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THE CORRESPONDENCE
OF
MADAME PRINCESS PALATINE,
MARIE-ADÉLAÏDE DE SAVOIE,
AND
MADAME DE MAINTENON.

VERSAILLES EDITION

*Limited to Eight Hundred Numbered Sets, of which
this is*

No. —



“Madame”

THE CORRESPONDENCE
OF
MADAME, PRINCESS PALATINE,
MOTHER OF THE REGENT;
OF
MARIE-ADÉLAÏDE DE SAVOIE,
DUCHESS OF BOURGOGNE;
AND OF
MADAME DE MAINTENON,
IN RELATION TO SAINT-CYR.

PRECEDED BY INTRODUCTIONS FROM C.-A. SAINTE-BEUVE.

Selected and Translated

BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY.

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CORRESPONDENCE OF MADAME,

ÉLISABETH-CHARLOTTE, PRINCESS PALATINE,
MOTHER OF THE REGENT.

INTRODUCTION BY C.-A. SAINTE-BEUVE.

“I am very frank and very natural, and I say all that I have in my heart.” That is the motto that ought to be placed upon the correspondence of Madame, which was chiefly written in German and published from time to time in voluminous extracts at Strasburg and beyond the Rhine. This correspondence, translated by fragments, was made into a volume and called, very improperly, the “Memoirs of Madame.” Coming after other memoirs of the celebrated women of the great century, it ran singularly counter to them in tone, and caused great surprise. Now that the Memoirs of Saint-Simon have been published in full, I will not say that the pages of the chronicle we owe to Madame have paled, but they have ceased to astonish. They are now recognized as good, naïve pictures, somewhat forced in colour, rather coarse in feature, exaggerated and grimacing at times, but on the whole good likenesses. The right method for judging of Madame’s correspondence, and thus of gaining insight to the history of that period, is to see how Madame wrote, and in what spirit; also what she herself was by nature and by education. For this purpose the letters published by M. Menzel in German, and translated by M. Brunet, are of great assistance to a knowledge of this singular and original personage; to understand her properly it is not too much to say that Germany and France must be combined.

Élisabeth-Charlotte, who married in 1671 Monsieur, brother of Louis XIV., was born at Heidelberg in 1652. Her father, Charles-Louis, was that Elector of the Palatinate who was restored to his States by the Peace of Westphalia. From childhood Élisabeth-Charlotte was noted for her lively mind, and her frank, open, vigorous nature. Domestic peace had never reigned about the hearth of the Elector-Palatine; he had a mistress, whom he married by the left hand, and the mother of Élisabeth-Charlotte is accused of having caused the separation by her crabbed temper. The young girl was confided to the care of her aunt Sophia, Electress of Hanover, a person of merit, for whom she always retained the feelings and gratitude of a loving daughter. To her she addressed her longest and most confidential letters, which would certainly surpass in interest those that are published, but M. Menzel states that it is not known what became of them. All that part of the life and youth of Madame would be curious and very useful to recover. “I was too old,” she says, “when I came to France to change my character; the foundations were laid.” While subjecting herself with courage and resolution to the duties of her new position she kept her German tastes; she confesses them and proclaims them before all Versailles and all Marly; and the Court, then the arbiter of Europe, to which it set the tone, would certainly have been shocked if it had not preferred to smile.

From Marly after forty-three years’ residence in France, Madame writes (November 22, 1714): “I cannot endure coffee, chocolate, or tea, and I do not understand how any one can like them; a good dish of sauerkraut and smoked sausages is, to my mind, a feast for a king, to which nothing is preferable; cabbage soup with lard suits me much better than all the delicacies they dote on here.” In the commonest and most every-day things she finds another and a poorer taste than in Germany. “The butter and milk,” she says, after fifty years’ residence, “are not as good as ours; they have no flavour and taste like water. The cabbages are not good either, for the soil is not rich, but light and sandy, so that vegetables have no strength and the cows cannot give good milk. *Mon Dieu!* how I should like to eat the dishes your cook prepares for you; they would be more to my taste than those my *maître-d’hôtel* serves up to me.”

But she clung to her own country, her German stock, her “Rhin allemand,” by other memories than those of food and the national cooking. She loved nature, the country, a free life, even a wild one; the impressions of her childhood returned to her in whiffs of freshness. Apropos of Heidelberg, rebuilt after the disasters, and of a convent of Jesuits, or Franciscans, established on the heights, “*Mon Dieu!*” she cries, “how many times I have eaten cherries on that mountain, with a good bit of bread, at five in the morning! I was gayer then than I am to-day.” The brisk air of Heidelberg is with her after fifty years’ absence; and she speaks of it a few months before her death to the half-sister Louise, to whom she writes: “There is not in all the world a better air than that of Heidelberg; above all, about the château where my apartment is; nothing better can be found.”

In Germany, on the banks of the Neckar and the Rhine, Élisabeth-Charlotte enjoyed the picturesque sites, her rambles through the forests, Nature left to herself, and also the spots of bourgeois plenty amid the wilder environment. “I love trees and fields more than the finest palaces; I like a kitchen garden better than a garden with statues and fountains; a

brook pleases me a great deal more than sumptuous cascades; in a word, all that is natural is infinitely more to my taste than works of art or magnificence; the latter only please at first sight; as soon as one is accustomed to them they fatigue, and we care no more about them." In France she was particularly fond of residing at Saint-Cloud, where she enjoyed Nature with greater liberty. At Fontainebleau she often walked out on foot and went a league through the forest. On her arrival in France and first appearance at Court, she told her physician when presented to her that "she did not need him; she had never been bled or purged, and when she did not feel well she always walked six miles on foot, which cured her." Mme. de Sévigné who relates this, seems to conclude, with the majority of the Court, that the new Madame was overcome with her grandeur and spoke like a person who is not accustomed to such surroundings. Mme. de Sévigné is mistaken; Madame was in no degree overcome by her greatness. She felt herself born for the high rank of Monsieur's wife, and would have felt in her right place if higher still. But Mme. de Sévigné though she herself walked with pleasure in her woods at Livry and her park des Rochers, did not divine the proud young girl, so brusque and wild, who ate with delight her bit of bread and cherries plucked from the trees at five in the morning on the hills of Heidelberg.

