated in such a manner that I should have preferred to pay, to say nothing, and to let Mme de la Motte enjoy the fruit of her intrigues." "What more natural, more skilful, more prudent conduct could Jeanne de Valois have pursued?" observes Maître Labori; "to fly, would have been to accuse herself; to give Rohan perhaps the means of disengaging himself; to remain, was to force Rohan to stop the affair at all costs; to make him pay Böhmer, and take everything on himself. What, in fact, had she to fear? Had not Rohan made himself in a slight degree her accomplice by his audacity in raising himself to the level of the queen, by his naïve credulity at the simulated interview, by the invented correspondence addressed to him and by him received? Still a dupe, Rohan must wish to protect the queen. Enlightened as to the truth, he cannot face an accusation of high treason, face the scaffold."[1]

[1] Fernand Labori, Conférence des avocats, 26th November, 1888. Alph. Carr (*Figaro*, 11th January, 1890) arrives at the same conclusions.

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As a matter of fact, Rohan hesitated; his mind was tormented between cruel uncertainties. The question put to him by the jeweller haunted him. He had endeavoured to reassure Böhmer; but he himself was far from being reassured. And the swindle shows itself in all its flagrancy when, comparing for the first time the engagement signed Marie-Antoinette de France, which he holds in his hand with letters from the queen, entrusted to him by some of his relations, he finds between them no resemblance!

Cagliostro, his habitual counsellor, was called in. The alchemist for once left aside all ideas about the grand Kopht, the archangel Michael, and the ox Apis. Very clear-sighted, he at once unravels the intrigue.

"Never," said Cagliostro to Rohan, "did the Queen of France sign *Marie-Antoinette de France*. You are the victim of a fraud, and there is only one course to take: go and throw yourself without delay at the feet of the king, and tell him what has taken place."

Did Cagliostro foresee the future? He gave golden advice in the present. We recently pointed out the critical moment in the life of Marie-Antoinette, the one in which the arrival of the comptroller-general prevented her from questioning Böhmer about the note he had just presented to her. We are now at the critical moment in the life of the cardinal. If he had followed the advice of the alchemist, the frightful scandal would have been avoided. He was in a painful perplexity. And here again his kind-heartedness stopped him. He hesitated to cast into

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irons this young woman, this Valois. She had been driven to it by misery. "I was puzzled as to what course it became me to take; uncertain whether to denounce Mme la Motte and make public the whole affair, or whether it would not be wiser to pay for the necklace and smother it all."[1]

. . . .

At Bar-sur-Aube Jeanne gave dazzling fêtes. The wildest luxury! She goes with her husband to the receptions held by the great landed proprietors of the neighbourhood. At Châteauvillaïn, the Duke de Penthièvre receives her with the greatest respect. "The prince," says Beugnot, "reconducts her to the door of the second salon opening on to the grand staircase; an honour which he does not pay to duchesses, and which he reserves for princesses of the blood." Such is his respect for the grand-daughter of kings.

Count Beugnot sees the La Mottes nearly every day. On the 17th August he had accompanied Mme de la Motte to the Abbey of Clairvaux for the solemnities in honour of St Bernard. The Abbé Maury, on his side, loaded the countess with the rarest distinctions. He believed, says Beugnot, in her relations with the cardinal, and treated her as a princess of the church! Jeanne wore a brilliant costume and was covered with diamonds.[2] The guests walked about all the evening in the beautiful gardens of the abbey. The sky was full of light. The sun had dis-

[1] Rohan's notes for his advocate, Maître Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve, and Cagliostro's interrogatory.
[2] Bibl. v. de Paris, réserve.

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appeared behind the wooded heights which surround Clairvaux. The trees which crown the hill formed a dark network on a purple ground, but the valley was in shadow. The tops of the poplars and firs were lighted up in orange tints. Little by little the light disappears and the sky becomes violet. In the valley rises a white mist, growing from moment to moment more opaque, mingled with grey tones which gradually became darker and darker. Heavy clouds invade the west, the dusk loses itself in night. The clock strikes nine, the supper hour. The Abbé Maury is late. Finally, at half-past nine, it is decided to sit down without him. The grand refectory, pierced by two rows of windows, is lighted up. The walls of raw white reflect the light of the wax candles, and in the recesses between the lofty pilasters pictures on religious subjects, to which the style of the period gives a mythological air, after the manner of Vanloo, shine with a joyous brilliancy.

The wheels of a carriage are heard. The abbé appears agitated, out of breath.

"Has anything happened?" he is asked.

"Anything happened, indeed? Where have you been living? Prince Cardinal de Rohan, grand almoner of France, arrested last Tuesday, the day of the Assumption, in pontifical robes, just as he was leaving the king's cabinet! There is some talk of a diamond necklace bought in the name of the queen."

Jeanne was seated between the black robes of two monks, and diamonds sparkled on her bosom.

"As soon as the news struck my ears," says Beugnot, "I cast my eyes on Mme de la Motte, who

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had dropped her napkin, and whose pale, motionless face remained set and rigid. The first moment passed. She makes an effort and rushes out of the dining-room. One of the dignitaries of the house follows her, and a few seconds later I quit the table and go after her. She had already had the horses put to her carriage and we drove off."

Jeanne de Valois uttered incoherent words, when suddenly her thoughts led her to the alchemist.

"I tell you that this is all Cagliostro."

"But you received this charlatan. Are you in no ways compromised with him?"

"Not in the least. I am quite at my ease. I made a great mistake in leaving the supper-table."

Beugnot has not the same confidence. He advises her to start for England.

"You will end by irritating me," she exclaimed. "I let you go as far as you liked, because I was thinking of something else. Must I repeat to you ten times running that I have nothing to do with this affair? I am very sorry to have got up from the table."

"The weather had suddenly changed. Heavy clouds rolled along the sky; a storm was brewing. Soon in the dark night the rain fell in torrents. The carriage was struck by the wet branches of the trees and shrubs as we passed beneath them. A monotonous, irritating sound! The wheels sank into the muddy roads, the thunder rolled, at times the horses reared and refused to advance. But at last we were out of the wood. On each side of the road the fields stretched out, dull and deserted. The carriage-lamps had gone out. It was impossible to see ahead.

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The countess was afraid that the horses, instead of crossing the bridges over the Aube in a straight line, would strike against the parapet and throw her into the river. But we reached Les Crottières, and at last came to the Rue Saint-Michael, to the countess's house." Beugnot advises her to burn all the papers which concern her relations with the cardinal. "We open," he writes, "the large box in sandal wood full of papers of all colours. I was in a hurry to come to an end."

"Why not throw them all into the fire, all at once?" he cried. But Jeanne was anxious that the young advocate should read certain documents. They were the pretended love-letters between Rohan and Jeanne de Valois. It was necessary Beugnot should take cognizance of them in order to be able to give evidence about them at the proper moment, and necessary, also, that the letters should be destroyed after being read, so that there might be no question as to their authenticity. Day was dawning when Beugnot took leave. Meanwhile all the papers had been destroyed.

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XXV

FILTH ON THE PASTORAL CROOK AND ON THE ROYAL SCEPTRE

While the cardinal was in these perplexities, the queen, informed of the conversation which Mme Campan had had on Friday, the 5th August, with her jeweller, sent for him on Monday, 8th August, to Versailles. He was to come directly. The note written by Loir, her valet, testifies to her impatience.[1]

On the 9th August Böhmer appears. Interrogated, he says under what circumstances he has sold the necklace. Marie-Antoinette, astonished, alarmed, orders the jeweller to prepare for her a statement,

[1] "Monsieur,—Mme de Mezri [he should have written Mme de Misery, the queen's first lady of the bedchamber] has ordered me to write to you on the part of the queen that you may come to-morrow morning, 9th instant, to Trianon. Her Majesty wishes to show you a sash-buckle the diamonds of which do not hold; the most convenient hour will be between nine and ten in the morning.

"I have the honour to be, Sir, your humble servant,

"(Signed) Loir."

Then, as postscript: "If M. Böhmer is not at Paris, I beg M. Bassenge to send an express to Poissy. From Versailles, this 8th day of August, 1785." On the back of the letter: "Service of the queen, very pressing."

"Monsieur,—Monsieur Böhmer, jouallier du Roi et de la Couronne, Rue Vendomme au Marais, à Paris." With this addition: "To the bearer, eighteen *sous* if the present is delivered before three o'clock in the afternoon, this 8th day of August." Dossier Böhmer, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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which she receives on the 12th.[1] The negotiations about the necklace, Mme de la Motte's initiative, the steps taken by the cardinal, and the delivery of the necklace into his hands are related in detail.

Marie-Antoinette—irritated, indignant—at once tells the king. She feels insulted by the use made of her name. The antipathy for the cardinal inspired by her mother reappears in all its force. "The affair," she writes to her brother, Joseph II., "has been concerted between the king and myself. The ministers know nothing of it."

Unfortunately! For in the ministry there was at that time a man of the first order, endowed with a profound knowledge of men and things, the Count de Vergennes. He would have prevented the irreparable fault which was about to be committed.

The 15th of August, the day of the Assumption, which had been kept as a grand festival at the Court since the vow of Louis XIII., who placed his crown and kingdom under the protection of the Virgin, was also the name's day of the queen. All the Court and all the nobility gravitating around the Court were assembled at Versailles, and a mass of people were arriving from Paris. In the morning, the king, the queen, Breteuil, and the keeper of the seals, Miromesnil, were together at ten o'clock in the king's cabinet.[2] Vergennes was not present. The question

[1] There are two statements from Böhmer and Bassenge setting forth the affair of the necklace; one which was given to the queen, 12th August, 1785 (published in 1786, 24 p., 8vo), and another which was given 23rd August to the ministers. Arch. Nat., F7, 4445/B.

[2] At present room 130 in the Château of Versailles.

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about to be discussed is not in his department. Breteuil reads aloud the statement of the jewellers. Then different opinions are expressed. Miromesnil recommends prudence and moderation. "We must have further information," he says. "Is not Rohan of such a rank and such a family," he adds, "that he deserves to be heard before being arrested?" Breteuil expresses with violence a directly opposite view. The personal hatred which had sprung up between Rohan and him has already been mentioned.

Breteuil was a very good man and a distinguished minister, to whom history will end by rendering justice. But with his great qualities of heart and mind he had, unfortunately, a hot, irritable disposition. He really believed that the cardinal, eaten up with debt, had imagined the combination in order to liberate himself from his creditors. He advised then the cardinal's immediate arrest. Marie-Antoinette, equally passionate, could not understand why there should be any hesitation.

"The cardinal," she said, "has stolen my name like a vile and stupid forger." Louis XVI. was inclined to Miromesnil's view. He asked Breteuil to go and find Rohan, who had come to Versailles to celebrate in the palace chapel the service of the Assumption. He was now in the king's cabinet,[1] with those who had the "grand entry." The dignitaries of the Court, that is to say, and the most illustrious members of the nobility. At eleven o'clock he entered

[1] Now room 125. The cabinet called the "Cabinet of the Council" must not be confounded with the Inner cabinet.

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the inner cabinet wearing a cassock of scarlet watered silk.

"Cousin," said the king, "what is this purchase of a diamond necklace which you are said to have made in the name of the queen?" Rohan had turned white.

"Sire, I see that I have been deceived, but I have deceived no one."

"If that is so, cousin, you have nothing to be troubled about. But explain."

The queen was before him, erect and haughty. She pierced him with her look, which she could render so hard. She crushed him with her rage, her contempt. What a sudden atrocious fall, destroying at one blow the dazzling and cherished hope which little by little had strengthened itself in Rohan's mind since that night scene in the park. Rohan is stifled. The blood rushes to his temples, his legs are giving way. Seeing his emotion, the king says in a softer voice, "Write down what you have to tell me." And he passes into his library[1] with the queen, Breteuil, and Miromesnil.

Rohan is alone, with a large sheet of paper in front of him, with haggard eyes and empty brain. He looks fixedly at the white sheet. His hand trembles. He writes fifteen lines, beginning with these words: "A woman whom I thought," and finishing with these, "Mme la Motte de Valois."

We read in the official report to the lieutenant of police de Crosne: "The king left the cardinal alone in the cabinet in order that he might write at his ease. Some time afterwards the cardinal brought to the

[1] Now room 133.

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king his declaration that a woman named de Valois had persuaded him that it was for the queen the necklace was to be bought, and that this woman had deceived him.

" 'Where is the woman?' said the king.

" 'Sire, I do not know.'

" 'Have you the necklace?'

" 'It is in the hands of this woman.'

"The king told him to go back to the cabinet and there await him. A few minutes afterwards the king and queen entered the cabinet, followed by the keeper of the seals and M. de Breteuil. The king then ordered Baron de Breteuil to read the statement of the two jewellers. 'Where are these pretended letters of authorisation, written and signed by the queen, which are referred to in the statement?' said the king.

" 'I have them, sire, and they are forgeries.'

" 'Forgeries! I should think so indeed.'

" 'I will bring them to your Majesty.'

" 'And this letter written by you to the jewellers, which is also in the statement?'

" 'Sire, I do not remember writing it; but I must have done so, since they give a copy. I will pay for the necklace.' "

After a moment's silence, the king resumed:

" 'Sir, I cannot avoid, under such circumstances, putting your house under seal, and assuring myself of your person. The name of the queen is very dear to me. It is compromised, and I must set matters right.' "

Rohan begs him not to cause a scandal, above all

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when he is about to enter the chapel to officiate before all the Court and the crowds of people who have come from Paris. He invokes the kindness of the king for the sake of Mme de Marsan, who watched over his infancy, for Prince Soubise, for the name of Rohan.

The king would perhaps have given way, but the queen, who had restrained herself with difficulty, intervenes.

"How is it possible, cardinal, that, not having spoken to you for eight years, you could have thought I wished to make use of your services to conclude the purchase of the necklace?"

Marie-Antoinette speaks in a high, nervous voice; she sheds tears. All the rancour she feels on the part of herself and of Marie-Thérèse, her mother, now moves her. Her emotion is shared by the king, and Breteuil gains the day over Miromesnil.

"Sir," he says, "I will endeavour to console your relations. I desire your justification. Meanwhile, I am doing what as king and husband I am bound to do."

Meanwhile, the brilliant gathering which filled the apartments of the king—the Œil-de-Bœuf, the Chamber, the Cabinet of the Council, the Cabinet of the Clock—had become nervous. The hour for Mass had passed long since. Darkness had fallen upon everything. A storm could be foreseen. What was taking place behind the heavy door of glass in the inner cabinet? All kinds of rumours and vague reports were being circulated.

Then the glass door opens, and Rohan appears erect and pale. Breteuil is behind him, unable to

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contain himself for joy. He is red in the face. In a loud voice he calls out to the Duke de Villeroi, captain of the body-guard—

"Arrest the cardinal!"

What a hubbub! The courtiers press forward. Those in the second rank stand on tiptoes the better to see. Some are standing on the benches; but they are all there, the "entries to the Chamber" and the "entries to the Cabinet." With all eyes fixed upon him, with moist forehead, with a fixed stare, stimulated by Breteuil, who is much puffed up, Prince Louis passes through the suite of rooms—the Cabinet of the Clock, the Cabinet of the Council, the Chamber of the Œil-de-Bœuf—an endless Calvary! He is at last apprehended. At the moment when quitting the apartments he passes from the Œil-de-Bœuf to the long gallery. The light is dazzling. The sun falls full through the wide windows reflected by the looking-glasses, and here the crowd, the people in the broad sense of the word, is massed. In his pontifical garments, prepared for divine service, the Prince Cardinal, Grand Almoner of France, is arrested like a thief.[1]

[1] This scene has been reconstituted in accordance with the official report addressed to Thiroux de Crosne, lieutenant-general of police (published by Peuchet, "Historic Memoirs," iii. 158-161), completed by the account sent by Marie-Antoinette to her brother, Joseph II. (published by MM. de Beaucourt and de Rocheterie, ii. 74-76; by the account which Rohan himself gave later on; by the narrative of Besenval ("Mémoires," éd. Barrière ii. 164, 165), who had the facts from the queen's own mouth; and by the letters, very precise, very well informed, which Rivière, diplomatic agent of Saxony, addressed to Prince Xavier de Saxe at Pont-sur-

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At the first moment the confusion had been so great that Villeroi felt obliged to wait before putting his orders into execution. He then entrusted the cardinal to M. de Jouffroy, lieutenant of the body-guard. In the general emotion the only person who preserved calmness was Rohan, now once more master of himself. In a quiet voice he asked M. de Jouffroy for a pencil, and wrote without ceremony a few words on a scrap of paper, which he rested on the bottom of his square, red hat. It was an order to his faithful Abbé Georgel to burn immediately all the papers in the red portfolio—papers so dear to him until now; all that he had preserved of the little notes with blue borders. When he reached the Hôtel de Strasbourg under escort, the order had been executed. The next day Rohan left for the Bastille.

Mme Campan unfolds to us the queen's state of mind. "I saw her," she says, "after Baron de Breteuil had left her. She made me tremble by her agitation."

"'These hideous vices,' she said, 'must be unmasked. When the Roman purple and the title of prince are only a cover for a needy man and a swindler, it is well that France and all Europe should know it.'"

Marie-Antoinette reckoned without Rohan's partisans, who were all preparing. In the first place, his immediate family, the Rohans, the Soubises, the

Seine; preserved in the archives of the Aube. See, for identification of the rooms in which the scene took place, Pierre de Nolhac, "Le Château de Versailles sous Louis Quinze," pp. 74, 75.