Madame's marriage was not made to please her. In France this has been concealed; in Germany it was said quite plainly. Her father, the Elector, hoped by this alliance to buy the safety of his dominions, always threatened by the French. Like a pious daughter she obeyed; but she could not refrain from saying: "I am the political lamb, about to be sacrificed for my country." The *lamb*, after we once know her, seems a singular term to choose for so vigorous a victim; but the comparison is just, all the same, so tender and good was the heart within her.

The rôle that Madame conceived for herself in France was that of preserving her native country from the horrors of war, and of being useful to it in the different schemes which agitated the Court of France and might in the end overthrow it. In this she failed; and the failure was to her a poignant grief. She was even made the innocent cause of fresh disasters to the land she loved when, on the death of her father and her brother (who left no children), Louis XIV. set up a claim to the Palatinate on her account. Instead of bringing pledges and guarantees of peace, she found herself a pretext and a means for war. The devastation and the too famous incendiarism of the Palatinate which the struggles of ambition brought about caused her inexpressible grief. "When I think of those flames, shudders run over me. Every time I try to go to sleep I see Heidelberg on fire, and I start up in bed, so that I am almost ill in consequence." She speaks of this incessantly, and bleeds and weeps for it after many years. For Louvois she retained an eternal hatred. "I suffer bitter pain," she writes thirty years later (November 3, 1718), "when I think of all that M. de Louvois burned up in the Palatinate; I believe he is burning terribly in the other world, for he died so suddenly he had no time to repent."

Madame's virtue in this and other conjunctures was in being faithful to France and to Louis XIV., all the while torn by distress within her secret self. She never ceases to interest herself in the fate of her unhappy country, and in its resurrection after so many disasters. "I love that prince," she said of the Elector of another branch which was reigning in 1718, "because he loves the Palatinate. I can easily imagine how pained he was when he saw how little remained in the ruins of Heidelberg; the tears come into my eyes when I think of it, and I am so sad." Nevertheless, she regrets the religious bickerings and persecutions introduced into the country, and her own powerlessness to intervene for the protection of those who are persecuted. "I see but too plainly now," she writes in 1719, "that God did not will that I should accomplish any good in France, for, in spite of my efforts, I have never been able to be useful to my native country. It is true that when I came to France it was purely in obedience to my father, my uncle, and my aunt, the Electress of Hanover; my inclination did in nowise bring me here." Thus, in the marriage, apparently so brilliant, which she contracted with the brother of Louis XIV. Madame cared for one thing only, namely, to serve and protect her German land from French policy; and on that very side where politics (to which she was always a stranger) touched her most, she had the grief of failing.

When the marriage of Elisabeth-Charlotte was negotiated, it became a question of converting her. The erudite and witty Chévreau, who was at the Court of the Elector Palatine in the capacity of councillor, flattered himself that he contributed to that result by daily interviews with her of four hours in length for three weeks. One of the orators who eulogized Madame at the time of her death, her almoner (the Abbé de Saint-Géri de Magnas), said as to this: "When asked in marriage for Monsieur by Louis XIV. the principal condition was that she should embrace the Catholic religion. Neither ambition nor levity had any share in this change; the respect and tenderness she felt for Mme. la Princesse Palatine, her aunt, who was Catholic, prevented her from refusing to be instructed. She listened to Père Jourdain, a Jesuit. Born with the rectitude which distinguished her all her life, she did not resist the truth. Her abjuration was made at Metz."

Madame was, in truth, perfectly sincere in her conversion; nevertheless, she carried into it something of her freedom of mind and her independence of temper. "On my arrival in France," she says, "they made me hold conferences about religion with three bishops. All three differed in their beliefs; I took the quintessence of their opinions and formed my

own.” In this catholic religion, thus defined in the rough, which she believed and practised in perfect good faith, there remained traces and several of the habits of her early faith. She continued to read the Bible in German. She mentions that at that period in France scarcely any one, even among the devout, read Holy Scripture. The translations recently made of it had led to such discussions and bitter quarrels that the ecclesiastical authority intervened and forbade the reading of them; which has ever since remained a rarity in our country. Madame was therefore a notable exception when, in her plan of life, she gave a great and regular place to meditation on the Holy Book. She selected three days in the week for that salutary practice. “After my son’s visit,” she writes (November, 1717), “I sat down to table, and after dinner I took my Bible and read four chapters of the book of Job, four Psalms, and two chapters of Saint John, leaving the other two till this morning.” And she might have written the same thing on each of her appointed days. On one occasion she was singing unconsciously the Calvinist psalms, or the Lutheran canticles (for she mixed them up), while walking alone in the Orangery at Versailles, when a painter who was at work on a scaffolding came down hurriedly and threw himself at her feet, saying with gratitude: “Is it possible, Madame, that you still remember our Psalms?” The painter was a reformer and afterwards a refugee; she relates the little story very touchingly.

She had nothing of the sectarian spirit. She blamed Luther for wishing to make a separate Church; he ought to have confined himself, she thought, to attacking abuses. She retained from him and from other reformers, in spite of her conversion, a habit of invective against religious Orders of all kinds; and on this subject she bursts into tirades which are less those of a woman than of a pedant of the sixteenth century or some doctor emancipated from the rue Saint-Jacques. Gui Patin in a farthingale could not have expressed himself differently. She corresponded with Leibnitz, who assured her that she wrote German “not badly;” which pleased her much, for she could not endure, she says, to see Germans despising and ignoring their mother tongue. The letters that she wrote to Leibnitz would be precious could they some day be recovered and published. She may have gladly borrowed from that illustrious philosopher his idea of an approach and fusion, a reconciliation, in short, between the principal Christian communities, for she renders it, rather brusquely as her manner was, when she says: “If they followed my advice all the sovereigns would give orders that among all Christians, without distinction of beliefs, people were to abstain from insulting expressions, and that each and all were to believe and practise as they saw fit.” In the midst of that Court of Louis XIV., which was so unanimous as to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, she retained the most inviolable ideas of tolerance. “It is not showing themselves in any way Christian,” she said, “to torture people for religious reasons, and I think it monstrous; but when one examines things to the bottom we find that religion is only a pretext; all is done from policy and selfish interests. They are serving Mammon, and not God.”