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Marsans, the Brionnes, the Prince de Condé, who had married a Rohan, and all his powerful house; around them all the malcontents of the Court, the whole of the French clergy, of whom Rohan was the head, from the most humble seminarist to the Prince Archbishop of Cambrai, who himself was a Rohan; the Parliament, the rival of the throne; the Sorbonne, where Rohan is prisoner and where he is much beloved; the enemies of Breteuil, and they are numerous—for Breteuil is a man of worth; the enemies of the queen—and they also are numerous—for she is kind and good; Calonne and his creatures, Lenoir and his gang; finally, the pamphleteers, paragraphists, gossip-mongers, tavern politicians, the orators of the Palais-Royal, who see in this conflict between the queen and the first dignitary of the Church of France a struggle in which the throne and the altar, flung violently one against the other, will both be shattered.

"M. de Breteuil," wrote Rivarol, "has taken the cardinal from the hands of Mme de la Motte and crushed him on the forehead of the queen, which will retain the marks." This bold image, which compares Rohan in his red robe to the poppies which children crush on one another's temples, is certainly bold, but it expresses the author's meaning.

In the Parliament, Fréteau de Saint-Just, one of the most popular of the counsellors, cried out, rubbing his hands, when he heard of the scandal, "Grand and joyful business! A cardinal in a swindle! The queen implicated in a forgery! Filth on the crook and on the sceptre! What a triumph for

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ideas of liberty! How important for the Parliament!"

On the 14th June, 1794, at Paris, the said counsellor Fréteau de Saint-Just was decapitated.

The profligate tricoteuses, the wine-complexioned patriots, were gathered around the guillotine. Did Fréteau think at that moment of repeating his exclamation. "Grand and joyful affair? Filth on the cross and on the sceptre? Triumph of liberty?" A dull thud, and a bleeding head, with open eyes rolls away.

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XXVI

THE BASTILLE

The very day of the cardinal's arrest, a *lettre de cachet*, countersigned Breteuil, ordered the incarceration of Mme de la Motte at the Bastille.[1] On the 18th August, at four in the morning, under the direction of Inspector Surbois, a few bailiffs, sent on the part of the loçal authorities, presented themselves at the house of the countess, Rue Saint-Michael, Bar-sur-Aube. The bailiffs showed more haste than care in executing their mission. They were not ordered, it is true, to arrest Count de la Motte, but they allowed him quietly to detach his wife's earrings, and then remove the diamond rings from her fingers; thus taking away the substantial evidence of the offence charged against her. Immediately after the departure of the bailiffs and of his wife, La Motte went to give an account of what had happened to Albert Beugnot, "in a self-satisfied and tranquil tone," says the latter. "But the same day," continues Beugnot, the younger, "he breaks the seals placed on his doors and takes whatever he wants, silver, diamonds, lace, and the case of diamonds of the value of one hundred thousand livres, which had been deposited as security with the notary Minguet, and which La Motte had withdrawn through the

[1] Orig. Bibl. de l'Arsenal, MS. Bastille, 12,457, f. 39.

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agency of Villette. He conceals the plate and a portion of the jewels at the house of his aunt, Mme Clausse de Surmont. Then he takes post with Mme de la Tour, his sister, and they travel together as far as Meaux, where they separate—Mme de la Tour going to Paris and the count, by way of Belgium, to England.[1] When the bailiffs reappeared, they found the house empty. On the 23rd August, de la Motte had the audacity to present himself in London, at the shop of Gray, the jeweller, in order to sell him the diamonds still remaining of the necklace, besides those which he had left in his hands on the occasion of his first visit.[2]

The cardinal slept at his own house, Rue Vieille-du-Temple, on the night of the 15th August. On the afternoon of Tuesday, the 16th, he was seen playing with his monkey at the windows of his drawing-room, which looked out upon the gardens connecting the Hôtel de Strasbourg with the Hôtel Soubise. In the evening the Marquis de Launey, governor of the Bastille, called for him in order to make him prisoner[3]; and at half-past eleven the carriage in which Rohan had taken his seat with Launey d'Agoult, commanding the body-guards, crossed the

[1] Dossier MS. Bibl. de la v. de Paris, réserve.

[2] Deposition of Gray, the jeweller, p. 24; deposition of Victor Laisus, servant of Count de la Motte. Arch. Nat., X², B/1417; and Maître Target, in the "Complete Collection," iv. 140, 141.

[3] Journal of Major de Losme. Collection of Alf. Bégis, published in the *Nouvelle Révue*, 1st December, 1880, pp. 522-547, and Bibl. de l'Arsenal, MS. Bastille, 12,457, f. 65, verso.

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drawbridge of the royal fortress. He was not lodged in the towers, that is to say, in the places reserved for ordinary prisoners. Two apartments were kept for the reception of prisoners of distinction in the buildings occupied by the officers of the staff. The most spacious of these was placed at the disposal of Rohan. Three of his servants, Brandner, Schreiber, and Liégeois, were authorised to serve him. A sum of one hundred and twenty livres per day—which seems almost impossible, considering the value of money at this epoch—was assigned for his maintenance.[1] His table was served in princely style; he saw everyone he wished to see—his family, his secretaries, his counsel. On one occasion he gave in his prison a banquet of twenty covers, at which oysters were opened and champagne corks set flying. Hardy notes that, in consequence of the number of visitors, the great drawbridge of the Bastille was kept lowered throughout the day, and the two flaps of the principal gates always open, "which no one remembered to have seen before."[2]

[1] Letter from La Chapelle, first clerk in the department of the king's household to the governor of the Bastille: "Versailles, 28th October, 1785.—You can, Sir, draw from the estates of the quarter Cardinal de Rohan's allowance at the rate of one hundred and twenty livres per day." Bibl. de l'Arsenal, MS. Bastille, 12,457, f. 633.

[2] Here is Cardinal Rohan's visiting list at the Bastille for one day only, 29th August, 1785: Prince de Condé, Duke de Bourbon, Countess de Brionne, Princess of Carignan and Countess Charlotte, her daughter; Prince and Princess de Vaudemond, Prince Ferdinand de Rohan, Prince and Princess de Montbazon, Duke and Duchess de Montbazon, Prince Camille de Montbazon, Prince Charles de Rohan, Countess de Marsan, Marshal de Soubise, Duchess de la

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From his prison, Rohan continued to administer the affairs of his diocese as well as those of the grand almonry and of the Quinze-Vingts. He kept almost as much state as at his Hôtel de Strasbourg. He walked every afternoon on the platform of the towers, wearing a brown coat and a round hat with a wide brim. To take the air, the cardinal had also the governor's gardens, in triangular form, in the former bastion of the fortress. Such, as is already known, was the regimen to which were subjected at the Bastille the prisoners of the king, that is to say, those who were confined there by *lettre de cachet.* But when, after the 15th December, the cardinal had been constituted a prisoner by decree of the assembled Parliament, and ceasing to be the king's prisoner became the prisoner of the magistracy, he was subjected to the ordinary regimen of prisoners in the Bastille, and now in his solitude became gloomy, so that his health was affected.

Louis XVI. had appointed from the first to interrogate Rohan at the Bastille, Breteuil and Thiroux de Crosne. The choice was regular. It was to the minister and to the lieutenant of police that the prisoners of the Bastille were specially subordinated. But Rohan objected to both of them—the first for his personal hostility, the second for not being

Vauguyon, Prince de Lambésc, Viscomte de Pont and Count de la Tour, his equerry; Carbonnières, Dubois; the Abbés Georgel, Odoran, de Villefond, Sinatery, and Bidot; Louvet and Calès, financial agents; Racle, Chargé des Affaires Guéméné, Ravenot; Roth, valet; Travers, surgeon; and the advocates Target, Colet, Tronchet, and Bonnières. Bibl. de l'Arsenal, MS. Bastille, 12,457, f. 59.

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of sufficient rank to question him. They were replaced by Vergennes, minister of foreign affairs, and Marshal de Castries, minister of marine. The cardinal handed to them, 20th August, a clear, moderate, and rigorously exact summary of the History of the Necklace as he knew it.[1]

Meanwhile the most fantastic stories were circulated in Paris. From the very beginning sides were passionately taken, and for months together we find the Dutch newspapers repeating like an echo: "At Paris people speak of nothing but the Affair of the Necklace." To follow the effect of these events on popular opinion we have one series of documents of inestimable value, the journal of the bookseller Hardy. The shops of the booksellers in vogue might in those days be compared to the editorial rooms of our great newspapers. There indeed were published, and purchased eagerly in large numbers, those pamphlets, libels, tracts, and fly-sheets which, printed the night before, appeared in the morning, and by twelve o'clock were sometimes sold out. There one saw congregated together speculators, journalists, quidnuncs, and idlers; gossip-shops, where were repeated the reports of the street, the cafés, the promenades, the Court, the tribunals, and the drawing-rooms. The bookseller Hardy, an honest man of unbiased mind, free from party spirit, wrote from day to day a narrative of everything of the kind that came to his knowledge.

Public opinion was at the outset hostile to the cardinal. People spoke of his debaucheries and of

[1] Published by Peuchet, "Historical Memoirs," iii. 162-165.

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the seraglios he kept in Paris. Not a woman was mentioned in the case—Mme de la Motte, Countess Cagliostro, or little d'Oliva—but immediately the Parisians whispered to one another, "Another of the cardinal's mistresses." And then the constant refrain, "Such a needy man!" All sorts of caricatures were published. One represented His Eminence in prison, holding with each hand a scroll of paper bearing these words, "With the alms entrusted to me I pay my debts." Rohan, it will be remembered, was Grand Almoner. Another exhibited him with a hempen rope round his neck, inscribed, "formerly had a blue one," in allusion to his blue cordon of the Holy Ghost; and the streets rang with songs on the subject.

But at Versailles the Court was hostile to the queen. The nobility and the clergy protested with shrill cries against the scandalous arrest of the 15th August, and considered themselves bound to make common cause with one of their principal representatives. "In the town," says the "Secret Correspondence," "they accused Mme de la Motte and the cardinal; but at the Court they accused the queen." Finally, the Parliament, influenced by the young and enthusiastic Duval de Eprémesmil, declared openly in favour of Rohan, who forthwith became known as "the illustrious victim of royal despotism and ministerial intrigue." The arrest of the 15th August was proclaimed a stroke of force and of illegality. "Protests were raised against such an absolute act of arbitrary government as the seizure of His Eminence, Prince Louis de Rohan-Guéméné,

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which some persons attributed to the personal hatred of a minister eager to exercise his vengeance."[1]

. . . . . .

Mme de la Motte arrived at the Bastille on the 20th August, at four in the morning. With her quick wit, she had from the first moment built up a complete system of defence, in which, according to her habit through life, she combined her feelings of rancour with what she believed to be her own interests. Her rivalry with Cagliostro has been spoken of. She had soon discovered that the alchemist was injuring her in the opinion of the cardinal. From another point of view, this strange personage, speaking bad French, eccentric in appearance, doubly suspected as alchemist and as Freemason, spending an immense income, of which no one knew the origin, and accused of espionage, seemed to her a man on whose back all responsibility could be thrown. She made her charges against him from the beginning of her first interrogatory. On the 23rd August Cagliostro and his wife were thrown into the Bastille. "Count Cagliostro," writes Hardy, "who arrived not long ago in the capital, where he made a display of pretended secrets and of charlatanism in a new style, having the reputation, moreover, of being a spy, has just been arrested with his wife, the alleged mistress of the cardinal."

Mme de la Motte seemed quite reassured. Her husband and Rétaux had fled, and it was difficult to

[1] *Amsterdam Gazette*, 27th September, 1785, confirmed by the "Memoirs of Madame Campan."

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bring against her any direct testimony. The cardinal had negotiated in a direct manner with the jewellers. The document signed "Marie-Antoinette de France" was all in his handwriting, with the exception of the signature forged by Rétaux. It was into his hands that the necklace was given. Mme de la Motte showed no alarm until the day she heard that Rétaux de Villette was being looked for abroad. This news showed her the necessity of making d'Oliva disappear, for if Rétaux was arrested, he might give the name of the queen's personator, and the effect of their depositions taken together would be crushing. From the depth of the Bastille Mme de la Motte found means to send a message to the young woman, Rue Neuve-Saint-Augustin, where she had been living since the 1st of July. "An atrocious calumny," she sent word to her, "has placed me in captivity, and the same hand which strikes me may place your life in danger by reason of that scene of the grove, if you do not quit France instantly."

Nicole d'Oliva, much alarmed, started the same night with her lover, Toussaint de Beaussire, and got to Brussels.[1] But they were both arrested on the night of the 16th October, 1785, and in their turn locked up in the Bastille. When Inspector Quidor had seized Rétaux de Villette at Geneva, where he was living in concealment under the name of Marc-Antoine, and when Rétaux, 26th March, 1786, was thrown into the great prison of the Rue Saint-Antoine, where so many others connected with the

[1] The passport for Brussels was delivered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 23rd September, 1785.

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case were already confined, then the necessary evidence in the case was complete, but for the absence of Count de la Motte.

Extradition was not recognised in England as in Belgium and Switzerland, and the demand made by Vergennes for the custody of de la Motte met with a refusal. The French government then did its best to get possession of La Motte by a stroke of hand: an affair of brigands, conceived by a certain Lemercier, secret agent of the Court of France in England. The project was got up by the Paris police in accord with Count d'Adhémar, ambassador of France in London. Count de la Motte's hiding-place had been discovered at Newcastle-upon-Tyne in England, near the borders of Scotland. A collier was freighted and kept in harbour. The crew, composed of five men, was bought over, and a thousand pounds sterling was offered to the person at whose house La Motte lodged, a teacher of languages named Costa, who had married a French woman. He was to administer a narcotic to the count, who, once asleep, was to be put into a sack and carried on board. But the plot, discovered by La Motte, came to nothing.[1]

And now we see Bette d'Etienville and his companions once more upon the scene, and we have more stories of brigands—brigands worthy of Offenbach. On 13th August Mme de la Motte had

[1] Declaration made on oath, 3rd April, 1786, before a Middlesex magistrate by Benjamine Costa, published in the "Memoirs of Count de la Motte," pp. 153-55; confirmed by the report dated September, 1785, from Lemercier to Thiroux de Crosne, published by Peuchet, iii. 171-73, and by letters from Rohan to Target. Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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begun to move her furniture from the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles the same day that Etienville started for Saint-Omer. On the 16th he arrives at Arras, where he finds the pretended Baroness de Courville, who had hastened to take flight on her side. The baroness informs him that the cardinal has just been arrested and thrown into the Bastille. People were astonished later on that Mme de Courville should have known at Arras, on the 16th August, that Rohan was already in the Bastille, since it was only on that day that the incarceration took place. It is more than probable that d'Etienville and the lady took flight as soon as they knew that Mme de la Motte was on the move, and that before the judges d'Etienville imagined his story about the cardinal's arrest in order to conceal the true motive of his departure.

However that may be, Mme de Courville, at Arras, on the 16th August, said to her companion that they must leave France and take refuge in London; that the cardinal had been arrested for negotiating the purchase of a diamond necklace, in which he had deeply compromised the queen, a purchase made in order to supply her, the Baroness de Courville, with the five hundred thousand livres promised for her marriage. "The diamonds," she says, "that you saw me with came from the necklace."

Baroness de Courville sees no safety but in flight. She presses d'Etienville to accompany her, but he refuses. If he goes with her, people will think him equally guilty. His soul is pure. All he wants is thirty thousand livres, payable as forfeit. "Your

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demand is just," says the lady, "and I will give you the thirty thousand livres at Saint-Omer, if you will accompany me so far."

"But when we arrived at the next place where the diligence changed horses," says d'Etienville, "I saw Mme de Courville was arranging to return to Paris accompanied by a man dressed in a blue cassock. I then thought that she had been arrested, and continued my journey as far as Saint-Omer, where I learnt conclusively that the cardinal had been made prisoner." [1]

Meanwhile, Baron de Fages had heard of his friend's disappearance consequent upon his learning that Mme de la Motte had fled. Fages now associated himself with a certain Count de Précourt, who thus presents himself to the public:

"I have the honour to be a colonel and a chevalier de Saint-Louis. I have taken part in two naval combats, in three battles, five sieges, more than twenty charges and encounters, and I went through the whole of the last war in Poland, where I commanded."

"It follows then," concludes Bachaumont, "that he is an adventurer and a loose fellow, whom one cannot be astonished to find in such company," for Précourt had also been mixed up in the intrigue of Baron de Fages, to whom with d'Etienville he served as security when purchases were to be made. He now obtains from Count de Vergennes a safe-conduct

[1] Interr. de Bette d'Etienville, 10th January, 1786, Arch. Nat., X^2, B/1417, and declarations contained in the Dossier Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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and an order to arrest d'Etienville. And in their turn Précourt and de Fages take the diligence to Saint-Omer, in order to joint the fugitive. On the 16th September they find him at Dunkirk. The rest has been summed up by the advocate of the two jewellers Loque and Vaucher, who put between commas the very terms employed by d'Etienville in his defence.