Later, she humanely intercedes with her son, the regent, to release from the galleys the Reformers who had been sent there. But as it is in Madame’s temperament to exaggerate everything, even her own good qualities, and to introduce a sort of incoherence into her efforts, she goes far beyond her object when she expresses the wish that she may see in the galleys, in the place of such poor innocents, those who she thinks have persecuted them, and also other monks, especially the Spanish monks, who resisted to the last in Barcelona the accession of Louis XIV.’s grandson. “They preached in all the streets that no one should surrender; and if I had my way those rascals would have gone to the galleys in place of the poor Reformers who are languishing there.” That is Madame—in all her goodness of heart, extravagance of language, and her frank, sincere religion of a mixed nature.

When she arrived in France at the age of nineteen no one expected all this. The Court was filled with memories and regrets for the late Madame, the amiable Henrietta, snatched away in the bloom of her charm and grace. “Alas!” cries Mme. de Sévigné, speaking of the new-comer, “alas! if *this* Madame could only represent to us her whom we have lost!” In place of a blithesome fairy and a being of enchantment, what was it that suddenly appeared before them?

“Madame,” says Saint-Simon, “was a princess of the olden time; attached to honour, virtue, rank, grandeur, and inexorable as to their observances. She was not without intellect; and what she saw she saw very well. A good and faithful friend, trusty, true, and upright; easy to prejudice and shock; very difficult to bring back from prejudice; coarse, and dangerous in her public outbursts; very German in her habits; frank, indifferent to all propriety and all delicacy for herself and for others; sober, solitary, and full of notions. She loved dogs and horses, hunting and theatres passionately, and was never seen except in full dress or in a man’s wig and riding-habit.”

He concludes his portrait admirably in these words: “The figure and rusticity of a Swiss, but capable withal of a tender and inviolable friendship.”

Introduced at Court by her aunt, the illustrious Princess Palatine, Anne of Gonzaga, in nothing was she in keeping with it,—neither in spirit, nor in the gifts of insinuation and conciliatory conduct, nor in caution. Succeeding the first Madame,

she seemed even farther aloof from it, more completely a contrast in manners, in the quality and turn of her thoughts, in delicacy, in short, in everything. Madame, throughout her life, was, and must necessarily have been, the contrary of many things and many persons about her; she was original, at any rate, and in all ways Herself.

It seems an irony of fate that gave as second wife to Monsieur, that prince so weak and so effeminate, a woman who in tastes was far more like a man, and who always regretted she was not born a boy. Madame gayly relates how, in her youth, feeling her vocation as a cavalier very strongly, she was always expecting some miracle of Nature in her favour. With this idea she devoted herself as much as she could to all manly exercises and perilous leaping. She cared much more for swords and guns than for dolls. But above all she proves how little of a woman's nature was in her by the want of delicacy, or, to speak plainly, the lack of modesty in what she says. She is honesty itself, virtue, fidelity, honour; but also, at times, indecency and coarseness personified. She speaks of everything indiscriminately, like a man, is never disgusted by any language, and never goes by four roads when she has to express something which would be difficult and embarrassing to any one but herself. Contrary to the nature of women, she has no desire to please, and no coquetry. Being asked one day why she never glanced into a mirror in passing it, "Because," she replied, "I have too much self-love to like to see how ugly I am." The fine portrait by Rigaud gives us a perfect likeness of her in her old age, portly, fat, a double chin and red cheeks, with dignity of carriage nevertheless, and a proud bearing, but an expression of kindness in the eyes and smile.^[1] She herself was pleased at times to record her ugliness; one might even suppose that she valued it.

"It is no matter whether one is handsome or not; a fine face changes soon, but a good conscience is always good. You must remember very little of me if you do not rank me among the ugly ones; I have always been so, and I am more so now because of the small-pox. My waist is monstrous in size; I am as square as a cube; my skin is red, mottled with yellow; my hair is getting gray; my nose is honeycombed with the small-pox, and so are my cheeks; I have a large mouth and bad teeth; and there's the portrait of my pretty face."

Certainly no one was ever ugly with more spirit and light-heartedness. Occasionally there slips in beneath Madame's pen and her expressions a natural vein of Rabelais and the grotesque. She fills in that way a unique corner in the Court of Louis XIV. Knowing well what was due to her rank and never departing from it, there are many occasions when she is incongruous with it and violates decorum.

It was perhaps by this naïve brusqueness, and also by her solid qualities as an honest woman (I was going to say an honest man), that she pleased Louis XIV., so that between herself and him there was formed a friendship which was not without its singularity, and which at first sight seems surprising. Mme. de Sévigné, in a letter to her daughter, seems to think that Madame felt for Louis XIV. (as the preceding Madame had done) an inclination that was more or less romantic, and which affected her without her admitting to herself exactly what it was. There is a little too much that is far-fetched in all this. In general, as I have already remarked, Mme. de Sévigné understands Madame very little, and does not give herself the trouble to seek the meaning of a nature so little French. When she hears that the princess fainted with grief at the sudden news of the death of her father, the Elector Palatine, Mme. de Sévigné jests about it thus: "On this, Madame began to cry and weep and make a strange noise; they said she fainted, but I do not believe it; she seems to me incapable of that sign of weakness. All that death could do would be to sober her spirits,"—*fixer ses esprits*, because *ses esprits* (in the language of the physics of the day) were always in movement and great agitation.

But let us leave for a moment such French pleasantries and this facility for trifling with everything and over-refining all things. Madame, married in so sad and hapless a manner, and with whom one had only to talk, it was said, to be disgusted at once with the painful conditions of marriage,—Madame was not the woman to fall back upon romance to console her for reality. Thrown into the midst of a brilliant but false Court, full at that time of gallantry and pleasures which merely covered ambitions and rivalries, she distinguished with an instinct of good sense and a certain pride of race the person to whom she could attach herself in the midst of all these people, and she turned with her natural uprightness to the most honest man among them, namely, to Louis XIV. himself. A Jesuit, who pronounced a funeral oration over Madame, Père Cathalan, has said on this subject all that was best to say. In the kingdom at that time was a king who was worthy of being one; with the good qualities we know well, combined with defects which every one about him sought to favour and encourage; a king who was essentially a man of merit, "always master and always king, but more of an honest man and Christian than he was master or king."