"We have seen," they say, "this citizen of Saint-Omer, after being abandoned at Arras by Baroness de Courville, go on to Saint-Omer, his native town, where he sojourned for some time, 'sparing the most tender of mothers the grief of learning the cruel position he is in,' and then reach Dunkirk 'without any object but that of seeking the tranquillity of an ignored existence,' meeting at Dunkirk M. de Précourt and Baron de Fages, and becoming their prisoner in virtue of an order from the king 'which they refused to show.'

"We have seen him always at rest about his innocence, and yet thinking himself lost when he sees a sentinel at his door; we have seen him carried from Dunkirk to Lille by the diligence, arrested at Lille by one of his creditors, who wishes to put him in prison, claimed by M. de Précourt as a prisoner of state, and placed, until the departure of M. de Précourt, in the Tower of Saint-Peter, the military prison of the town, where he is called 'Monseigneur' by two women detained for defrauding the tobacco revenue to the extent of six francs in each case, and where 'he does not hesitate to make two beings happy by delivering these two women,' and 'where he forgets his own sorrows by sharing their joy,' and

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'where, finally, he thanks heaven for having given him a feeling heart.'

"We have seen him pass from the tower of Saint-Peter to the guard-room of the infirmary, shocked by such treatment, but 'resigned like the lamb that is sacrificed.'

"We have seen him, with a vanity still more ridiculous, 'supply from his own purse the money needed by the persons who had come to arrest him, and pay the expenses of a journey which only presented to him the prospect of a very unhappy future;' and we now know that he paid with the money of a lady of Autun to whom he had sold false safe-conducts.

"Finally, he arrives at Versailles, always conducted and kept in view by M. de Précourt like a criminal. But here the scene changes. The fugitive d'Etienville, pursued like a thief, arrested by order of the king, and Baron de Fages, who pretended to have been robbed, and M. de Précourt, bearing the pretended order, the criminal and his two satellites, so divided until now, will at present have the same interests and the same fears; they form a triumvirate of which d'Etienville acts as adviser and director."

At Versailles Précourt had explained to his captive that Vergennes, who was now acquainted with the depositions of the prisoners at the Bastille, did not wish to complicate the case of the cardinal, already extremely involved; that he did not desire to pursue the affair of Mme de Courville, and that he advised d'Etienville to seek an asylum within the rules of the Temple, in order to set his creditors at defiance; which was accordingly done. D'Etienville and de

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Fages, once more friends and companions, lived for two months side by side within the protecting enclosure. They make advances towards the lieutenant of police and towards the Rohan family, promising in connection with the cardinal absolute discretion and even favourable depositions in return for trifling assistance, and they discover that the pretended Baroness de Courville has fled to London. Notwithstanding their friendship and their life in common, de Fages continues to prosecute d'Etienville; an artifice thought necessary in order to keep off the accusation of conspiracy, for it must not be supposed that they worked purposely together in order to dupe jewellers and other tradesmen. Finally, d'Etienville, prosecuted for a graver matter —the false safe-conducts sold to the lady of Autun— is driven from the asylum of the Temple, and seeks refuge at Saint-Jean de Latran. On 22nd December, 1785, he is locked up at the Grand Châtelet.

To the prisoners were now added all the witnesses thought useful in the Diamond Necklace case: Countess de Cagliostro, Mme de la Tour and Marie-Jeanne, the young girl, "still innocent," who had seen the queen in a bottle of water; Rosalie, the soubrette; Baron de Planta, Maître Laporte, who had spoken to Mme de la Motte of the necklace; Grenier, the goldsmith; Du Clusel, first clerk of the navy, and Claude Cerval, called "the Italian," who had negotiated some bonds which the La Mottes pretended to have received from the cardinal; and, finally, Toussaint de Beaussire, arrested at Brussels with his mistress, Nicole d'Oliva. All were lodged in the Bastille.

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XXVII

PRELIMINARIES OF THE JUDGMENT

WITH the exception, then, of Count de la Motte, all our characters are now under lock and key. Louis XVI. left it to the cardinal to say whether he would trust to the decision of his sovereign or to that of the Parliament.

Rohan chooses the Parliament in the following letter:

"SIRE,—I hoped through confrontation to obtain proofs which would have convinced your Majesty beyond doubt of the fraud of which I have been the plaything, and I should then have desired no judges except your justice and your kindness. Refused confrontation and deprived of this hope, I accept with most respectful gratitude the permission which your Majesty gives me to prove my innocence through juridical forms; and consequently I beg your Majesty to give the necessary orders for my affair to be sent and assigned to the Parliament of Paris, to the assembled Chambers.

"Nevertheless, if I could hope that the inquiries which have been made, and which are unknown to me, could have led your Majesty to decide that I am only guilty of having been deceived, I should then beg you, Sire, to decide according to your justice and your kindness. My relations, penetrated with the same sentiments as myself, have signed.

"I am, with the deepest respect, etc.,

(Signed) "CARDINAL DE ROHAN,

"DE ROHAN,

Prince de Montbazon.

"PRINCE DE ROHAN,

Archbishop of Cambrai.

"L. M. PRINCE DE SOUBISE."

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Historians do not seem to have known the original of this letter, and they all appreciate it in an inexact manner according to different commentaries they have read. In reality, Rohan subjected himself to the king's judgment if he was looked upon as innocent. But Louis XVI., influenced by Marie-Antoinette, persisted in considering him guilty. Rohan then was sent before the Parliament. The letters patent were given at Saint-Cloud on 5th September and registered the 6th September, when the two Chambers were in assembly.

Louis XVI. thus committed a second fault not less grave than the first. The king was already troubled by the ideas which made the Revolution. He held in his hands an instrument which, in the circumstances, was marvellously adapted to the object for which it was designed—the *lettre de cachet*. By custom and by law the king was the first and, if he desired it, the only judge of his subjects. Parliament only sat in judgment in virtue of a delegation of the judiciary power of which the king was the sole source. And Louis XVI. entrusts to this assembly, which administers justice only because he has empowered it to do so, a case in which the honour of his wife and that of his crown are immediately concerned. The scene of the grove—that alone—in which the dignity and virtue of the queen were outraged, authorised him to exercise personally his functions as judge.[1]

[1] Napoleon said at St Helena: "The queen was innocent, and, to give greater publicity to her innocence, she desired the Parliament to judge the case. The result was that the

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And the Parliament, with the spirit which animated the majority of its members, had for its immediate desire one thing only—to humiliate the crown; and after that to attack the "arbitrary power of ministers." The Count de la Motte was himself soon afterwards to write as follows: "It is certain that a portion of the magistracy, as if by way of prelude to the resistance soon to be opposed to the authority of the king, sought less to prepare a triumph for the cardinal than a humiliation for the Court." Even the Abbé Georgel took this view. He speaks of certain magistrates who supported the cardinal as doing so, "not with that calm and scrupulous interest which an equitable judge grants to a defendant, but with all the ardour of party spirit."

The manners of the time gave to lawsuits extreme importance. The statements and pleadings of the advocates were printed, distributed, and sold by thousands of copies. For months together the reputation, the virtue, and even the honesty of the queen are to be discussed not only in France but throughout Europe All that the king submitted to the Parliament was the swindle in connection with the necklace and the forgery of the queen's signature. The cardinal was innocent on both points, and, as fate would have it, the recognition of his innocence became a mortal blow to the queen's reputation.

queen was thought guilty, and that discredit was thrown on the Court." Napoleon thought it was the duty of Louis XVI. to decide the affair by his own authority. General Gourgaud, St. Hélène inédite, iii. 398.

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Thus, through the magnitude of the interests at stake, this action became, according to Mirabeau's remark, "the most serious affair in the whole kingdom." And the advocates, as they draw up their pleadings, may well say, "the whole of Europe has its eyes fixed on this important trial.[1] The slightest details become the food of universal curiosity."

The First President d'Aligre named as commissaries and reporters Maximilien-Pierre Titon de Villotran and Jean-Pierre Du Puis de Marcé, both counsellors in the Grand Chamber. The former, a brilliant orator, had the gift of dealing rapidly with the matters before him, and of rendering them interesting and lucid. He had the reputation of always bringing over his colleagues to his own opinion. The second was known as the friend of everyone, and his portrait is thus sketched in Target's manuscript notes: "Fundamentally he is a good, humane man, with nothing of the intriguer; but slow and easily influenced; no wit and no speaker, but conciliatory, kind, and honourable. He pleases his colleagues and society generally by his good qualities. He is not very ambitious and cares little for position, because he has sense enough

[1] Maître Thilorier for Cagliostro, p. 49. Maître Blondel, for Nicole d'Oliva, expresses himself in the same sense: "the too-celebrated process which fixes at this moment the gaze of all France, of all Europe." Hardy says in his Journal, under date of 6th September, 1785, "the lawsuit which occupies the attention not only of all France, but of the whole of Europe." Again, in the *Leyden Gazette* of 28th June, "this great piece which has such a plot that all Europe is intent upon the dénouement."

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to understand that he has not the talents necessary for success.[1] Du Puis de Marcé was entrusted with the confrontations, and Titon with the general report on the affair.[2]

The suit was conducted throughout in the most regular manner. A decree from the king transformed the Bastille for this occasion from a state prison to a judiciary prison, where Parliament had full control over the prisoners connected with the affair of the necklace. All the documents in the case are complete and bear the signatures of the prisoners and of the witnesses. The records of the trial are also complete, without an omission. No detail of the case was kept secret. The prisoners were all confronted with one another. They communicated freely with their advocates, and furnished them with all the information which they thought necessary for their defence. The *Leyden Gazette* published an account of the slightest incidents. The Parisians were kept informed from day to day at the Bastille. It may even be said that during the trial the widest liberty was allowed to the accused, though some of their allegations were of a scandalous character. In the present day, during no judiciary inquiry, would such freedom be allowed to the prisoners?

Opinion soon turned in favour of the cardinal. "People no longer saw anything in the affair," says Hardy, "but an inconsiderate act of the government comparable to that of sending Beaumarchais so unfairly last March to Saint-Lazare; but with this

[1] Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.
[2] Both condemned to death in 1793.

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difference, that the personage then dealt with was of much less importance." The women all declared in favour of la Belle Eminence. Ribbons half red and half yellow became the fashion; the red representing the cardinal and the yellow the straw on which he was supposed to lie. "Cardinal sur la paille" was the name given to the ribbon. It has been mentioned that on being arrested Rohan was allowed to send to Abbé Georgel orders to burn the pretended correspondence with the queen. "The great ladies of the Court," we read in Hardy's Journal, "undertook with the greatest warmth the cardinal's defence, so touched, so grateful did they feel for the delicacy he had shown, the moment after his arrest, in ordering Abbé Georgel, his confidential man, to destroy or make away with generally all that could have revealed his agreeable correspondence with a good many of them."

In court, Mme de la Motte defended herself with astonishing energy and presence of mind. During a trial which lasted several months, and in the course of which she was almost daily in the dock, she did not lose heart for one moment. She kept her head against all the evidence. The moment she saw her particular system of defence break down, she in the twinkling of an eye constructed another, in presence of the judges, with the most circumstantial details. If she was asked for a proof of what she advanced, she immediately cited two, three—any number—invented in support of her declarations, and to these she quickly added others, not less imaginary, in order to convince the magistrates absolutely, if one

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shadow of doubt seemed to remain. To the cardinal, when he asked whence so much money came suddenly into her possession, she replied that he knew better than anyone, since she was his mistress and he kept her; to Baron de Planta, whose vigorous and precise depositions struck like blows from a hammer, she declared that it was scandalous for him to dare to speak against her after having attempted to violate her; to Father Loth, so lately her confidential friend, and who, partly from gratitude towards Rohan, to whom he owed the satisfaction of having preached before the king, partly from rancour against Villette, who had supplanted him in the favour of the countess, she said that he was a crapulous monk, bringing girls to her husband, and stealing things from her drawers; to Mlle d'Oliva she addressed reproaches on the subject of her immorality and on her unbecoming conversation; to Cagliostro, after throwing a bronze candlestick at him, she put questions, laughing loudly at the time, as to why he used to call her his "swan" and his "dove" and other cooing names.

Cagliostro replied by casting an inspired look at the beams of the ceiling, making at the same time grand gestures, and inundating the unhappy countess with a torrent of words in which were repeated the name of God and a number of Arabic and Italian expressions, together with sonorous words belonging to no language at all.

One terrible scene was her confrontation of the 12th April, with d'Oliva and with Villette. Pressed by their declarations, absolutely in accord, Jeanne

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was obliged at last to accept the scene of the grove. Until then she had obstinately denied it, and the avowal was not obtained from her until after contortions and cries of rage, at the end of which she fainted. There was a run for vinegar. Saint-Jean, turnkey at the Bastille, took her at last in his arms to carry her into his room, but scarely had he seized her, when, returning to consciousness, Jeanne bit him in the neck till he bled. Saint-Jean uttered a shriek and let her fall.[1]

Cagliostro distinguished himself particularly in his confrontation with Rétaux de Villette. "It was then," he himself writes, "that I read him for an hour and a half a sermon in order to make him understand the duty of a man of honour, the power of Providence, and his duty towards his neighbour. I afterwards made him hope for the clemency of God and of the government. In fine, my discourse was so long and so strong that I was at last unable to speak another word. The official reporter was so touched and so affected, that he said to Villette that he must be a monster if he was not penetrated, for that I had spoken to him as a brother, as a man full of religion and morality, and that the words I had spoken were words from heaven. Accordingly, Rétaux no longer hesitated to declare 'that the woman La Motte intrigued and lied beyond conception, so that he himself, now that all was discovered, could not understand it;' and this he said with

[1] *Leyden Gazette*, 14th April, 1786; Hardy's Journal, Bibl. Nat., MS. Franç. 6685, p. 316 (26th March, 1786); Georgel, ii. 186-87; "Vie de Jeanne de Saint-Rémy," ii. 39.

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groans and with so penetrated a demeanour that his very movements would have furnished new proofs, had they been necessary."[1] All this excitement was succeeded, when Cagliostro found himself alone in his room, by moments of discouragement and prostration, which at last filled the governor of the Bastille with alarm. He accordingly wrote to the lieutenant of police, who ordered that an under-officer should be placed near the prisoner to keep him company and "prevent the effects of despair."

The attitude of the cardinal was perfectly tranquil. He appeared in his robes of ceremony; and we can imagine him just as he appeared with his tall figure, his blue eyes, soft and sad, and his greyish hair beneath his red hat. The red robe was of a silky stuff and paler than the regulation colour. From the thousand arabesques of Bruges lace stands out in delicate shades the pale blue cordon of the Holy Ghost. The cardinal's attitude inspires respect and sadness.

The feelings caused by the appearance of the Baroness d'Oliva, with her touching grace, are those of sympathy and emotion. "Never," says Charpentier, in his "Bastille Unveiled," "was so much simplicity and depravity seen in the same person. Never was seen more frankness, more candour, than Mlle d'Oliva showed in her interrogatory. Full justice was rendered to her on this point by her judges, her advocates, and all who had any dealings with her."

Is it necessary to point out the incessant self-

[1] Target's notes, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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contradictions of Mme de la Motte in the course of the trial? After denying the scene of the grove, she acknowledges its reality; after accusing Cagliostro, she proclaims his entire innocence. In her first statement, as drawn up by her advocate, the thief is Cagliostro, in the second it is the cardinal. Rohan, according to her, made her his first present of diamonds in the month of March. But, replies the cardinal, already in the month of February Villette is shown to have been selling the diamonds taken from the necklace. Even in the same story, her facts contradict one another. Rohan is accused of having appropriated fragments of the necklace; of having instructed the counters to sell them at Paris; of having instructed La Motte to sell them in London. D'Etienville had seen fragments in the hands of Mme de Courville; and, pressed in the confrontation, Mme de la Motte resets the magnificent necklace and places it on the neck of Mme de Courville, who without the least concealment wears it in the palace of Prince de Rohan![1]

So much so, that the cardinal's advocate, addressing Doillot, advocate of Mme de la Motte, feels himself justified in saying to him, "With what eye can a client be regarded who seems to wish now in her evidence to forget her written statements, and now in her written statements to forget her evidence, and for whose defence on the eve of the verdict scarcely one fact remains of those brought forward for her defence at the opening of the trial?"

[1] Statement of Bette d'Etienville against Baron de Fages. "Collection complète," iii. 26. 27

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Her attitude towards the Bette d'Etienville intrigue is very curious. Jeanne had invented it very skilfully, as has been seen, in order to supply a motive for the theft of the necklace by the cardinal. At first she remained firm, and when she was confronted with d'Etienville, asserted that she herself was the lady who in the first instance he had been seen in company with Mme de Courville. But as soon as she saw that this did not do, and understood that d'Etienville, in need and ready to play any part, cared now only to make himself agreeable to the cardinal, she declared that she did not know what all this story meant, and that she had only backed it up with her testimony in order to take vengeance on the cardinal, who accused her of having taken the necklace.

Rétaux had confessed. He had acknowledged himself the author of the forged signature, "Marie-Antoinette de France" on the contract made with the jewellers; also the writer under Mme de la Motte's dictation of the forged correspondence—the little notes with blue borders. "She is crushed by the evidence," says Maître Target; "the evidence of Böhmer and Bassenge, of Grenier, of Achet, of Maître de la Porte, of Père Loth, of Villette, of Mlle d'Oliva, Cagliostro, her own servants, all the witnesses from France, all the witnesses from England, where her husband had circulated the same fables. All voices are raised against her, and her answer is that these witnesses all swear falsely. That is her sole reply; that alone convicts her."