"It was this merit that touched her," says Père Cathalan, very truly. "A taste for, and, if I may so express myself, a sympathy of greatness attached Madame to Louis XIV. Inward affinities make noble attachments of esteem and respect; and great souls, though the features of their greatness may differ, feel, and resemble one another. She esteemed, she honoured, shall I venture to say she loved that great king because she was great herself. She loved him when he was

greater than his fortunes; she loved him still more when he was greater than his sorrows. We saw her giving to the dying monarch her bitter tears, giving them again to his memory, seeking him in that superb palace so filled with his presence and his virtues, saying often how she missed him, and feeling always the wound of his death,—a sentiment which the glory of her son, the regent, could never take away.”

Madame was agreeable to Louis XIV. by her frankness, her open nature; she amused him with her repartees and her lively talk; she made him laugh with all his heart, for (a rare thing at Courts) she liked joy for joy's sake. “Joy is very good for the health,” thought she; “the silliest thing is to be sad.” She broke the monotony of Court ceremony, the long silent meals, the slow minuets of all kinds. What would have been incongruous in others had a certain spice in her; she had her privileges. “When the king dislikes to say a thing directly to any one, he addresses his speech to me; he knows very well that I don't constrain myself in conversation, and that diverts him. At table he is obliged to talk with me because nobody else will say a word.”

She was not so inferior to the king as might be thought; or rather she was not inferior to him at all except in politeness, in moderation, in the spirit of consistency and sobriety. In certain respects she judged him with much intelligence, and with freer and broader good sense than he was capable of himself; she thought him ignorant in many ways, and she was right. What she valued most in him was his uprightness of feeling, and the accuracy of his *coup-d'œil* when left to himself; also the quality of his mind, the charm of his intercourse, the excellent expression of his thoughts,—it was, in short, a certain loftiness of nature which attracted and charmed her in Louis XIV. She aided more than any other in consoling him and diverting his mind after the death of the Duchesse de Bourgogne; she went to him every evening at the permitted hour, and she saw that he was pleased with her company. “There is no one but Madame who does not leave me now,” said Louis XIV. “I see that she is glad to be with me.” Madame has ingenuously expressed the sort of open and sincere affection that she felt for Louis XIV. by saying: “If the king had been my father I could not have loved him more than I did love him, and I had pleasure in being with him.” When the king's health declined and he neared his last hour, we find Madame laying bare her grief in her letters; she, whose son was about to become regent, she dreads more than any one the change of reign. “The king is not well,” she says, August 15, 1715, “and it troubles me to the point of being half ill myself; I have lost both sleep and appetite. God grant I may be mistaken! but if what I fear should happen it would be for me the greatest of misfortunes.” She relates the last scenes of farewell with true and visible emotion. The little good that has been done in the final years of that long reign she attributes to Louis XIV.; and all that was bad she imputes to her whom she considers an evil genius and the devil personified,—to Mme. de Maintenon.

And here we come to Madame's great antipathy, to what in her is almost unimaginable prejudice, hatred, and animosity so violent that they become at times comical. And truly, if Madame at a given moment had really been in love with Louis XIV., and if she had hated in Mme. de Maintenon the rival who supplanted her, she could not have expressed herself otherwise. But there is no need of that sort of explanation for a nature so easy to prejudice, so difficult to placate, and so wholly in opposition and contrast to the point of departure and proceedings of Mme. de Maintenon. Hers were antipathies of race, of condition, of temperament, which long years passed in the presence, the continual sight, the rigid restraint of their object only cultivated, secretly fomented, and exasperated. Who has not seen such long-suppressed enmities which explode when an opening is made for them?

Madame, pre-eminently princess of a sovereign house, who never, with all her natural human qualities and her free and easy ways, forgot the duties of birth and grandeur, she of whom it was said, “No great personage ever knew her rights better or made them better felt by others,”—Madame held nothing in so much horror and contempt as misalliances. The gallery at Versailles long echoed with the resounding blow she applied to her son on the day when, having consented to marry the natural daughter of Louis XIV., he approached his mother according to custom, to kiss her hand. Now of all misalliances what could be greater or more inexcusable to her eyes than that which placed Mme. de Maintenon beside Louis XIV.?

Madame, natural, frank, letting her feelings willingly escape her, liking to pour them out, often in excess beyond themselves and observing no caution, could not away with the cold procedure, prudent, cautious, mysterious, polite, and unassailable, of a person to whom she attributed a thousand schemes blacker and deeper than those of hell.

She disliked her for little things and disliked her for great ones. She supposed that it was Mme. de Maintenon who, in concert with Père de La Chaise, had plotted and carried through the persecution of the Reformers; in this she was not only human, but she found herself once more a little of a Calvinist or a Lutheran with a touch of the old leaven; she thought close at hand what the refugees in Holland were writing from afar. She believed she saw in Mme. de Maintenon a Tartuffe in a sage-coloured gown. And besides—another grievance almost as serious!—if there was no longer any

etiquette at Court, if ranks were no longer preserved and defined, Mme. de Maintenon was the cause of it.

“There is no longer a Court in France,” she writes, “and it is the fault of the Maintenon, who, finding that the king would not declare her queen, was determined there should be no more great functions, and has persuaded the young dauphine [the Duchesse de Bourgogne] to stay in her, Mme. de Maintenon’s rooms, where there is no distinction of rank or dignity. Under pretext of its being a game, the old woman has induced the dauphine and the princesses to wait upon her at her toilet and meals; she has even persuaded them to hand her the dishes, change her plates, and pour what she drank. Everything is topsy-turvy, and none of them know their right place nor what they are. I have never mixed myself up in all that: when I go to see the lady I place myself close to her niche in an armchair, and I never help her either at her meals or her toilet. Some persons have advised me to do as the dauphine and the princesses do, but I answer: ‘I was never brought up to do servile things, and I am too old to play childish games.’ Since then no one has said anything more about it.”

I should never end if I enumerated all the reasons by which Madame brought herself, gradually and insensibly, to a species of mania which seizes her whenever she has to speak of Mme. de Maintenon, for there are no terms that she does not employ about her. On this subject she drops into whatever the grossest popular credulity could imagine in its days of madness; she sees in Mme. de Maintenon, even after the death of Louis XIV. and while buried at Saint-Cyr, a monopolist of wheat, a poisoner expert in the art of a Brinvilliers, a Gorgon, an incendiary who sets fire to the château de Lunéville. And after she has exhausted everything, she adds: “All the evil that has been said of this diabolical woman is still below the truth.” She applies to her an old German proverb: “Where the devil can’t go himself he sends an old woman.” Saint-Simon, inflamed as he is, pales beside this fabulous hatred, and has himself told us the secret of it.

One day, on a memorable occasion, Madame found herself humiliated before Mme. de Maintenon, forced to admit a wrong she had done her, to make her excuses before witnesses, and to say she was gratefully obliged to her. This happened on the death of Monsieur (June, 1701). Madame, who at that serious crisis had everything to obtain from the king both for herself and for her son (and did in fact obtain it), made the effort to lay her dignity aside and address herself to Mme. de Maintenon. The latter went to see her, and in presence of the Duchesse de Ventadour as witness, she represented to Madame, after listening to her, that the king had much reason to complain of her, but was willing to overlook it all. Madame, believing herself quite safe, protested her innocence; Mme. de Maintenon, with great self-possession, allowed her to speak to the end, and then drew from her pocket a letter, such as Madame wrote daily to her aunt the Electress of Hanover, in which she spoke in the most outrageous terms of the relations between the king and Mme. de Maintenon. We can imagine that Madame, at the sight, nearly died upon the spot.

When the name of the king was laid aside Mme. de Maintenon began to speak on her own account, and to answer Madame’s reproaches for having changed in her sentiments towards her. After allowing Madame, as before, to say all that she had to say and to commit herself to a certain extent, she suddenly quoted to her certain secret words particularly offensive to herself, which she had known and kept on her heart for ten years,—words that were said by Madame to a princess, then dead, who had repeated them, word for word, to Mme. de Maintenon. At the fall of this second thunderbolt Madame was turned into a statue, and there was silence for some moments. Then followed tears, cries, pardon, promises, and a reconciliation, which, being founded on the cold triumph of Mme. de Maintenon and the inward humiliation of Madame, could not of course last long.

It was soon after this scene and during the very short time that the renewed friendship lasted that Madame wrote to Mme. de Maintenon the following letter:—

Wednesday, June 15, 11 in the morning.

If I had not had fever and great agitation, Madame, from the sad employment of yesterday, in opening the caskets containing Monsieur’s papers, scented with the most violent perfumes, you would have heard from me earlier; but I can no longer delay expressing to you how touched I am by the favours that the king did yesterday to my son, and the manner in which he has treated both him and myself; and as all this is the result of your good counsels, Madame, be pleased to allow me to express my sense of it, and to assure you that I shall keep, very inviolably, the promise of friendship which I made to you; I beg you to continue to me your counsels and advice, and not to doubt a gratitude that can end only with my life.

ÉLISABETH CHARLOTTE.

Proud as Madame was, there was nothing for her, after such a step and such a reconciliation so painful to the core, but to

become henceforth the intimate and cordial friend of Mme. de Maintenon, or her implacable enemy. The latter sentiment prevailed. In spite of efforts which may have been for a time sincere, the conditions and the repugnances were too strong; antipathies rose up once more and carried all before them.

Madame deserves consideration by more than one claim, and especially because, having written much, her testimony stands and is invoked in many cases. When the present edition of letters and fragments of letters by M. Brunet is exhausted, why should he not undertake to form a complete collection, leaving nothing out that could enrich and enlighten it on the German side, and adding only such notes and French erudition as may be strictly necessary? We should then have, not exactly an historical document added to so many others, but a great chronicle of manners and morals, a fiery social gossip, by one whom we may call the Gui Patin or the Tallemant des Reaux of the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth. We should thus gain a vivid, witty, and ruthless book, which would make a pendant to Saint-Simon on more than one ground.

Madame and Saint-Simon have this in common—they were two honest souls at Court, honest souls whom indignation easily roused; often passionate, prejudiced, and at such times ferocious and pitiless for the adversary. Saint-Simon—need it be said?—has over Madame all the superiority of a genius expressly made to sound and fathom hearts, and to bring back living descriptions, which he gives us in strokes of flame. Madame, often credulous, looking elsewhere, mixing things up and little critical in her judgments, nevertheless sees well what she does see, and renders it forcibly, with a violence which, though little conformed to French taste, is none the less imprinted on the memory. They knew each other and esteemed each other. They had, without suspecting it, the same idiosyncrasies, which they observed, reciprocally, in each other; one was astride of her rank as princess and ever on the *qui-vive* lest it should not be sufficiently respected; the other, as we know, was intractable and even fanatical on the chapter of dukes and peers.

Saint-Simon has spoken of Madame with truth and justice, as of a manly nature somewhat in keeping with his own. All that we read in Madame's letters, in which she declares herself to every eye, is only a sort of demonstration and commentary of Saint-Simon's judgment upon her.

Madame was naturally just, humane, compassionate. She was very anxious about her debts and her creditors, which the great of the earth are not apt to be, and it was noticed that she was never easy unless she had secured their payment,—"forestalling demands, sometimes wishes, and always impatience or complaints." The letters she writes during the terrible winter of 1709 breathe pity for the poor, who "are dying of cold like flies." No princess ever had more consideration for those who surrounded her and served her; "she preferred sometimes to deprive herself of necessary attentions, rather than require them when inconvenient to others." She was what is called a good mistress, and the nearer her people came to her, the more they regretted her. "Saint-Cloud," she wrote in the autumn of 1717, "is only a house for summer; many of my people have to lodge in rooms without fireplaces; they cannot pass the winter here, or I should be the cause of their deaths, and I am not hard enough for that; the sufferings of others make me pitiful."