Her last resource, like that of all criminals at bay,

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was mystery. The explanations she had invented had been destroyed one after the other, and finding under the overpowering weight of evidence no new theory, she declares that there is a secret which she can only tell in confidence to the minister of the king's household. Afterwards in a state of exasperation and powerless rage she pretends to be mad. She broke everything in her room, would not eat, and refused to go to the court for her interrogatories.[1] The turnkeys of the Bastille, going into her room, found her lying stark naked upon her bed.

[1] Letters in sympathetic ink from Rohan to Maître Target. Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

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XXVIII

SECRET CORRESPONDENCE [1]

WHILE he was in solitary confinement in the Bastille, Prince de Rohan managed to correspond with his advocates. He said he was ill, and was visited by Dr Portal, professor at the school of medicine, who soon thought of a pretext for attaching to himself a surgeon named Travers, a personal friend of the cardinal.[2] These three secretly arranged a means of communication. The prisoner wrote them short notes, which passed under the eyes of the officers of the Bastille. The doctors sent them to Maître Target, and he, by the heat of the fire, made the sympathetic writing stand out.

"I can perfectly read," writes the cardinal to Travers, "what you said to me in the crumpled paper; but you need not crumple it so much. I do not venture to send you the continuation of the confrontation till I receive your promise to show them to no one except Maître Target; for I repeat to you

[1] Dossier Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve.

[2] "I think the cardinal, having something wrong with his nose and with his knee, has need of a surgeon. 13th March, 1786. (Signed) PORTAL." Bibl. de l'Arsenal, MS. Bastille, 12,457, f. 68. A surgeon was officially appointed for the service of the prisoners of the Bastille, but he could not have done what was wanted.

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that if the least suspicion were entertained, there are no sort of means that might not be adopted."

The letters are sad. "I hope I shall not be confronted before Monday; but the sooner you can send to me, the better. *Vale, vale!* May Heaven diminish my trouble." Then: "Every day there are nine hours of confrontation, and I am very much fatigued. I am horribly accustomed for some time past to things which ought not to be, and this habit is painful. I avow to you between ourselves that I am beginning to get tired, but I shall only redouble my efforts; and above all, I will not let my enemies have any doubts on the subject. I wish always to seem fresh when I descend into the arena, and, before doing so, to staunch my wounds. I will at least deprive them of one satisfaction. *Vale, vale!*"

The confrontation unveiled to him the atrocious conduct of the woman for whom he had had nothing but kindness. "I am to be confronted with the wicked woman to-morrow," he writes to Target. "To-day she had a scene with Count de Cagliostro. He called her '*Sacrée raccrocheuse!*' because she said nasty things about his wife; and she threw a candlestick at him, which struck him in the stomach; but she was at once punished, for the candle went into her eye. We shall see to-morrow. I can answer for one thing: she will throw nothing at me, and she will certainly not confuse me. She fills me with horror."

Mme de la Motte loses her assurance. The last interrogatory finishes with her bursting into tears,

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and her only answer is that she "throws herself into the arms of Providence." The declarations of Rétaux de Villette and Nicole d'Oliva have placed the probity of the cardinal beyond suspicion. "We are not yet at the end of these extraordinary things," he writes, "but I foresee it without any fear. I thank God for having rendered my position so different from what it was. What renders me more tranquil is that my honour being saved, all the rest is only my own personal affair."

In these letters the cardinal's kindness of heart stands out in the most touching manner. He is preoccupied with Cagliostro, the Countess Cagliostro, and Baron de Planta, all thrown into the Bastille on his account. He is as anxious about them as about himself. He is constantly making suggestions for their advantage. Maître Target must mention in the Statement he is about to publish, that Mme de la Motte ended by proclaiming the innocence of Count Cagliostro and of his wife. He must also take care always to give Cagliostro the title of count. It would cause him pain to forget this. Rohan also wishes that Target, with his great authority, should speak to Cagliostro's advocate, stimulate his ardour, and give him advice.

Finally, Rohan overflows with gratitude towards his defender. "Farewell! I repeat to you once more all the expressions of that tender gratitude which I feel for you with all my heart."

Twice only in these letters, beneath the mystery of the invisible ink, a remembrance of the queen appears. "Have you any news of the queen?"

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[The word Reine is indicated in the original French by its initial "R."]

The second time the expression shows how deep his anxiety is on the subject.

"Let me know if it is true that the queen ['L. R.,' signifying la Reine] is always sad."

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XXIX

THE DEFENCE AND THE DEFENDERS

It was the custom at the time for the so-called "Memoirs" (i.e., fully developed statements for or against a person involved in a lawsuit) and consultations of advocates to be published. They were printed and sold in large numbers. The noise of the action about the necklace was such that all the official documents in the case were read with passionate interest, not only in France but even beyond the frontier. The talent of the advocates added to the interest of the trial at such a point that more than a century afterwards these occasional writings may still be read with pleasure.

The council of the cardinal was composed of the masters of the Parisian bar: Target, de Bonnières, Laget-Bardelin, Tronchet, Collet and Bigot de Préameneu. Maître Target, of the French Academy, was then considered—a reputation which he enjoys even to the present day—one of the glories of the French bar. He was the first advocate who had been elected a member of the Academy since the industrious Le Normand, who had been dead for the last forty years. It is true that during these forty years no representative of the bar had chosen to become a candidate, it being considered unworthy of a barrister to tout for votes.

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Mme de la Motte would have liked to be defended by young Albert Beugnot. But Beugnot, notwithstanding the pressing advice of Thiroux de Crosne, lieutenant of police, who tried to influence him by pointing out the reputation which a beginner might acquire in such a case, declined the honour. Then Thiroux de Crosne gave her his own family counsel, Maître Doillot, now more than sixty years of age, who had renounced the active exercises of his profession for some little time past, but whose advice was still sought as an enlightened jurisconsult. "The old man did not approach Mme de la Motte with impunity," says Beugnot; "she quite turned his head."

Nor did Maître Blondel, advocate of Baroness d'Oliva, a young practitioner fresh from the school of law, approach with impunity his charming client. His head was also turned. To tell the truth, however, the effect was not precisely the same. Mme de la Motte put into the head of Maître Doillot whatever she wished, and made him write the most extravagant things.

"The advocate must have gone mad," said his brother, the notary at the Châtelet, "or Mme de la Motte must have bewitched him, as she did the cardinal." So much so, indeed, that the esteemed jurisconsult left his reputation behind, whereas that of the young barrister, borne on the wings of love, was in a single day carried to the skies.[1]

The Statements of Doillot on behalf of the countess appeared first in November, 1785. Thanks

[1] Maître Blondel quitted the bar and became judge at the Paris Court of Appeal.

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to the excitement of the moment, it had a wild success.[1] "The advocate Doillot," said the *Leyden Gazette*, "cannot satisfy the demands made throughout the day. His house is besieged by a continual crowd. Several thousands of copies have scarcely sufficed to satisfy the avidity of the first applicants."[2]

The author of "Les Observations de P. Tranquille"[3] gives a picturesque description of the rush.

"As I am not one of those beings who get crushed for the sake of something new, I went my own way. I was not ten steps from this house—the house of M. Doillot—when a lawyer's clerk, quite blown, all in perspiration, called out to me eagerly, 'Have you got it, sir? have you got it?' Hearing from me that I had not got it, my clerical friend left me. I turned the corner of this accursed street, when the carriage of a doctor, who was bursting his lungs by shrieking 'the one by Maître Doillot,' almost ran over me. I had not yet recovered from my fright when the cabriolet of M. D—— brushed my coat. I was wishing the advocate and his statement at the devil, and thought I had at last got free from the importunate crowd, when a surgeon accosted me saying, 'I need not ask why you are here. Have you got one?' I swear in good faith that I thought at this moment that instead of distributing the statement of the case, they were giving away gold to every Frenchman who happened to want it."[4]

[1] Beugnot, i. 98.

[2] *Leyden Gazette*, 9th December, 1785.

[3] Charles-Louis Hû, grocer.

[4] "Observations de P. Tranquille" (La Mecque, 1786). p. 35.

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There were disturbances in the Rue des Maçons, where Doillot lodged.[1] It was found necessary to have the house guarded by the soldiers of the watch. Ten thousand copies were thus distributed from hand to hand. The booksellers sold five thousand copies in one week; and within a few days Doillot received three thousand orders.[2]

The idea of implicating Cagliostro in the intrigue had been conceived, as Georgel says, with diabolical cunning. If Jeanne de Valois had in the first instance made a direct accusation against Cardinal de Rohan, no one would have believed in it. But there was something mysterious and suspicious about Cagliostro, and it was known what influence he exercised on the mind of the cardinal. "The alchemist," she suggested, "took the necklace to pieces in order to increase by means of it 'the occult treasures of an unheard-of fortune.'"

"To conceal his theft," says Doillot, "he ordered M. de Rohan, in virtue of the influence he had established over him, to sell some of the diamonds, and to get a few of them mounted at Paris through the Countess de la Motte, and to get more considerable quantities mounted and sold in England by her husband." As to the idea of the necklace having been bought by the queen, M. de la Motte treats it as a criminal blasphemy.

The defence of Cagliostro was a marvel; astounding by its irony, its brilliancy, and its elevation. From this day the attention of the lettered classes,

[1] Bachaumont, xxi. 123.

[2] "Vie de Jeanne de Saint-Rémy," i. 432, 433.

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the writers, the frequenters of artistic salons, and of literary cafés, was drawn towards a discussion in which was to be seen, as in a tournament of Parnassus, a contest between the most skilful pens of the day. Of Cagliostro's factum the "Correspondance Littéraire" writes as follows:

"Oh, how fine it would be were it all true," cried a woman of wit, after listening with emotion to a reading of this affecting statement.

"I do not guard myself," replied a man of feeling "against the emotion caused by a well-written novel until a judicial inquiry has decided whether the facts set forth are really true."

"And the man of feeling was right," adds the journalist.

Eight soldiers of the watch, before the door of Mâitre Thilorier, formed a dyke against the public rushing to procure this sensational piece of writing. Cagliostro had supplied the first draft in Italian, and M. Thilorier, an advocate of twenty-nine years of age, had given to it, in French, a lively, piquant form.[1]

Cagliostro, whose liberty, whose very life, were at

[1] Jean-Charles Thilorier, born at La Rochelle in 1756, died 20th June, 1818, 7 Rue Neuve-des-Capucines, with the title of advocate at the Councils of the King. He was the son of an advocate, and left two sons, one of whom, Adrien-Jean Pierre, was also an advocate. Having had, in 1790, the courage to undertake the defence of the Marquis de Favras, he was imprisoned, and afterwards took refuge at the house of his brother-in-law in the Blésois. He had a passion for mechanical science and philosophy; left a "Universal System" (four volumes published in 1818), and cultivated poetry and wrote tragedy. His younger son, Nicolas-Charles, died at Blois, in June, 1839, leaving an only daughter, now Mme Storelli.

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stake, began by relating the most improbable stories about his birth and education; the prodigious knowledge he had acquired and the miraculous cures which he had effected wherever he went. His mythological Odyssey across Europe and Africa is set forth in inconceivable terms; after which, in the happiest, the most serious manner, he begins his defence. The first part might cause doubts as to the veracity of the second.

"But this piece of madness," says Beugnot, "at which Thilorier, a man of infinite wit, was the first to laugh, was thought perfectly natural and quite in order." Cagliostro had, it is true, one unanswerable argument: the cardinal had made his agreement with the jewellers on the 29th January, 1785, and he, Cagliostro, had only arrived in Paris at nine in the evening of the 30th.

With Mme de la Motte he took a very high tone. The countess in her statement called him an empiric, a low alchemist, a dreamer about the philosopher's stone, and a sham prophet.

"*Empiric!*" Cagliostro replies. "I have often heard this word, but have never quite known what it meant; perhaps a man who, without being a doctor, has some knowledge of medicine, goes to see patients and does not charge for his visits; who cures the poor equally with the rich, and receives money from no one—in that case I am an empiric.

"*Low alchemist!* Alchemist or not, the qualification of 'low' suits those only who beg and crawl, and people know whether Count Cagliostro has ever asked a favour of anyone.

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"*Dreamer about the philosopher's stone!* Never has the public been importuned by dreams of mine.

"*False prophet!* I have not always been so. If Cardinal de Rohan had listened to me, he would have mistrusted the Countess de la Motte, and we should not be where we are now."

The conclusion of the statement might well be quoted entire. Here, in any case, are the last lines:

"Frenchmen, are you merely curious? Then read those vain writings in which cunning and levity have taken delight in casting upon the friend of man opprobrium and ridicule.

"Would you, on the other hand, be kind and just? Ask no questions; but listen, and love him who has always respected kings, because they are in the hands of God; governments, because God protects them; religion, because it is the law of God; law, because it is the complement of religion; and, finally, men, because, like himself, they are God's children.

"Ask no questions; but listen to and love him who has come among you doing good; who has allowed himself to be attacked with patience, and has defended himself with moderation."

People were quite overcome with this style of literature, which took them by surprise—for the pleadings were really addressed to the Lords of the Parliament, sitting in the assembled Chambers—when there appeared the delightful statement of Maître Blondel, pleading for Nicole d'Oliva. Nicole was charming, and her advocate said so in exquisite language. "The statement of Mlle Oliva," writes Father Georgel, "interested all sensitive hearts

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through the ingenuous confessions made by the beautiful courtesan. The style had the freshness of colouring which the poets attribute to the queen of Gnidos and of Paphos." And a nice specimen is this of Jesuit style called forth by the contemplation of a pretty girl.

Maître Blondel wrote much better. His statement is so simple, so clear, so natural, and so touching in its emotion. Its logic is remarkable for such fine, such delicate deductions, that it is impossible, even now, to read it without the liveliest sympathy. All Paris regarded Nicole with the eyes of Blondel. Twenty thousand copies of the little masterpiece on her behalf were sold in a few days.[1] Maître Blondel had the same interest as the cardinal's advocate, Maître Target, in proving that in the scene of the grove, where everything was dark, Nicole had been unable to distinguish anything. This suggested to Manuel the following rhyme, which he places in the mouth of the pretty personator:

> Tous deux m'ont démontré que je n'ai rien pu voir,
> Target, qu'il faisait nuit, Blondel, qu'il faisait noir.
> Voilà ce que je sais. Et mon âme ingénue
> Dans cet humble récit se montre toute nue.
> Je suis simple, naïve. Et qui sut jamais mieux
> Que la belle Oliva se dévoiler aux yeux?

When from the depths of le Châtelet, where he was sojourning in melancholy captivity, Bette d'Etienville learnt of the literary success of these writings, which were attended, also, for their authors, with

[1] *Amsterdam Gazette*, 31st March, 1786. The Statement had appeared on the 27th.

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pecuniary success, each copy selling for some twenty to thirty *sous*, he determined to be in it; for had not he also been mixed up with an affair of diamonds? It has been said that Vergennes and the ministry would have preferred not to complicate a matter already so complicated by adding to it the incredible story of the citizen of Saint-Omer and his friend Baron de Fages. But he, d'Etienville, was resolved to speak and to write under all circumstances. He began then to shower statements upon the public; publishing between the 24th February and the 11th of April three, one after the other. People might cry out, "Where does this new man come from? What does he want? By what right does he publish a statement? His statement, however, was like a novel—with movement, interest, and style. Everyone read it, and everyone took an interest in Bette d'Etienville, without caring whether he was a real personage or a creature of fantasy."[1]

These statements were signed as defender by Maître Montigny, an advocate of ill repute (remarks the journal of Bachaumont), who did not distribute a single copy gratuitously, but sold them all at his own domicile, Rue de la Harpe, without shame. D'Etienville, who now exercised his pen for the first time, signed: Auctor et actor.

The beautiful Countess Cagliostro had to defend her Maître Polvérite, who in his statement made her life even more improbable than that of her husband. "This new fable," says Beugnot, "had also its success."

[1] Beugnot, i. 101.

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Rétaux de Villette chose a little hunchbacked advocate, Maître Jaillant-Deschainaits, "as cunning as people of his kind usually are," who painted Villette as he in fact was: a light, feeble character, ruled by his mistresses, and always ready to render them whatever services they desired without always perceiving the consequences. This advocate gained the greatest success of all in a judiciary point of view. His client, guilty of forgery and direct accomplice in the theft of the necklace, got off with a punishment ridiculously slight.

Now came the statements of Baron de Fages, Dom Mulot, the Count Précourt. The accusation against d'Etienville and his companions brought by the watchmakers Loque and Vaucher. This last production, the work of Maître Duveyrier, admirable by its irony and its humour, was ranked by critics with the pleadings of Maître Blondel and Cagliostro.

Speaking of one of the statements of d'Etienville, the bookseller Hardy writes: "Among other striking features may be remarked, on page 22, the speech addressed on 16th August, 1785, by Mme de Courville, who was running away from Paris and had then reached Arras, to Bette d'Etienville: 'Cardinal de Rohan was arrested yesterday at Versailles. We must run. The knot of this affair is the purchase of a necklace worth sixteen hundred thousand livres, of which you have seen portions in my possession. The discovery of this intrigue has been the cause of my grief and anxiety since the beginning of this month. That is what prevents my marriage and causes my ruin.' "

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By the importance which Hardy attaches to this detail may be seen how effectively the de Courville plot, in spite of its improbability, had been elaborated by Jeanne de Valois, and what help it would have been to her if the arrest, which she had never expected, of Rétaux and d'Oliva had not destroyed for her all possibility of defence.