Once only was she pitiless; but she was wounded then in her tenderest spot. Mme. de Maintenon had imported from Strasburg (*expressly to annoy me*, thought Madame) two girls of equivocal birth who called themselves Comtesses Palatine and whom she placed in the suite of her nieces. The first dauphine (Monseigneur's wife, a Princess of Bavaria) spoke of this to Madame, weeping, but not daring to resent an affront which was aimed at both. "Let me settle that," replied Madame. "I'll manage it; for when I am right nothing frightens me." The next day she arranged an accidental meeting in the park with one of the two self-styled Comtesses Palatine, and treated her in such a manner (the astounding terms have been preserved) that the poor girl was taken ill, and finally died of it. Louis XIV. contented himself with saying to Madame, "It is not safe to meddle with you in the matter of your family—life depends upon it." To which Madame replied, "I don't like impostors." And she never felt the slightest regret for what she had done. The trait is characteristic in a nature that was otherwise essentially kind. All vehement passion easily becomes cruel when face to face with an object that irritates and braves it. In this case the execution performed by Madame appeared to her under the form of a rigorous duty of honour.

The life that Madame led at the Court of France varied, necessarily, during the fifty and one years that she spent there; she could not live at the age of sixty as she had done at twenty. But at all times, before and after the death of Monsieur, she had managed to make for herself a retreat and a sort of solitude. The exaggerated and incongruous sides of Madame's nature being now sufficiently visible and well known, I desire to neglect nothing that will show the firm and elevated parts of her soul. From Saint-Cloud June 17, 1698, she writes thus:—

"I do not need much consolation in the matter of death; I do not desire death, neither do I dread it. There is no need of the Catechism of Heidelberg to teach us not to be attached to this world; above all in this country where all things are so full

of falseness, envy, and malignity, where the most unheard-of vices are displayed without reserve. But to desire death is a thing entirely against nature. In the midst of this great Court I live retired, as if in solitude; there are very few persons with whom I have frequent intercourse; I am whole, long days alone in my cabinet, where I busy myself in reading and writing. If any one pays me a visit I see them for only a few moments; I talk of rain and fine weather or the news of the day; and after that I take refuge in my retreat. Four times a week I send off my regular letters: Monday, to Savoie; Wednesday, to Modena; Thursday and Sunday I write very long letters to my aunt in Hanover; from six to eight o'clock I drive out with Monsieur and my ladies; three times a week I go to Paris, and every day I write to my friends who live there; I hunt twice a week; and this is how I pass my time."

When she speaks of solitude we see it is a Court solitude and much diversified. Still it was remarkable that a woman of so grand a station and a princess should spend so many hours daily alone in her cabinet in company with her desk.

After the death of Monsieur, Madame could live more to her liking. She regretted being obliged to dismiss her maids-of-honour, whose youth and gayety amused her; but she gave herself a compensation after her own heart, by taking to herself, without official title, two friends, the Maréchale de Clérembault and the Comtesse de Beuvron, both widows, whom Monsieur had dismissed with aversion from the Court of the Palais-Royal, but to whom Madame had ever remained faithful in absence. They were the "friends in Paris," to whom she wrote continually. Becoming free herself, she wanted them near her, and henceforth enjoyed, almost as a simple private person, that united constant friendship in which she trusted.

Hunting was long one of Madame's greatest pleasures, or rather passions. I have said that while a child at Heidelberg she gave herself up to all manly exercises. Her father, however, forbade her to hunt or to ride on horseback. It was in France, therefore, that she served her apprenticeship, and her impetuosity often made it dangerous. Twenty-six times was she thrown from her horse, without being frightened or discouraged. "Is it possible," she says, "that you have never seen a great hunt? I have seen more than a thousand stags taken, and I have had bad falls; but out of twenty-six times that I have been thrown from my horse I never hurt myself but once, and then I dislocated my elbow."

The theatre was another passion, which, in her, was derived from intelligence and her natural taste for things of the understanding. It was the only pleasure (except that of writing letters) which lasted to the end of her life. She was not of the opinion of Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and other great religious oracles of the day in the matter of theatres; she forestalled the opinion of the future and that of the most indulgent moralists. "With regard to the priests who forbid the theatre," she says, rather irreverently, "I shall say no more, except this, that if they saw a little further than their own noses they would understand that the money people spend on going to the play is not ill-spent; in the first place, the comedians are poor devils who earn their living that way; and next, comedies inspire joy, joy produces health, health gives strength, strength produces good work; therefore comedies should be encouraged, and not forbidden." She liked to laugh, and the "Malade Imaginaire" diverted her to such a degree that one might think in reading her letters that she was trying to imitate all that is most physical and unfit for women in its style of pleasantry. And yet "the 'Malade Imaginaire' is not the one of Molière's plays that I like best," she says; "Tartuffe pleases me better." And in another letter: "I cannot write longer, for I am called to go to the theatre; I am to see the 'Misanthrope,' the one of Molière's plays that gives me the most pleasure." She admired Corneille and quotes the "Death of Pompey." I do not know whether she liked "Esther," but she must surely have loved Shakespeare. "I have often heard his Highness, our father," she writes to her half-sister, "say that there are no comedies in the world finer than those of the English."

After the death of Monsieur and during the last years of Louis XIV. she adopted a way of life that was very precise and retired. "I live here quite deserted (May 3, 1709) for everybody, young and old, runs after favour. The Maintenon cannot endure me, and the Duchesse de Bourgogne likes only what that lady likes." She became at last absolutely a hermit in the midst of the Court. "I consort with no one here, except my own people; I am as polite as I can be to everybody, but I contract no intimate relations with any one, and I live alone; I go to walk, I go to drive, but from two o'clock to half-past nine I never see a human face; I read, I write, or I amuse myself in making baskets like the one I sent my aunt." Sometimes, however, to enliven this long interval from two o'clock to half-past nine, her ladies would play at *hombre* or *brelan* beside her writing-table.

The regency of her son brought the Court again around Madame; and her more frequent residence in Paris allowed her less retreat than she was able to make at Versailles. Sometimes, in the morning, half a dozen duchesses would take up her time and cut short her correspondence. She detested their conversations of mere politeness, in which they talked without having anything to say. "I would rather be alone than have to give myself the trouble of finding something to say to each of them; for the French think it very bad if you do not talk to them, and go away discontented; one must therefore

take pains to say something to each; and so I am content and tranquil when they leave me to myself." She made exception with less annoyance when it was a question of Germans of high rank, who all wished to be presented to her, and whom she greeted very well. At times there were as many as twenty-nine German princes, counts, and gentlemen in her apartment.