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XXX

"LATEST NEWS! LATEST NEWS!"

The interest and emotion produced by the statements of the advocates received new stimulus from the pamphlets and other publications which the affair calls forth from all sides, such as: the "Royal Guard," by Manuel; the "Reflections of Motus," and the "Observations of P. Tranquille," by Charles-Louis Hû; the "Oriental Tale," the "Letters from the Abbé G—— to the Countess," and the countess in answer to the abbé; the "Collection of Authentic Documents," the "Letter on the Occasion of the Cardinal's Arrest," the "Authentic Statements on behalf of Cagliostro," the "Last Piece of the Necklace," and how many more! Among the authors of these pamphlets may be found wig-makers, grocers, and booksellers' clerks. All heads were set going. A secret printing-office, at the bottom of a court out of the Rue des Fossés-Saint-Bernard, was entirely occupied with the production of plates illustrating the Affair of the Necklace. It was directed by Louis Dupré, otherwise Point, barber's assistant—Figaro was really a type of the period—and Antoine Chambon, booksellers' commission agent. The two partners were at last discovered and thrown into the Bastille, 21st March, 1786.[1] But in

[1] La Bastille dévoilée, iii. 108.

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presence of the greater part of these frightful publications the efforts of the police remained impotent, and the prosecutions had no effect but to stimulate public curiosity, and the paragraph-mongers continued to exercise their imagination: not all the newspapers of France and of Europe would have sufficed to hold their information. What became under their pens the scene of the grove?

"In granting her favours to the cardinal the d'Oliva made him believe, with both their heads on the same pillow, that she was the queen herself. Thence the grand ideas of the ambitious prelate who flattered himself that he would soon be first minister of the crown."[1]

As for Count de la Motte, it was asserted that, forced by the Lord Mayor to quit London, he had taken refuge at Constantinople, where he had become circumcised and had adopted the turban.[2] Allow for the mental excitement in the years immediately preceding the Revolution, and you will have an idea of the agitation produced by the action. The caricatures became at last so offensive that they in their turn had to be stopped.[3]

These measures only stimulated the ardour of the collectors, the bibliophiles, the amateurs of plates and prints. There were many who wished to possess all the printed statements, pamphlets, tracts, verses, and songs which the affair from day to day brought forth. A series was published of twenty-

[1] Bachaumont, 16th December, 1785.
[2] Journal de Hardy, 26th March, 1786.
[3] *Courrier de l'Europe*, 11th April, 1786.

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two portraits representing all the personages of the drama, most of them were fancy sketches. The first portraits published, as of Mme de la Motte, were really portraits of the Présidente de Saint-Vincent, while the Count de la Motte was a reproduction of the Prince de Montbarey. The same picture served for d'Etienville and the Baron de Fages. It was the face of a deaf and dumb man, describing himself as Count de Solar, found in 1773 on the road to Péronne. The newsvendors were well received all the same, when they ran through the streets and offered to the crowd the last new series of plates issued, still damp from the press, attracting purchasers by their habitual cry: "Latest news! latest news!" [1]

Finally, on the 16th May, 1786, a few days before the decision of the court, appeared the Statement on behalf of the cardinal by Target. It had been praised beforehand in a thousand and one different tones. The advocate had read portions of it to his colleagues of the Academy, who all declared themselves delighted with it. It is true that when an academician reads anything to his colleagues, they always declare themselves delighted. Manuscript copies, more or less faithful, had been made from it, and they were sold for as much as thirty-six livres a piece—equal to at least seventy-two francs in the present day. When the document appeared in printed form there was quite a riot under the colonades of the Soubise mansion, where it was freely distributed, and the crowd which pressed

[1] Journal de Hardy, 12th July, 1786.

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together in the vast crescent-shaped gallery became at last so formidable that the ordinary watch was insufficient, and it was found necessary to send for the mounted guard.[1] Three editions appeared the same day—one at Hardouin's book-shop in the Palais-Royal; the other at Claude Simon, while the third, printed at Lottin's, was given away at the Hôtel Soubise. Notwithstanding the gratuitous distribution, the statements were sold for as much as a crown. But so much had been said in praise of it beforehand that it proved a disappointment. It was difficult, no doubt, to produce anything better than the statements on behalf of Cagliostro and of d'Oliva. But Target's work was by no means without value. In our time this piece of judiciary eloquence has been compared to the finest harangues of Cicero. This is doing it an injustice. Some portions of Target's factum are marked by a precision and a power of demonstration never attained by the insufferable chatterer of Tusculum. Perhaps, if Target had not been convinced that in a case of such importance it was incumbent upon him to write a masterpiece for posterity, he would really have written one. But masterpieces are surrounded with less parade.

It gave rise to the following popular song—

> Target, dans son gros Mémoire,
> A tracé tant bien que mal
> La sotte et fâcheuse histoire
> De ce pauvre cardinal;

[1] Journal de Hardy, 24th May, 1786.

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Et sa verbeuse éloquence
Et son froid raisonnement
Prouvent jusqu'à l'évidence
Que c'est un grand innocent.

The cardinal was "a great innocent." That was the point of the refrain, the absolute truth.

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XXXI

BEFORE THE JUDGMENT

On 15th December, 1785, the writs of summons to appear before the Parliament "in order to be heard," issued against the prisoners in the Bastille, were converted into warrants of arrest against the cardinal, the Countess de la Motte, and Cagliostro. The latter had now little less than a majority in favour of his acquittal. It was not until 19th January that the warrant was served upon Mlle d'Oliva. The warrant against Rétaux was given out immediately after his arrival at the Bastille. "From the moment of the cardinal's being arrested," writes Marie-Antoinette to her brother, Joseph II.,[1] "I saw that he would be unable to appear any more at the Court. But the action, which will last several months, may have other results. It began by the issue of the warrant of arrest which suspends him from all rights, functions, and faculty of performing any civil act until judgment is pronounced. Cagliostro, charlatan, La Motte and his wife, together with a girl named Oliva, a mudlark of the gutters, are in the same boat. What associates for a grand almoner, a Rohan, and a cardinal!"

[1] Dated 27th December, 1785; published by MM. de la Rocheterie and de Beaucourt, pages 85, 86.

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From this day began for the prisoners the strictest captivity. The Parliament rejected on the 17th February, 1786, the claim put forward by the general assembly of the clergy under the presidency of Arthur de Dillon, Archbishop of Narbonne, to bring the cardinal before an ecclesiastical tribunal. The king had already sent this reply to the letter addressed to him by the assembly of the clergy, 18th September, 1785: "The clergy of my kingdom can count on my protection and on my care to insure the observance of the fundamental laws on which are based the privileges which the kings, my predecessors, have granted to them," and he did not allow himself to be chequed by any other formalities. Thus he paid no particular heed to the demonstrations of the Sovereign Pontiff, who in great anger had threatened Rohan to deprive him of his hat, because being a cardinal he allowed himself to be judged by the Parliament. It was thought sufficient to send to the Pope a certain Abbé Lemoine, doctor at the Sorbonne, who explained what it was all about, when the Pope declared himself satisfied.

Another ecclesiastical manifestation produced more effect than that of the general assembly of the clergy, although it emanated from only a single individual. The Abbé Georgel, of the order of Jesuits, was the cardinal's vicar-general, not only at Strasburgh but also at the grand almonry; and he profited by the issue of a dispensation "permitting the use of eggs during Lent until Palm Sunday," to show what he thought of the matter. He boldly compares the cardinal to St Paul, Louis XVI. to

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Nero, and himself to the disciple Timothy whom the Apostle exhorts not to blush for his captivity:

"I, François Georgel, doctor in theology, etc., sent to you, my dear brethren, as the disciple Timothy was sent to the people whom Paul in his bondage could not teach, I say to you that you are permitted to eat butter and eggs in Lent."

But listen:

"May our voice, with a blast like that of the fatal trumpet which will summon the dead to the last judgment, imitate the accents of the envoys of God when they said: 'Listen, people, for it is God himself who speaks by our mouth. Impiety has broken its dykes, it has inundated the earth, and in the blindness of its fury has said, "I will ascend to heaven, I will insult the Almighty! But from the bosom of the cloud striped by lightnings to the sound of the thunder which will burst over the entire world, the majesty of God will appear; from the throne of Justice will proceed the vengeance which will drag down the impious into the eternal abyss."'"

What appears incredible is that this strange form of permission for the use of eggs during Lent was posted by the orders of Georgel, the vicar of the grand almonry, on the doors of the chapels of all the palaces of the king at the Louvre, at the Tuileries, even to the gates of the chapel at Versailles.[1]

A *lettre de cachet*, signed Breteuil, dated 10th March, 1786, sent Georgel to calm the ardour of his

[1] Journal de Hardy, 13th March, 1786; Bachaumont, xxxi. 203; Georgel, ii. 192, 193.

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imagination in his native province at Mortagne, the pretty little chief town of Le Perche, emerging like an island from the green sea of pasturage around it. He arrived in the first days of spring, while at the Bastille Rohan was beginning to find the walls of his cell naked and sad; for since the 15th December, when from prisoner of the king he had become prisoner of the Parliament, he was no longer permitted to hold drawing-rooms as at the Hôtel de Strasbourg, to give banquets of twenty covers, and to compose, in collaboration with the Abbé Georgel, edifying notes for the *Courrier de l'Europe*, the *Leyden Gazette*, or the *Amsterdam Journal*. The Archbishop of Paris, who went to see Rohan on 5th January,[1] was struck by the alteration in his features.

"You see a very unhappy man," said the cardinal, "but I hope with the grace of God to support my sufferings patiently until the end." He had periodical attacks of colic. Then he became soured in his mind and imagined he was being poisoned.[2] And the people—even to the gay young women sitting down with their companions dangling their legs on the edge of the ditches of the Bastille—sang to him:

On sait que le docteur Portal
Nous a rendu le cardinal
En le bourrant de quinquina.
Alleluia!

[1] Bibl. de l'Arsenal, MS. Bastille, 12,457, f. 64.

[2] Bachaumont, xxxi. 41; *Gazette de Hollande*, 7th February, 1786; *Leyden Gazette*, 7th February and 24th March, 1786.

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Oliva dit qu'il est dindon,
Lamotte dit qu'il est fripon,
Lui-même dit qu'il est bêta.
Alleluia!

Le Saint-Père l'avait rougi,
Le roi, la reine l'ont noirci,
Le Parlement le blanchira.
Alleluia!

The cardinal was growing lean,
But Portal drugged him with quinine,
And now in health he may be seen.

"A fool!" cries Oliva, gay lass,
As knave Lamotte would have him pass;
Admits himself he's been an ass!

The Pope had dressed him all in red,
"He's black," the king and queen have said;
The Parliament cries "white," instead.

On the eve of the day on which Parliament was to assemble, the question for public opinion was between the cardinal and the queen. The nobility of Versailles hoped to secure in the acquittal of one of its most brilliant representatives the humiliation of the sovereign. Among the people, on the other hand, "it was declared that his Eminence persisted in maintaining that the famous diamond necklace had been duly remitted to the queen, and earnestly requested to be confronted with her Majesty." [1]

[1] Journal de Hardy, 9th March, 1786.

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XXXII

MME DE CAGLIOSTRO AT LIBERTY

Cagliostro continued to astonish opinion and to amuse it. On 24th February he issued a statement on the subject of the detention of his wife a prisoner, like himself, at the Bastille. "As long as the petitioner," said the statement, "was able to believe that the rigours of a long and cruel captivity had not affected the health of his wife, he resigned himself to silent grief. But at present, when it is no longer possible for those who surround her to conceal from him the danger which threatens her days, the supplicant, penetrated with the most profound affliction, takes refuge in the bosom of the magistrates."

Accordingly all Paris is informed that the life of an angel is imperilled by the barbarity of the monarchy.

"It was a touching exposure," says Hardy, "of the critical and dangerous condition in which Mme de Cagliostro at this moment finds herself; a condition which demands the succour of the beneficent art exercised by her husband, who has had the happiness to snatch one thousand Frenchmen from the hands of death; also of the misfortunes of this lady, who, without warrant from the Parliament or accusation of any kind, has been deprived of her liberty since 22nd August." The Parliament was much

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alarmed, and the august tribunal decided that a delegation of magistrates should withdraw and approach the king in order to entreat him to snatch the charming victim from the frightful fate which menaced her. The government was touched, and sought information at the Bastille, where the Marquis de Launey replied that the prisoner was wonderfully well, and took daily exercise on the platform of the towers.[1]

All the noise made had nevertheless the result of hastening the liberation of Mme de Cagliostro, who quitted the Bastille 18th March. She went to her hotel in the Rue Saint-Claude, where for more than a week a visiting-book left with the porter received new signatures throughout the day. "It is nothing rare to see in the evening nearly three hundred names on her porter's list," said one of the news-writers.

[1] "1786, 23rd February. The Commissary Chesnon has just informed us on your part of the anxiety of the members of the Parliament as to the health of Mme de Cagliostro. You may rest assured, Sir, that if she had had the least indisposition you would have been informed of it, as you habitually are, daily, of everything that takes place at the château. The lady is not unwell. She walks about every day, and is at this moment on the towers. About a fortnight ago she got a slight sprain in the left wrist, but that has not prevented her from amusing herself with needlework. M. Chesnon has been this morning to look for the doctor of the château, but without finding him. He has written to him, and as soon as he comes I will send you on his report." Letter from the Marquis de Launey, governor of the Bastille, to the lieutenant of police. Minute from the hand of De Launey, Bibl. de l'Arsenal, MS. Bastille, 12,517, f. 126. Mme de Cagliostro was served by her own maid, Françoise, who had been allowed to accompany her. Bibl. de l'Arsenal, MS. Bastille, 12,457, f. 126.

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"It is the perfection of good style to have made a call at Mme Cagliostro's," said another.

Those who had the honour of being received by the countess declared that her eyes had been so much worn by the tears she had shed at the Bastille that there was but little of them left.

What remained of them, however, was very presentable, and her consolers knocked in great numbers at her door, anxious to chase away the grief caused to her by the captivity of her husband.

The news-writers now declared that Cagliostro was drawing up a petition much more pathetic than the one he had before printed, in which he begged the Court to replace his wife once more in confinement.

After being a few days at liberty, the young woman went to the Palais-Royal to see in the shop-windows of the print-sellers her portrait, around which a crowd was assembled. It was frightful, and it made her laugh like a lunatic, which caused her to be recognised. The ladies who were taking the air saluted her and raised cries in her honour, and the young men who passed by offered her the flowers they had originally destined for someone else. The best houses disputed the honour of entertaining her. Charming, but light-minded, she talked too much: saying, for example, at one dinner before a numerous assembly, that she had always been exceedingly well at the Bastille, and could not speak too highly of the kindness shown to her by the governor.[1]

[1] "The Last Piece of the Necklace," p. 26, note 1.

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Mme de la Tour, sister of Count de la Motte, had been set at liberty on the 7th February.

These vacancies were in part filled, for on the 12th May, the Baroness d'Oliva gave birth at the Bastille to a new little subject of the king. Baptised the day afterwards in the parish of Saint-Paul, he received the names of Jean-Baptiste Toussaint, his father: Jean-Baptiste-Eugéne Toussaint de Beaussire, having at once recognised him.

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XXXIII

THE VERDICT [1]

On 22nd May the Parliament began to sit, in order to hear the documents in the case read. La Grand Chambre and La Tournelle, assembled together, reckoned among their members sixty-four judges. The honorary counsellors and masters of requests who had a right to sit were all there, but the princes of the blood and peers stayed away. The Premier President of the Parliament was the Marquis Etienne-François Aligre, at the head of the Assembly since 1768. He was known, says that

[1] The facts of this chapter are from an official narrative dated 31st March, 1786, réserve in MS. at the National Archives; the manuscript notes of Target's dossier, Bibl. v. de Paris, réserve; the "Narrative of what took place in the Parliament relatively to the Affair of Cardinal de Rohan," Paris, 1786, small 8vo of 157 and 31 pages; the narrative of Mercier de Saint-Léger in Souvenirs and Memories, September, 1898, pp. 193-201; the notes sent to Prince Kaunitz by Count de Mercy-Argenteau, who had them from the Premier President d'Aligre, in the Arneth-Flammermont collection; "Correspondence of the Foreign Diplomatic Agents in France before the Revolution," published by J. Flammermont, Paris, 1896; the Letters of Mme de Sabran, the Memoirs of Mme Campan, the Journal of Hardy, the *Leyden Gazette*, and the Bachaumont.

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gossip Abbé Georgel, by his wealth, his avarice, and a special talent he possessed of putting out his money rapidly, at the highest rate of interest. "He had none of the qualities which a great magistrate should possess," says Beugnot. "He had, rather, the opposite defects; but he was singularly skilful in managing his assembly, and hitherto had shown himself favourable to the Court. But for some little time past it had displeased him; so that, without going against it himself, he allowed an opposition to be formed."

The Marquis d'Aligre was very intimate with Mercy-Argenteau, and furnished him in the course of the trial with the most curious notes as to the disposition of the different judges. The general opinion on the eve of the day when the prisoners were to appear before the Parliament is sketched as follows:

"In the course of the examination and as long as no one was accused but the Cardinal de Rohan and Mme de la Motte, her contumacious husband, the girl d'Oliva, and Cagliostro, it was possible to think (and indeed impossible not to do so) that the cardinal would be condemned to a severe and degrading punishment. The authorship of the forgery was uncertain; the agreement, covered with approvals and signatures, all forged, was in the cardinal's handwriting; he had exhibited it to the jewellers, and in the belief that the agreement was covered with approvals and signatures that were genuine the necklace had been delivered to him. The *corpus delicti*, in short, was with the cardinal.

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The deposition of Bassenge proved that the cardinal had always spoken and written as though he had a direct mission from the queen. The cardinal, moreover, had dictated a letter from which it appeared that at a moment when it was impossible for him not to know that the approvals and the signatures were forgeries, and that the instalments were not being paid, he had conceived the idea of substituting M. Sainte-James as the intending purchaser and of inducing him to undertake the purchase of the necklace, flattering himself that he could thus obtain the protection of the queen. This letter and the consequences resulting from it are perfectly in accord with the deposition of M. de Sainte-James.

"As long as the case remained in this state the cardinal's defence was worth nothing. In vain did he allege that he had been deceived and led away. The answer made to him was that the alleged deception was incredible, and certainly not proved. Mme de la Motte opposes a direct contradiction; the scene of the terrace (read 'grove') is fabulous. It is attested by the girl, Oliva; but her evidence is as untrustworthy as his own.

"Since, however, the arrest of Villette it has been established: 1st, that he is the author of the forgery; 2nd, that the scene of the girl Oliva is true; 3rd, that in order to lead away the cardinal he wrote under the dictation of Mme de la Motte different letters, which she sent to the cardinal as written by the queen.

"From this moment the assertion of the cardinal as to his having been led away seems proved. If he

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was led away, his offence is no longer forgery; it is an insult, a want of respect towards the sacred persons of the king and of the queen, a monstrous abuse of the name of the queen, and of a forged signature which he declared to be genuine.

"These considerations make one think that it is impossible to go so far as to declare his culpability, still less to condemn him to perpetual banishment, which carries with it civil death, and would involve the relinquishment of the consistorial benefices held by the cardinal."

To understand the verdict about to be given it must be remembered that there were at this time two different forms of acquittal: "Dismissal of the accusation" proclaimed the complete innocence of the prisoner—it was his full rehabilitation after the charges made against him; the "out of court" verdict, on the other hand, proclaimed that there were not enough proofs to establish the accusation. This verdict was not uninjurious for the person accused, and implied that his honour was no longer intact.

. . . . . .

The reading of the documents having been terminated on the 29th of May, the Parliament assembled on the 30th of May to hear the evidence by word of mouth. On the night of the 29th the prisoners had been transferred from the Bastille to the Conciergerie. The duties of procurator-general were fulfilled by Joly de Fluery, who read aloud his conclusions and demands.

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He demanded that the papers signed Marie-Antoinette de France be declared "fraudulently falsified;" against Count de la Motte he demanded a declaration of contumacy, and against Villette the galleys for life; against the Countess de la Motte public whipping, branding on the shoulders, and perpetual imprisonment at the Salpêtrière. As to the cardinal, the representative of the ministry demanded that within eight days he should present himself before the Grand Chamber to declare aloud that he had rashly accepted as genuine the appointment in the grove, that he had helped to lead the jewellers into error by allowing them to believe that the queen had knowledge of the agreement; to declare, moreover, that he repented of these things, and begged pardon of the king and of the queen; that he should, moreover, be condemned to resign all his appointments, to give alms to the poor, and to keep away throughout his life from the royal residences.

Joly de Fleury had drawn up his conclusions in opposition to the view of the advocate-general, to whom custom required that he should submit them. Scarcely had he finished, when Séguier rose. The violence of the scene which now followed showed to what a point passion was being carried. Séguier declared that the cardinal ought to be purely and simply acquitted, and turning towards Joly de Fleury, he added:

"On the point of descending to the grave, you wish to cover your ashes with ignominy and to make us magistrates share it."

"Your anger, sir, does not surprise me," answered

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the procurator-general. "A man given up to loose living, like you, must necessarily take the part of the cardinal."

"I sometimes go to see girls," replied Séguier. "I even leave my carriage at their doors. That is a private affair. But never have I been known to make a base traffic of my opinion."

The procurator-general could not say another word. He remained with his mouth open.

Rétaux de Villette opened the series of interrogatories. He appeared dressed in a coat of black silk. With the greatest frankness he avowed the part he had taken in the intrigues of Mme de la Motte. It was he who had traced the words "Marie-Antoinette de France" at the bottom of the famous agreement; but he had done it in good faith. In writing these words he made no attempt to imitate the signature of the queen, who, in fact, did not sign in this way. This man, who is very vicacious, went so far as to anticipate questions before they were fully put with the air and tone of the greatest exactitude.

Rétaux de Villette was succeeded by the Countess de la Motte. She wore a black bonnet trimmed with black "blonde" and bows of ribbon; a dress of lavender satin trimmed with black velvet, a sash of black velvet trimmed with steel buttons, and on her shoulders a mantle of embroidered muslin edged with Malines lace. She gazed at the assembly with a haughty eye. Her lips had a hard smile. When she perceived the prisoner's seat of ignominy, which the sergeants told her she was to occupy, she had a

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movement of repulsion and her face flushed. But she had soon arranged her dress with so much grace that she seemed to be in a drawing-room, sitting at ease on a couch. She spoke with a clear, dry, precise voice. The phrases seemed cut with a knife. She began by declaring that she was about to confound a great rogue. She meant the cardinal. Her presence of mind was astonishing. Questioned by a clerical counsellor, whom she knew not to be very favourable to her, she answered:

"That is a very insidious question. I know you, Monsieur l'Abbé, and was expecting you to put it. I will answer you."

"The woman La Motte," notes one of the persons present, "spoke with a tone of assurance and intrepidity, with the eye and countenance of a wicked woman prepared for anything; but she commanded attention because she speaks without any sign of embarrassment, trusting more to probabilities than to facts, and to the impossibility, above all, at this trial of exhibiting letters, documents, and all the material proofs that might be desired. I do not think this woman, though she has grace, distinction, and style, could have engaged anyone's sympathy, the case against her being too clear." Suddenly Jeanne changed her manner, and to a question concerning a pretended letter from the queen to the cardinal, she replied, "that she would maintain silence, not to offend the queen."

"Their Majesties," replied the president, "are above offence, and justice requires you to speak the whole truth." She then said "that the letter in

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question began with these words 'Je t'envoie,' adding that the cardinal had shown her more than two hundred letters from the queen, in which she addressed him with *tu* and *toi*, and that many of them made appointments, which, for the most part, the queen and Rohan had kept."

At these words there was a sort of clamour among the magistrates, although the majority of the judges belonged to the opposition. Such assertions shocked them as men and citizens, and they had difficulty in restraining their indignation when the countess, as she retired, made them a succession of bows with provoking and mocking smiles.

Scarcely had she gone out when the seat of ignominy, known as *la "sellette,"* was removed. Then the cardinal came in. He wore a long violet robe, cardinal's mourning; a red cap over his grey hair, red stockings and heels, and a little cloak of violet cloth lined with red satin; the blue watered silk of the order of the Holy Ghost, and the episcopal cross hanging from a chain of gold. He was very pale, very tired, very agitated, and his eyelids hung heavily over eyes of faded blue. His legs bent beneath him, and his cheeks were wet with tears. Several of the counsellors, "noticing his changed and suffering countenance," pointed out that he was unwell and must be offered a seat, and the Premier President made him sit down at one of the ends of the bench where the members of the examining commission were placed when they came to the Parliament. His interrogatory lasted more than two hours. "He spoke," said Mercier de Saint-Léger,

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"with much grace and power." He was impressive by his physiognomy and his aristocratic bearing; he was interesting from "his air of candour and his modest courage." As he retired he bowed to the court. His expression was full of lassitude and sadness. All the magistrates returned his bow. "The great bench even rose, which is a marked distinction."

The judges were still under the impression left by the cardinal, when Nicole d'Oliva was called. But the usher returned alone; the prisoner was giving the breast to her newly-born babe. She humbly prayed the Lords of the Parliament to be good enough to wait a few minutes until her son had finished his repast, and, in the words of the official record, "the Law was silent in the presence of Nature." The assembly hastened to reply that it granted the young mother all the time she thought necessary. At last she entered. The disorder of her very simple attire, her long chestnut hair escaping from her little round cap, together with her tears, her trouble, her charming *naïveté*, enhanced her beauty and her grace. M. de Bertignières, who had a gallery of pictures, was reminded of La Cruche Cassée, by Greuze, exhibited at one of the latest salons, and the Abbé Sabatier, his neighbour, to whom he mentioned this, shared his view. Scarcely had the pretty girl given signs of faintness than most of the members of the austere tribunal rose to receive her in their arms. She found it impossible to utter one single word in answer to the questions put to her, her sobs were choking her. All this was more than enough to

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convince the magistrates of her perfect innocence. She rose to withdraw "and was accompanied," says Mercier de Saint-Léger, "by marks of the liveliest interest."

At last Cagliostro appears, and here the scene changes. The alchemist is proud and triumphant in his coat of green silk embroidered with gold. He shakes with gaiety the tresses of his hair which falls in little tails over his shoulders. To the first question, "Who are you? and whence do you come?"

"I am an illustrious traveller," he replies in clarion tones, and the assembly breaks into a loud laugh.

Cagliostro does not wait for a second question. He at once begins a thundering improvisation, recounting the history of his life with its astounding features, and employing a jargon in which all known languages are mixed together—Latin, Italian, Greek, Arabic, and other tongues which never existed. His manner, his gestures, his vivacity, recall the veritable mountebank of the fair telling his wondrous tale to gaping yokels, and amuse the Parliament beyond measure. When the president adjourns the sitting he seems to be on the point of complimenting Cagliostro on his good humour and his ready wit.

Towards six o'clock the prisoners leave the court to go back to the Bastille. The carriages which take them have to be driven back through the Cour de Lamoignon. The names of the cardinal and of Cagliostro are called out with cries of enthusiasm which fill the air, and hopes for their liberation are

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shouted. The cardinal seems to be a little alarmed and bows with an air of constraint. Cagliostro, however, is in his element. He moves about, raises his arms, throws up his hat, which a thousand hands seek to catch, and entertains the crowd with all sorts of contortions.

. . . . . .

Wednesday, 31st March, was the day on which the verdict was to be given. The sitting opened at six in the morning, and from five o'clock all the passages of the court and all the neighbouring streets are crowded with people pressed closely together and agitated like the waves of the sea. The watch on foot and on horseback of the town guard moves about in the precincts of the court from the Pont Neuf to the Rue de la Barillerie. As early as five in the morning the members of the Rohan-Soubise and Lorraine families, men and women to the number of nineteen persons, including Mme de Marsan, Mme de Brionne, Prince Ferdinand, Archbishop of Cambrai, and Prince de Montbazon, have taken their places at the entrance to the Grand Chamber, dressed in mourning. Countess de Rochefort-Breteuil had not come, but she had sent word "that she had an attack of colic." Mme de Brionne had assumed her grand air. She had just left the Premier President, with whom she had had a terrible scene, telling him that everyone knew he was sold to the Court. Before long the magistrates appeared, and members of the Rohan-Soubise and Lorraine families bowed as they passed before them. They employed no solicitations

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but those of sullen silence in which their despair might be seen. This method of appeal, at once so noble and so touching on the part of two illustrious houses, made more impression on the judges than any eloquence could have done. The sitting was opened at six o'clock. Each counsellor explained aloud the reasons for his decision.

The Parliament began by declaring the word "approved" repeated six times in connection with each of the clauses of the agreement with the jewellers and the signature "Marie-Antoinette of France" falsely written and falsely attributed to the queen. Then on the part of a tribunal in which political passion already made itself felt, dividing the counsellors into hostile sides, it was declared by the unanimous vote of the sixty-four magistrates present that the Countess de Valois was guilty. With regard to the punishment, two of the magistrates, Robert de Saint-Vincent and Dionys du Séjour—others say MM. Delpech and Amelot—were for inflicting the penalty of death. This was a manœuvre on the part of the cardinal's friends. The penalty of death was not applicable; but to propose it was to compel the clerical counsellors to retire, their ecclesiastical character not permitting them to take part in a case where capital punishment might be involved. Now, among the thirteen clerical counsellors only two, the Abbé Sabatier and Terray, were favourable to Rohan. The number of the judges was thus reduced to forty-nine. They showed themselves of one mind in regard to a condemnation *ad omnia citra mortem*, that is to say, to the severest punish-

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ment next to that of death. Jeanne de Valois de Saint-Rémy, Countess de la Motte and de la Pénicière, was then condemned unanimously to be whipped naked by the executioner, marked on the shoulders with the letter V (voleuse), shut up at the Salpêtrière for the rest of her days, and deprived of all her property. Count de la Motte was condemned to the galleys for life, Rétaux to exile beyond the kingdom, while Nicole d'Oliva was put "out of court," which, as before said, was acquittal not without blame, "since," says the official record of the trial, "although substantiallv innocent, it was considered just that this stain should be imprinted on her for the purely material crime she had committed in substituting her own person for that of the queen in a scene of swindling. Cagliostro was dismissed from every charge."

The great battle between the two parties was delivered on the subject of the cardinal. The reporting counsellors, Titon de Villotran and Du Puis de Marcé, adopted the conclusions of the king's procurator. Boula de Montgodefroy, consulted the first as the senior member of the assembly, declared on the other hand for the cardinal's acquittal, pure and simple, and his dismissal from every charge. He had brought his conclusion ready drawn up. It was said that his nephew, treasurer of the great stable, had been threatened to have four horses taken from him if his uncle went against the cardinal. Robert de Saint-Vincent, violent enemy of the Court and a personal friend of Target, but a thoroughly honest man, spoke similarly in favour of an entire and

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complete dismissal from the charge, "speaking with power and eloquence, very long and very well, so that his words made a sensation." "It was to be regretted," he said, "for the whole body of the magistracy, that the conclusions of the king's procurator should ever have been uttered. In that case I should not have had to discuss the faults by which they are disgraced." Then raising his voice, he added, "since when have the ministerial decisions been accepted by our magistrates?" And as these words, which resounded for the first time in a French court of justice, raised some murmurs, "Yes, gentlemen," he exclaimed, "I said 'ministerial.' They come from no tribunal. They are not conclusions formed by a magistrate, they are too much opposed to law and good order; and never before did the Parliament hear any which were so little in conformity with its principles." And the orator attacked with vivacity all idea of pronouncing the slightest penalty against Prince de Rohan. He had been duped, cruelly duped; and the magistracy could not punish where good faith was quite undeniable.

Fréteau's view, noble and elevated, was expressed with an eloquence which, if somewhat cold, was not without feeling. That of d'Outremont was carefully reasoned, point by point, and set forth in so touching a manner that it drew tears from the eyes even of those who held a contrary opinion. "It is innocence, gentlemen, that I am defending, as a man and as a judge, and I am so thoroughly penetrated with my belief that I would allow myself to be hacked to pieces in maintaining it." The excellent reputation

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which d'Outremont enjoyed among his colleagues helped to make his view prevail. Bertignières spoke with wisdom and in a very logical manner.[1]

[1] Daily notes for the advocates of Cardinal de Rohan. Dossier MS. Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, réserve.

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XXXIV

POPULAR TRIUMPH

For the persons acquitted the evening was a triumphant one. An immense crowd surrounded the court. Loud calls of "Long live the Parliament! Long live the innocent cardinal!" resounded through the streets. The women of the fish-market assembled in groups in the May court with bouquets of roses and jasmines. They stopped the magistrates, who were pointed out to them, and obliged them, whether they would or not, to allow themselves to be clasped and embraced by strong arms against sturdy breasts.

The Marquis of Launey, governor of the Bastille, having received orders to reconduct Rohan to the prison of the king, the cardinal was escorted there by a crowd of over ten thousand persons, amidst a deafening tumult, and for more than an hour the walls of the fortress resounded with the acclamations of the populace.

"The judges dispersed," writes Cagliostro; "the verdict is given. It flies from mouth to mouth. The members of the Parliament, surrounded, pressed, applauded, are crowned with flowers. A universal acclamation rises, and the prelate, with his purple robes, is reconducted in triumph to the doors of the

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Bastille, which open to receive him, but which will soon open again to restore him to the wishes of a sympathetic public, which shares his glory after having shared his misfortunes."

People wished to illuminate, but the police forbade it.

"I don't know where the Parliament would have fled, if they had given an unjust judgment," said Mirabeau, who also shared the passions of the crowd. He added, thinking of the Court at Versailles: 'The trial is hard, but decisive." He concluded by these prophetic fears: "May other passions not take advantage of them!" The next day the cardinal and Cagliostro went out of the Bastille. The pen of Cagliostro has left an account of his deliverance, of which we must not spoil the flavour.

"I quitted the Bastille about half-past eleven in the evening. The night was dark, the quarter which I inhabited but little frequented. What was my surprise, then, to hear myself saluted by eight or ten thousand persons.[1] They forced open my door; the court-yard, the staircase, the rooms were all filled. I was carried right into the arms of my wife. My heart was not sufficient for all the feelings which strove for mastery in it. My knees gave way beneath me. I fell on the floor unconscious. My wife uttered a piercing cry and fainted. Our friends pressed around us, uncertain whether the most beautiful moment of our life would not be the last. The anxiety spread from one to the other, the noise of

[1] Confirmed by Hardy (1786) and by Bachaumont, xxxii. 84, 85.