One evening she made a scene before all present to the Duchesse de Berry, her grand-daughter, who had appeared before her in a loose gown, or rather in fancy dress, intending to go to the Tuileries in such array. "No, madame," she said, cutting short all explanation, "nothing excuses you; you might at least dress yourself properly the few times you do go to see the king; I, who am your grandmother, dress myself every day. Say honestly it is laziness that prevents you from doing so; which belongs neither to your age nor to your station. A princess should be dressed as a princess, and a soubrette as a soubrette." While saying all this and not listening to the reply of the Duchesse de Berry, Madame went on writing her letter in German, her pen never ceasing to scratch the paper. The table on which she wrote was a secretary somewhat raised, so that in her pausing moments she could, without rising from her seat, look down upon the game of the players beside her. "That was her occupation if she ceased to write, but when any one came in and approached her she would leave everything to ask them, 'What news?' and as the giving of news made every one welcome, people invented it when there was none to tell. No sooner had she heard it than, without examination, she turned to the letter already begun and wrote down the tale she had just been told." It is thus that, side by side with things that she sees well and says well, and which are in truth the expression of her own thought, her letters contain much else that is simply malignant gossip and trash.

In the days of Louis XIV. letters were unsealed at the post-office, read, and extracts made and sent to the king, and sometimes to Mme. de Maintenon. Madame knew that, but went her way in spite of it, using her privilege as princess to tell truths without reserve, and even to write insults on those who, unsealing the letters, would find her opinion of them. "In the days of M. de Louvois," she writes, "they read all letters just as they do now, but at least they sent them on in decent time; but now that that toad of a Torcy directs the post-office, letters are delayed for an interminable length of time.... As Torcy does not know how to read German he has to have them translated, and I don't thank him for his attention." M. de Torcy must have enjoyed that passage.

Among the tastes, or fancies, which together with her letter-writing served to fill and amuse the long hours of Madame's solitude, we must reckon two parrots, a canary, and eight little dogs. "After my dinner I walk my room for half an hour for the sake of digestion, and play with my little animals." A nobler taste was that of coins, which Madame had to a high degree. She collected them from all parts of the world, and no one could pay their court more delicately than by bringing her a specimen. The collection that she thus formed was celebrated. She confided the care of it to the learned Baudelot, who had all the erudition and naïveté of an antiquary, and with whom she sometimes amused herself. "One study alone," says one of her eulogists, "attracted her—that of coins. Her series of the emperors of the upper and lower empire, which she collected with judgment and arranged with care, placed before her eyes all that was most to be respected in past ages. While examining the features on the coins she recalled the salient points of their owners' actions, filling her mind with noble ideas of Roman greatness." I do not know whether in forming her cabinet of coins Madame had any such lofty and stern views, but at any rate, in this most remarkable of her tastes she showed herself the mother of the regent,—that is to say, of the most brilliant and best-informed of amateurs.

There is a serious side in the letters of Madame: that by which she judges the morals, the personages, and the society of the regency. She had some trouble in breaking herself in to that new style of life, and to a residence in the city and the Palais-Royal. "I like the Parisians," she writes, "but I do not like to live in their town." She had accustomed herself, during her long seasons at Saint-Cloud, to a measure of retreat, companionship, and liberty which suited her nature, and I shall even say, her semi-philosophy. When she returned there she felt herself in her element. "I find myself well at Saint-Cloud, where I am tranquil (1718); whereas in Paris I am never left an instant in peace. This one presents me a petition, that one asks me to interest myself on his behalf, another solicits an audience, and so forth. In this world great people have their worries like little ones, which is not surprising; but what makes it worse for the great is that they are always surrounded by a crowd, so that they can not hide their griefs, or indulge them in solitude—they are always on exhibition."

That regret was in her a most sincere one. The power of her son brought her little influence, and she wanted none, save for the sake of a few private benefits. She asked him for nothing; she never meddled in public affairs or politics, and piqued herself on not understanding them. "I have no ambition," she said (August, 1719); "I do not wish to govern; I should take no pleasure in it. It is not so with French women; the lowest servant-woman thinks herself quite fitted to rule the State. I think it so ridiculous that I am quite cured of all mania of that kind."

She views like a virtuous woman the debauchery of the period, and that of her family, and she expresses the deep disgust she feels for it. The regent has never been better painted than he is by his mother; she shows him to us with his facile faculties, his interests of all kinds, his talents, his individual genius, his graces, his indulgence for all, even for his enemies; she denounces the one great capital fault that ruined him,—that ardent debauchery at a fixed hour, in which he buried himself and was lost to sight until the next morning. “All advice, all remonstrance on that subject,” she writes, “are useless; when spoken to he answers, ‘From six o’clock in the morning till night I am subjected to prolonged and fatiguing labour; if I did not amuse myself after that I could not bear it, I should die of melancholy.’ I pray God sincerely for his conversion,” she adds, “he has no other fault than that, but that is great.” She shows him to us as a libertine even in matters of science, that is, curious and amorous of all he saw, but disgusted with all he possessed. “Though he talks of learned things, I see plainly that instead of giving him pleasure they bore him. I have often scolded him for this; he answers it is not his fault; that he does take pleasure in learning all things, but as soon as he knows them he has no further pleasure in them.”

The most characteristic passages in her letters are of things that cannot be detached and cited singly. Never did the effrontery and gluttony of women of all ranks, the cupidity of everybody, the shameless traffic and cynical thirst for gold, find a firmer or more vigorous hand to catch them in the act and blast them. Madame, in treating of these excesses, has a species of virtuous immodesty like that of Juvenal; or rather, issuing from her Bible readings, she applies to present scandals the energy of the sacred text, and qualifies them in the language of the patriarchs. “How many times,” says one of her eulogists whom I like to quote, “how many times she condemned the bold negligence of attire which favoured corruption, and the taste for liberty and caprice—the fatal charm which our nation has criminally invented! Indecent fashions, which ancient decorum cannot away with, would often bring upon her face and in her eyes the emotion and fire of outraged modesty.” It was not a mere sentiment of etiquette which made her rebuke her grand-daughter, the Duchesse de Berry, on her dishabille, but another and a more estimable sentiment. Even where she is not outraged she gives details which make her smile with pity. “It is only too true that the women paint themselves blue veins to make believe their skins are so delicate the veins show through them.”