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the drums was no longer heard. A sad silence had replaced the noisy joy. I recovered. A torrent of tears fell from my eyes, and I can at last without dying press to my heart—— I stop. Oh, you privileged beings to whom heaven makes the rare and terrible present of an ardent soul and a sensitive heart, you who know the delights of a first love, you alone can understand me; you alone can appreciate what after ten months of suffering is the first moment of happiness."

On 2nd June, in the early morning, around the palace of Rohan-Soubise, in the Rue Saint-Claude, the people formed a compact mass. Cagliostro was obliged to show himself on the terrace of the boulevards, and the cardinal, though in night-cap and a white vest, was obliged to appear at the windows of the Hôtel de Strasbourg, looking over the gardens. "Long live the Parliament! Long live the cardinal!" was the cry.

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XXXV

THE GRIEF OF THE QUEEN

WHILST around de Rohan and de Cagliostro all Paris resounded with cries of joy, this noisy hilarity had a sad opposite at Versailles. Vaguely the poor queen realised that it was not so much the victory of de Rohan as her defeat and humiliation that the people celebrated. How much had she fallen in their affection since the day when, as dauphine, on her husband's arm, she made her first visit to her dear Parisians, whose marks of enthusiasm and affection drew from her the touching letter which we have quoted.

"Is there no one, then," cries M. Labori, "to tell this implacable crowd that there are some crimes which are impossible, and that the Queen of France does not sell herself for a jewel?"[1]

"The king came in," writes Mme Campan, "and said: 'You will find the queen very unhappy. She has good reasons to be so. But what does it all mean? People only see in this affair a Prince of the Church and the Prince de Rohan, whilst it is really a needy man (I am using his own expression) seeking by desperate means to raise money, and in which the cardinal ends by getting swindled himself. Nothing

[1] Speech at the Conference of Lawyers, 26th November, 1888.

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is easier to understand, and it is not necessary to be Alexander to cut this Gordian knot.' The grief of the queen was extreme. She was in her boudoir and wept.

"'Come,' she said to me, 'come and pity your outraged queen, a victim of cabals and injustice. But, in my turn, I pity you as a Frenchwoman. If I have not found just judges in an affair *which* touched my character, what can you hope if you have a lawsuit which touches your fortune and your honour?'" And to her friend, the Duchess de Polignac, Marie-Antoinette wrote: "Come and weep with me, come and console my soul, my dear Polignac! The verdict which has just been given is a frightful insult. I am bathed in tears of grief and despair. I can be satisfied with nothing when perversity seems to search every means to agonise my soul. What ingratitude! But I will triumph over the wicked by tripling the good I have always tried to do. It is much easier for them to afflict me than to bring me to avenge myself on them. Come, my dear heart!"

The queen, and the king under the influence of the queen, never believed, and did not believe now, that the cardinal was innocent.

It is true that the whole trial ought to have been specially considered from one most important point. "The great fact," says, very justly, Beugnot, "which dominated the whole affair was this, that M. and Mme de la Motte had had the audacity to feign one night, in one of the groves of Versailles, the Queen of France. The wife of the king had

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made an appointment with Cardinal de Rohan, had spoken to him, had given him a rose, and had suffered the cardinal to throw himself at her feet. That was the crime which respect for religion, majesty, and morals outraged to the last degree could not but condemn."

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XXXVI

THE MAGISTRATES

The conclusions of Joly de Fleury, procurator-general, were assuredly just and moderate. But princes of the blood had taken part against the queen. Calonne was at the head of the ministry which had then the greatest power, the ministry of finance. He did not forgive Marie-Antoinette her endeavours to stop his advance to power, nor the severe manner in which she had summed him up: "A clever intriguer," she called him. He exercised in connection with the trial, all his activity, his influence, all the formidable means at his disposal. He was seconded by his friend, the clever and intelligent Lenoir, king's librarian, who had quitted the lieutenancy of police, 30th July, 1785, and who attributed his departure to the queen. He was seconded by the family of Maurepas, who did not forget that Marie-Antoinette, when this minister returned to power at the accession of Louis XVI., had supported with all his ardour the candidature of Choiseul. Mercy-Argenteau, who had long been on intimate terms with the Premier President d'Aligre, so well acquainted with his assembly, sent to Kaunitz a very interesting notice on the motives of the magistrates who had shown themselves favourable to Rohan.

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"Without the help of intrigue and plenty of money, the cardinal would not have got off without a slur. The levity and indiscretion of people in this country had made it easier to know how the different judges voted and with what motives."

The President de Lamoignon, who occupied in Parliament a high position, and always influenced by his opinion Presidents Saron and de Saint-Fargeau; also M. de Glatigny was the personal friend of Lenoir, who had introduced him to the comptroller-general. President de Gilbert was devoted to Calonne, who had bought from him for the king his estate of Saint-Etienne; and President Lepeletier, of Rosambo, who was ruined, "was constantly applying to the finance department for money." Boula de Montgodefroy had a nephew who was under this same comptroller-general. Oursin was a cousin of Lenoir and quite devoted to Calonne, as was also Pasquier, who wanted the comptroller to remit the dues which his son had to pay for a government appointment. Delpech was a friend of Calonne's, and Barillon—who could generally be counted upon to influence Counsellor Le Pileur—was soliciting the comptroller to remit his capitation tax, which he had not paid for several years.

On the other side, Counsellor d'Outremont was devoted to the Countess de Brionne, aunt of the cardinal, and M. de Guillaume "received benefits from the house of Rohan." D'Outremont influenced Counsellor Langlois. M. de Jonville was attached to the Soubise family, the Maurepas family had secured Amelot, and Target, the advocate of the cardinal who

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occupied the first place at the Paris bar, had among his personal friends, Bertignières, Saint-Vincent, and Fréteau, who influenced Counsellor Lambert. As for MM. Héron de la Michodière, Dubois, and Duport, since we have no information as to the motives which prompted their action, let us try to think that they judged according to their conscience.

Valuable information! People have never ceased to blame Marie-Antoinette for the administration of Calonne. This frivolous and prodigal financier is looked upon as the fit minister of a queen wild for pleasure, extravagant, and light-minded.

> "Ce n'est pas Calonne que j'aime,
> C'est l'or qu'il n'épargne pas."

> "I do not look on Calonne as my friend;
> I only like the gold he lets me spend."

was the burden of the street song.

It is true that Marie-Antoinette opposed Calonne's entry into the government, and that she did not cease to manifest the contempt she felt for him: what of that?

From the first day, Calonne pursued the queen with venomous hatred; until the last moment he was eager for her destruction: what does that matter?

And such was the absolute power of the monarchy under the ancient régime. We take this example because it is here before us. The honour of the queen is at stake. The crown may be affected. The king entrusts the decision of the case to a tribunal in which not one judge is of his nomination; to magistrates over whom he has no power, and for whom he can do nothing at any step of

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their career, in any way; to magistrates, who by spirit and by tradition are hostile to him. As Beugnot shows, the king's own procurator is not freely chosen by the king. But much more than that, here is even the comptroller-general, assisted by the librarian of the king, presiding over his financial council, with the money of the king, with the posts and pensions of the king, under the eye of the king—who combats directly under such grave circumstances the interest of the king and his authority. No one is astonished at it. Is there any government in the present day which would have the courage to allow such liberties beneath its very eyes? Meanwhile the people sang:

> "Si cet arrêt du cardinal
> Vous paraissait trop illégal,
> Sachez que la *finance*,
> Eh bien!
> Dirige tout en France:
> Vous m'entendez bien?
>
> "Si ces Messieurs du Parlement
> Ont déboursé beaucoup d'argent
> Pour acheter leur charge:
> Eh bien!
> Il revient pour *décharge*,
> Vous m'entendez bien?"

And from the neighbouring street, close to the cardinal's palace, came, like an echo, the following:

> "Mais le pape, moins honnête,
> Pourrait dire à ce nigaud:
> Prince, à qui n'a point de tête
> Il ne faut point de chapeau!"
>
> "The Pope to Rohan should have said:
> 'You've shown yourself a perfect flat!
> You cardinal without a head,
> Send back to Rome your scarlet hat.'"

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XXXVII

ORDERS OF EXILE

The sadness which Marie-Antoinette was unable to conceal after the decision of the Parliament showed how much she felt it. She declared herself offended, and by doing so made it an offence. With secret joy the people of the Court, the innumerable rivals of the Polignacs, offered to the queen the expression of their sympathy. A queen whom a judicial decision can affect is already no longer a queen.

Louis XVI., after having committed two faults—making public the Affair of the Necklace and then submitting it to the Parliament—went on to commit a third. Policy commanded him to accept the decision with good grace, saying, "No one is more pleased than I am at the innocence of the cardinal having been established." But to satisfy the queen, who was nervous and irritated, he ordered Baron de Breteuil to carry to the prince a *lettre de cachet* which exiled him to his Abbey of Chaise-Dieu in Auvergne, commanding him at the same time to resign all his functions and dignities at Court. Rohan received his enemy on 2nd June, and made him a haughty reply. He will obey the king who sends him into exile, but he has not awaited his Majesty's orders to send in the resignation of his

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offices, which had reached Versailles that morning.[1] Rohan started on Monday, 5th June, in a carriage and six, accompanied by his brother the Archbishop of Cambrai, and his young secretary, Ramon de Carbonnières; he was followed by another carriage and six, and by five coaches carrying his luggage and a numerous following of servants.

La Chaise-Dieu was an abbey of Benedictines, where Rohan arrived on 10th June. The Dutch newspapers at once published a description of it: "Situated on the banks of the river Lenoire, La Chaise-Dieu is well built between two hills crowned by lofty mountains. In winter it is surrounded by masses of snow. It serves as refuge for travellers who have lost their way, to whom the bell calls from four o'clock in the morning until eight at night, and who receive from the monks the most affectionate hospitality. Forty Benedictines attended by some forty servants await in the most agreeable comfort, in the most perfect security, in the most unchangeable happiness, the approach of death."[2] These charming descriptions did not prevent the nobility from crying out once more against royal tyranny. Mme de Marsan threw herself at the feet of the queen to obtain for the cardinal, who had a bad knee, some other place of residence than one which his friends described as "frightfully unhealthy."

"The cardinal must submit to the king's orders," said the queen. "This refusal," replied Mme de

[1] The office of Grand Almoner was given to the Bishop of Metz, Laval de Montmorency.

[2] *Utrecht Gazette*, 23rd June, 1786.

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Marsan, "makes me understand how disagreeable my person must be to your Majesty. It is the last time that I have the honour of appearing before you."

"I shall regret it, madam."

Mme de Marsan then went to the king and endeavoured to move him by reminding of the care with which she had brought him up. Louis XVI. answered that he felt very grateful to her, but that for the moment he could make no alteration in the cardinal's punishment.

Rohan as a man of brains soon made himself at home in his new situation. The canons of the noble chapter of Brioude came and offered him their most valuable furniture. His monks, who had never seen him and who detested him for the very reason of his absence, finding him always amiable and good-humoured, formed an affection for him. He was passing his days in happy tranquillity when his relations and friends succeeded in obtaining for him another place of exile, the Benedictine Abbey of Noirmoutiers near Tours. Louis de Rohan went there towards the end of September.

Cagliostro received the same day as the cardinal an "order of relegation." He was exiled from the kingdom with his wife. A few days were granted him to put his affairs in order. He retired to Passy, whence he started on 13th June for Boulogne-sur-Mer, and on the 16th embarked for England. Rétaux de Villette remained at the Conciergerie. He had feared the galleys, and was quite delighted at the fate reserved for him. Accordingly, during his

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last days at the Conciergerie he entertained the prisoners with his violin, which he played in perfection. The property and money which he had deposited on entering the Bastille were returned to him. On 21st June his brother, president of the electors of Bar-sur-Aube, called to take him away. Maître Jaillant-Deschainaits, who had defended Villette before the Parliament, entertained them to dinner in the evening, and a few days afterwards the gallant secretary of Mme de la Motte took road for Italy. It will be remembered with what brutal abruptness Inspector Quidor had checked one of Villette's earlier pleasure tours. Later on at Venice, dreamily wandering among pretty girls with showy dresses along the dark canals, Villette composed and published in 1790 a "History of the Necklace";[1] a history of his own manufacture, in reality an abominable libel, in which he collects or invents against the queen and Mme Polignac the dirtiest and most disgraceful calumnies.

. . . . . .

As to Nicole d'Oliva, such had been the success of her grace and charm that young men made her offers from every side. She first gave the preference to her advocate, Maître Blondel, and went to stay at his house, Rue Beaubourg; but her health had been affected. She had been agitated by too many emotions, poor girl, for some months past. Country

[1] "Historical Memoirs of Court Intrigues and of what took place between the Queen, Mme de la Motte, and the Count d'Artois."

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air was recommended to her, and she was received at her guardian's in the village of Passy. Abbé Georgel cannot contain his indignation.

"On her leaving prison," he writes, "there appeared, to the shame of our morals, several rivals anxious to marry her." Nicole's choice fell upon the father of her little Jean-Baptiste, born in the Bastille, and on 24th April, 1787, she married, at the church of Saint-Roch, Jean-Baptiste-Eugéne Toussaint de Beaussire, son of the king's lieutenant at the salt magazine.

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XXXVIII

BETTE D'ETIENVILLE AS A NOVELIST

Meanwhile Bette d'Etienville, citizen of Saint-Omer, was waiting in the prison of the Châtelet for his difference with the watchmakers Loque and Vaucher and with other tradespeople to be settled by the judges. At the beginning of July it had at last been found possible to lay hands on his friend Baron de Fages, against whom a warrant had been issued by the lieutenant of police for more than eight months. He had been brought to the gardens of the Palais-Royal—everything was then done at the Palais-Royal—by a promise to introduce him to someone who wished to do him a service. De Fages was locked up at the Conciergerie, and sentence was passed at the Châtelet on the 23rd January, 1789. D'Etienville and de Fages were both publicly blamed; d'Etienville having, moreover, to pay a fine of three livres, while de Fages was ordered to pay three livres in the form of alms to the poor prisoners. Dom Mulot was only admonished, while the Count de Précourt was dismissed from every accusation. The tribunal, moreover, declared d'Etienville and de Fages to be debtors to the tradesmen for the goods they had received, with authority to the tradesmen to arrest them. Finally, the statements published by

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the two confederates were to be destroyed. The citizen of Saint-Omer and his friend, the baron, got off—considering everything—on good terms. They appealed, all the same, to the Parliament, which dismissed them from the infliction of the fines. The affair was thus brought from a criminal into a civil court, and the two friends had only to deal with the bills of the tradesmen whom they had swindled with so much grace and good humour.

As d'Etienville had gained a good sum of money by his statements—he had published three, one after another, and his advocate did not give away one single copy gratuitously—he was able to pay the tradespeople at least in part, and was set at liberty. Baron de Fages petitioned for the same advantage: and, as the jewellers Loque and Vaucher failed to comply with some legal requirements, de Fages in his turn was set free.

At the beginning of the Revolution the two inseparable companions were re-imprisoned for debt, "with a pension of rather more than eight *sous* (eight sols four deniers) per day." They addressed a petition to the National Assembly, "which owes to itself the duty of abolishing bodily arrest." [1] The petition was referred to the Committee on *Lettres de Cachet*. The terrible days of September find de Fages and d'Etienville at the Hôtel de la Force, but they escape death and are set free. Baron de Fages returned to his domicile in the Rue du Bac, marché Boulainvilliers, where a denunciation was soon to reach him. An anonymous letter, dated 26th

[1] Arch. Nat., D. V. 3/37, 18.

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Ventôse (An. II.)—16th February, 1794—had described him to the Brutus section of the Revolutionary Committee of Surveillance as a "former noble and former member of the body-guard of the former Monsieur."

"It seems, and there can be no doubt," says the anonymous writer "that he must be leagued with traitors, for he had conversations with my wife and my mother-in-law, in which the conspiracy referred to was mentioned." The letter concluded: "You have now the necessary information for making known to you an ungrateful man, without honour, an idler, and, to say everything in one word, a noble of the past."[1]

This was very grave. The denunciation was transmitted from the Brutus section to the Fontaine de Grenelle section; but when it arrived there it was no longer anonymous. The members of the committee had all countersigned the declarations of an unknown person, whose testimony it had been impossible to verify. What was the result? Was Baron de Fages guillotined or not?

Bette d'Etienville had better luck. Notwithstanding two additional imprisonments, at Besançon in 1793, and Champlite in 1794, he had had the ingenious idea of collecting in six small volumes the thirty-four principal Statements and other documents in the Affair of the Necklace[2] The collection met

[1] Arch. Nat., F^7, /4703.

[2] "Complete Collection of all the Statements which have appeared in the Famous Affair of the Necklace, with all the Secret Documents which relate to it, and which have

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with success, and its sale brought in money. The statements which he had himself drawn up for the trial—auctor et actor—had revealed to him his talent as a writer. And he drew upon his fertile imagination to enrich French literature with a whole series of novels, each in two or three volumes: "The Sacrifices of Love," "The Marchioness's Prejudice," "Pauline, or the Happy Effects of Virtue," "Pulchérie, or the Supposed Assassination," "Rosamond, or Filial Devotion," "The Asylum of Infancy," "The Heroism of Love," and "The Triumph of Truth." The novels were also received with favour, several of them were found in the library of Marie-Antoinette. "The Marchioness's Prejudice" had the honour of going through several editions. In 1790, d'Etienville brought out a journal, the *Philanthropist*, in which he displayed the purest revolutionary humanitarianism. He afterwards became—who would have guessed it?—the administrator-general of the Agricultural Bank. Poor agriculturists! It was not indeed long before the bank went into bankruptcy, and seals were placed on the papers of the retired novelist.

He was accused of "having endeavoured by means of false promises and hopes of chimerical profits to deceive the public and to cheat the shareholders of their money." But once more the tribunals

not appeared." Paris, 1786. Six volumes in eighteen. Each pamphlet has its special pagination. The date 1786 is that of the first edition of the documents and not of this republication. Notwithstanding the assertion in the title, the collection is not complete.

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acquitted him.[1] Is it astonishing that, with such a favourable experience of the administration of justice, d'Etienville should have undertaken the reform of French legislation? He shed light on this grave subject in 1819, in his "Letter to the French." Then, in 1825, he wished to found a university of the mechanical arts, and he finished his career in 1826 by a dissertation on the "Inviolability of Property," He perhaps ought to have begun it by putting into practice his newly-adopted principle. He ended his days in frightful poverty, after writing lamentable letters begging for assistance as an "old man of letters."[2]

. . . .

They came to a sad end, these gay companions, these children of Bohemia. Without overlooking their faults, let us thank them with a smile for having enlivened our story with their rich escapades. Bette d'Etienville, citizen of Saint-Omer, "living like a gentleman on his own property," Baron de Fages-Chaulnes, true Gascon, Count de Précourt, knight of Saint-Louis, "who had taken part in two naval engagements, three battles, five sieges, more than twenty charges and encounters, and who had been through all the Polish war, where he commanded," without forgetting Dom Mulot, regular canon of Saint-Victor, would have been worthy of being associated under the pen of Lesage with Gil Blas de Santillane, or of animating with their surprising conceits the comedies of a Regnard.

[1] *Moniteur Universel*, 7th March, 8th April, 1797.
[2] Bette d'Etienville died at Paris in 1830.

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XXXIX

THE EXECUTION OF THE SENTENCE[1]

WE left Mme de la Motte at the Conciergerie, ignorant of her arrest. There the porter and his wife, a worthy pair, took good care of her. When she heard that the cardinal had been acquitted she fell into a paroxysm of rage. Her limbs trembled; she bruised her face till it was covered with blood.

The magistrates had fixed the date for carrying out the sentence for the 13th, but it did not take place. And the news-writers put it about that the countess would be pardoned by the king; that the Court was ashamed of the iniquity already perpetrated; that the queen blushed to allow the ruin of an innocent woman—her victim. At present the wind blows from a fixed quarter against her.

[1] Account by the librarian, Nicholas Ruault, an eye-witness; a manuscript in the collection of Alf. Bégis; Hardy's Journal for the 21st June, 1786; Mme de Sabran's correspondence, 21st June, 1786; Account of the Execution of the Sentence Pronounced on Mme de la Motte, and Other Persons Convicted in the Affair of the Diamond Necklace, s. l., 1786, published in 8vo of eight pages, (this is the reprint of Paris correspondence dated the 21st June, published in the *Leyden Gazette* of the 28th June, 1786); *Utrecht Gazette*, 22nd June, 1786; *Le Bachaumont*, 22nd June, 1786; *Amsterdam Gazette*, 30th June, 1786; Mercier de Saint-Léger, *loc. cit.*, pp. 200, 201; "Life of Jeanne de Saint-Rémy," t. ii.

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Whatever the queen may do or may not do, whatever may happen, the wind blows dead against her.

On the 19th it became known that the king's procurator had decided to carry out the sentence. Next day an immense crowd thronged the court-yards of the palace and its vicinity. The windows of the neighbouring houses were let at exorbitant rates. Stands were erected. But the day passed without the portals of the Conciergerie opening for Jeanne de Valois, and the loafers who had been standing for hours had to go home disappointed. The lieutenant-general of police was alarmed at the influx of the populace.

The magistrates, the barristers for the defence, were overwhelmed with applications. Everybody wished to know exactly when the sentence would be carried out; everybody wished to be present. "I ask you this," writes the Duc de Crillon to Maître Target, "as I would ask a favour in the most important crisis in my life, though it is only a sick woman's craving. The point is to see another scourged with the rods prepared for her."[1]

On Wednesday, 21st June, at five in the morning, Jeanne de Valois was waked by the concierge. She refused to get up, supposing that she was again to be taken into court. She would answer no more of her judge's questions. After much persuasion, however, she consented to put on a petticoat and underjacket and a pair of stockings. When she reached the threshold of the Court of May, four

[1] Published in "Un Avocat du XVIIIe Siècle," containing the speech of Maître Boulloche on Target. Paris, 1893.

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huge executioners, assisted by two serving-men, seized her, tied her hands, and carried her to the foot of the grand staircase. Maître Breton, recorder to the Parliament, ordered her to kneel down to hear her sentence. She changes colour. A flood of abuse bursts from her lips. She bites those who come near her, rends her garments, tears her hair. The executioners are obliged to force her on her knees by pressing their hands on her shoulders, and one of them striking her heavily behind the knees, they manage to hold her more or less in this position while the sentence is read. When the recorder reached the passage which said that she was to be whipped and branded, her fury burst forth. "It is the blood of the Valois that you outrage," and in a tremble, addressing the bystanders whom the ceremony had collected, "Will you suffer a descendant of your kings to be treated thus? Rescue me from these murderers!" Her shrieks were so terrible that they were heard throughout the palace. She vomited abuse against the Parliament, the cardinal, and even a name more sacred still. She wished to be decapitated. Then she fell into a sort of collapse, from which she recovered on hearing that her property was confiscated.

Executions usually took place about noon. No one in Paris had counted on such an early hour. The stands were empty and the shutters closed. But two or three hundred persons drawn from the neighbourhood were there, and looked on Jeanne with mingled feelings of horror and pity. Others, farther off, were crowding against the doors of the great rail-

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ings which had just been closed. Two urchins had clambered along the bars and clung hooked on to the moulded fleur-de-lis. Jeanne refused to undress. She fought like a lioness, with hands, feet, and teeth, so that her clothing, down to her chemise, had to be cut away. The cord was fastened round her neck. Some strokes of the rod were laid across her shoulders, marbling them with bars of red. At that moment she escaped from the iron grasp that held her and rolled in terrible convulsions upon the ground. The executioner had to follow her as she rolled. When they were about to brand her on the shoulders with the letter V she was lying prone upon the stones of the court-yard, her whole body exposed to view. The delicate flesh smokes under the red-hot iron. A light-blue vapour rises amid the dishevelled hair. Her bloodshot eyes seem to start from their sockets, her lips writhe in a terrible grimace. Her whole body was so convulsed that the letter V was branded the second time, not on her shoulder, but "on her lovely bosom," writes the librarian Ruault. Jeanne gave a last convulsive bound. She fell on the shoulder of one of the executioners, and found strength enough to bite him through his clothing and draw blood. Then she fainted.

A public vehicle took her, together with a prison official and two police-officers, to the Salpêtrière. On the way she tried to throw herself out of the window.

After bathing her grimed and lacerated face with eau de Cologne, and gently gathering her hair under a little round hood, the prison sister staunched her wounds. She puts on her a very worn, soft cotton

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chemise, and revives her with warm soup with a little bread soaked in it. Her gold "de Mirza" earrings are taken from her. They are weighed, and the Sieur Louis—secretary to the Academy of Surgery, who happened to be at the hospital—offers twelve louis for them. At this moment Jeanne recovers her wits.

"Twelve louis! why, that is sarcely the value by weight."

A bargain is struck for eighteen louis, which Sieur Louis takes from his pocket.

Then Jeanne is led to prison. She has assigned to her one of the six-and-thirty little private cells six feet square, a favour for which she is indebted to the female prisoner who consented for her sake to give up her cell and go into the common dormitory, where the female prisoners sleep six in a bed, for these poor wretches mostly have to share the same mattress, and do not attain the privilege of having one for themselves except by seniority, which means a considerable time; so that the sacrifice made by this poor girl was of the greatest. Ere noon a posse of police assembled in the Place de Grève, and fixed upon the notice-board erected for the purpose the placard announcing to the passer-by the sentence to penal servitude for life upon the galleys incurred by M. le Comte de la Motte. On 4th September were sold by order of the exchequer at Bar-sur-Aube, Rue Saint-Michael, the furniture, effects, plate, and jewellery of the count and countess. This was the ending of the "supplement to the Arabian Nights."

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XL

THE BILL FOR THE NECKLACE

The cardinal's first care, when he could turn his mind to settling his affairs, was to find means for making good to the jewellers Böhmer and Bassenge the wrong they had undergone. These two merchants had behaved very ill towards him during the trial. They had seen that the necklace being scattered and the La Mottes without means, their claim would become valueless unless it were endorsed by the cardinal upon the strength of his immense revenues. Accordingly, in their depositions they endeavoured their utmost to inculpate Prince Louis by accusing him of having come to them with a direct commission from the queen to buy the necklace. "They make me call myself a direct agent," exclaimed the cardinal to Maître Target; "they make me say I was writing to the queen, though I have proved that all along they believed in a third person as an intermediary."

"We shall have to challenge Bassenge's evidence," notes Target. "He should be plaintiff, not a witness. His evidence is too open to suspicion, since interest is the test of human action. This axiom—though not without exception—applies in this case, especially to men in trade. The behaviour of this man is clearly shown; how he tries in his

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deposition to flatter the cardinal, and how he tries to fix the blame on him. We must pick this deposition to pieces to make it fail."

Questioned separately, Böhmer and Bassenge, who were both lying, contradicted one another. Böhmer, aware of this, then said he had a very poor memory. He would answer no more questions and would accept whatever his partner said.[1]

Vergennes, who had asked the jewellers for their authority to recover legally in London the diamonds taken from the necklace, received from Böhmer the following reply, dated 4th October, 1785:[2]

"My Lord,—I have not found it possible to comply with the request made to me, in your name, to claim or recover by legal proceedings in London some diamonds which must have formed part of the grand necklace which I delivered to Mgr. le Cardinal de Rohan as the agent charged by the queen to purchase them. As neither my partner nor myself have dealt in the matter of this sale with the Count and Countess de la Motte, we therefore cannot prefer any claim against them, and have no ground upon which it could be based. We are advised by counsel that it rests with Mgr. le Cardinal de Rohan to give you the necessary authority, since it is he that must have delivered the necklace to the Countess de la Motte.

(Signed) BOHMER."

The jewellers were supported by Sainte-James,

[1] Dossiers of Böhmer and Target, Bibl. v. de Paris, MSS. de la réserve.

[2] Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve, dossier Böhmer.

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whose interest was identical with theirs, as he had still to recover the eight hundred thousand livres he had advanced to purchase the diamonds. But when confronted with the cardinal the financier was ashamed and retracted.

Without waiting for the decision of Parliament, which would release from liability to the Böhmer's by proclaiming his innocence and declaring him to have been the victim of a swindle, Prince Louis, with his characteristic generosity and nobility of mind, had determined to indemnify the jewellers for the loss they had suffered. His Abbey of Saint-Vaast yielded him an income of three hundred thousand livres. He offered to make over this income to the jewellers until they were indemnified in full, and besides this a lien on all his fortune as guarantee. Böhmer and Bassenge estimated that this was not enough.

From the very first the queen had had the Böhmers informed that she took them under her protection. "Her Majesty, the queen," they write to Breteuil, "obeying only the impulse of her generous and sympathetic heart, has carried her kindness so far as personally to assure us that we shall not suffer, that our necklace will either be paid for or be returned."

The jewellers take advantage of this kindness to notify Breteuil that they cannot accept the cardinal's proposals:

Firstly, Because he wishes to reduce the debt from one million six hundred thousand to one million four hundred thousand livres. It has been seen that they had previously agreed to this reduction.

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Secondly, Because if the cardinal died before the debt had been extinguished, a new owner would succeed to the abbey revenues of Saint-Vaast, and they would lose the balance. Moreover, is not Prince Louis's property already so burdened that its sale would not yield enough to pay the mortgages? The Böhmers expect to be especially favoured. And this expectation was realised.

On 15th December, 1782, before Maître Margantin, notary in Paris, a deed was signed whereby the cardinal acknowledged himself indebted to the jewellers to the amount of one million nine hundred and nineteen thousand eight hundred and ninety-two livres. This included for interest three hundred and nineteen thousand eight hundred and ninety-two livres over and above the one million six hundred thousand livres for which they originally stipulated. The amount was payable out of the revenues of Saint-Vaast, quarterly, on and after the 1st April, through Joseph Liger, the cardinal's agent for the said revenue, at the rate of two hundred and twenty-five thousand livres per annum. The last of the stipulated payments would thus be made on 1st January, 1795. And the king by special grace declared that the payments should continue to be made out of the rents of Saint-Vaast until the debt was liquidated, even if the cardinal should die before this was done. The Böhmers made over half their bond to Sainte-James in settlement of the debt of eight hundred thousand livres and interest, and half[1] to Nicolas-

[1] Exactly £900,602.

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Gabriel Deville, secretary to the king, for ready money. Sainte-James was to be paid the first.

Joseph Liger, the cardinal's land-agent, paid over the following sums: On 1st July, 1786, to Böhmer and Bassenge, fifty-six thousand two hundred and fifty francs; from 1st October, 1786, to 1st April, 1787, to Sainte-James, as the jewellers' creditor, one hundred and fifty-eight thousand five hundred and ninety francs. At this time Sainte-James became a bankrupt, and Liger handed over another sum of four hundred and five thousand and seventy francs to Sainte-James's creditors. A last payment of fifty thousand francs was made by Liger on 9th February, 1790. The total amount of the sums received from Liger by the Böhmers, or their representatives, was six hundred and sixty-nine thousand nine hundred and ten francs. Then supervened the confiscating of church property by the revolutionary government, and consequently suspension of rental at Saint-Vaast. Deville, to cover himself, lost no time in sequestrating all the property of the Böhmers, and also the fortune of Mme Böhmer, who had become security for her husband. Moreover, the Revolution put an end to all jewellery business. The Böhmers were ruined, and from thenceforward they besieged the National Assembly with petitions. Forgetful of their declaration that they had no claim against the La Mottes, they asked to be indemnified from the proceeds of the sale of their estates. They ask that the cardinal's private property be sold; his furniture and family possessions, which could not be confiscated as church pro-

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perty. They prefer claims upon his property on the other side of the Rhine, which was beyond the clutch of the Revolution. It has been safeguarded in the treasury of the Grand Duke of Baden, and thither they carry their demand. They clamour for payment from the king and queen, from the queen with threats. They demand settlement by the National Exchequer of a sacred debt which even the decrees of the National Assembly have guaranteed to them.[1]

Böhmer had sold his post of jeweller to the crown.[2] He died at Stuttgart on 18th September, 1794. His widow married his partner, Paul Bassenge.[3] They left one son, sole heir to the joint claim—Henry Alexander Bassenge. He made an attack upon the representatives of Liger. "In vain did Liger's heirs invoke the sequestration laid in 1790 on the property of Saint-Vaast: words are not deeds and sequestration is not settlement. What though, amidst a too-stormy revolution, the Sieur Liger, through stress of circumstances, was evicted from his stewardship by circumstances over which he had no control; what though he retained it only in part; what though,

[1] These facts and quotations are from the jewellers' petition to the National Assembly (December, 1790, Arch. Nat., F^7/4445, B) and from the Böhmer dossier (Bibl. v. de Paris, MS. de la réserve).

[2] 31st December, 1789, Böhmer obtains permission to sell his post of jeweller to the crown to Menière, a jeweller in the service of the Garde Meuble de la Couronne. Arch. Nat., O^1/204.

[3] Böhmer had married Catherine Renaud (contract dated on 23rd June, 1768, before Maître Semillard, in Paris). Catherine was married again to Paul Bassenge at Bâle on the 28th July, 1796. She died at Dresden on the 12th September, 1806.

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from his relations with the cardinal, he fell under the scythe of the Revolution, it would not necessarily follow that his heirs would be suffered to retain wealth and fortune, nay, even the bread and the last farthing of the orphan whose sole support to-day is in the dole of the charitable.

"If Liger's death was revolutionary, Böhmer and Bassenge died of chagrin and distress, bequeathing to the writer nothing but public charity for his inheritance."

On 28th February, 1820, the Duke Louis de Riario Sforza, colonel of cavalry, as representing Henry Alexander Bassenge, laid claim to the property left by the cardinal which had been disposed of in the treasury of the Grand Duke of Baden. And on the 21st August, 1843, the first chamber of the civil court of the Seine had still to determine the claims of representatives of Nicolas Deville in a suit for settlement of the debt for the Diamond Necklace, brought against Prince Armand de Rohan-Rochefort, the heir of Charlotte-Louise Dorothée de Rohan-Rochefort, the heiress of Prince Louis de Rohan.[1]

[1] *Gazette des Tribunaux*, 2nd September, 1843.

THE END

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