The Duc de Richelieu, a young dandy who turned all the heads of the day, and whom our writers, at their wits’ end, have lately endeavoured to restore to fashion in novels and plays, was to Madame an object of extreme aversion; she paints him with the hand of a master, as absolutely contemptible, with all his equivocal and frivolous charms, his varnish of politeness, and his vices. It is a portrait to read, and I should like to quote it here, but I am restrained by respect for the great men, and for the honourable men, who have made that name of Richelieu so French. Without going beyond general observations what can be more just and more sensible than the following reflection of Madame, written a few months before her death (April, 1722)? “Young men, at the epoch in which we live, have but two objects in view,—debauchery and lucre; the absorption of their minds on money-getting, no matter by what means, makes them dull and disagreeable; in order to be agreeable, people must have their minds free of care, and also have the wish to give themselves up to amusement in decent company; but these are things that are very far away from us now-a-days.” With a presentiment of her coming end, she asks of God only his mercy to herself and her children, especially her son. “May it please God to convert him! that is the sole favour that I ask of Him. I do not believe that there are in Paris, either among ecclesiastics or people of the world, one hundred persons who have a true Christian faith, and really believe in our Saviour; and that makes me tremble.”

The people of Paris recognized in Madame a princess of honour and integrity, incapable of giving bad advice or employing selfish influence; consequently, she was in great favour with the Parisians; more than she deserved, she said, meddling so little as she did in their affairs. Even amid the riots and the execrations roused by the catastrophes at the close of Law’s system, Madame, as she drove through the streets, received none but benedictions—which she would gladly have transferred to her son. She noticed as a mother on that occasion that if the cries were loud against Law, they were at least not shouted against the regent. But there were other days when the murmurs against her son reached her ears, and she complains of the ingratitude of Frenchmen towards him. She was not, however, without admitting to herself the element of weakness in his government; she tells it and repeats it constantly. “It is very true,” she says, “that it is better to be kind than harsh, but justice consists in punishing, as well as in rewarding; and it is certain that he who does not make Frenchmen fear him will soon fear them; for they despise those who do not intimidate them.” She knows the nation, and judges it as one who is not of it.

On one point Madame sacrificed to the spirit of the regency and was in curious contradiction to herself. She took a great liking to a natural son of the regent, whom he had by an opera-dancer named Florence; she said he reminded her of the “late Monsieur,” only with a better figure. In short, she loved the young man, whom she called *her* Abbé de Saint-Albin.

He was afterwards Archbishop of Cambrai, and when he made his argument before the Sorbonne (February, 1718) she was present in great state, thus declaring, and also honouring, the illegitimate birth of this grandson. Madame deserted on that day all her orthodox principles about the duties of rank, and allowed herself to follow her fancies.

She died at the age of seventy at Saint-Cloud, December 8, 1722, ten days after her faithful friend, the Maréchale de Clérembault, and one year before her son, the regent. According to her own wish, she was taken to Saint-Denis without pomp. The obsequies were performed in the following February. Massillon, whom she knew and loved, pronounced her funeral oration, which was thought fine. Père Cathalan, a Jesuit, pronounced another at Laon in March, from which I have taken certain traits of her character.

Such as she is, with all her coarseness and her contradictions on a basis of virtue and honour, Madame is a useful, a precious, and an incomparable witness as to manners and morals. She gives a hand to Saint-Simon and to Dangeau—nearer, however, to the former than to the latter. She has heart; do not ask charm of her, but say: “That Court would have lacked the most original of figures and of voices if Madame had not been of it.” Arriving at Versailles at the moment when the La Vallière star declined and was eclipsed, and seeing only the last of the brilliant years, she enters little into that era of refinement which touches the imagination; but lacking that refinement, and solely through her frankness, she lays bare to us the second half of Louis XIV.’s reign under its human, most human, natural, and—to say the whole truth—its material aspect. She strips that great century of its idealism, she strips it too much; she goes almost to the point of degrading it—if we listen to her alone. As time goes on, and the delicacy and purity of manners and language retire more and more into Mme. de Maintenon’s corner and seek at last a refuge at Saint-Cyr, Madame holds herself aloof at Saint-Cloud, and again aloof in the Palais-Royal, and thence—whether at the close of Louis XIV.’s reign or under the regency—she makes, lance in hand, and her pen behind her ear, valiant and frequent sorties in that blunt style which is all her own, which wears a beard upon its chin, and of which we know not rightly whether it derives from Luther or from Rabelais, though we are very sure it is the opposite of that of Mme. de Caylus and her like.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

Sainte-Beuve, in his essay on Madame, suggested to the French editor of her letters that he should make a more complete collection of them. M. Brunet professes to have done so in the edition from which this translation is selected.^[2] But when examined the additions prove very insignificant, and the arrangement, though apparently more chronological, interferes with the interest of the reader. Passages which seem to belong together are cut up into sentences and scattered singly over weeks and months; so that the point of Madame's racy representations is often weakened. In this translation parts of the letters of each year on a given topic are put together, so as to offer a better picture of Madame's thought; as for her nature, she gives that herself, and no one can better the portrait.

Nothing need be added to Sainte-Beuve's admirable essay beyond a brief account of Madame's parentage, family relations, and the history, such as it is, of her correspondence.

She was born at Heidelberg in 1652. Soon after her birth, her father, Charles-Louis, Elector Palatine, parted from his wife, Charlotte of Hesse-Cassel, and the little daughter, Élisabeth-Charlotte, was given to the care of her father's sister, Sophia, Electress of Hanover (mother of George I. of England); with whom she remained until her marriage, against her wishes, in 1671, to Monsieur, brother of Louis XIV., after the death of his first wife, Henrietta, daughter of Charles I. of England. The marriage was political,—Louis XIV. seeking to acquire rights in the Palatinate, and subsequently in Bavaria.

The father of Élisabeth-Charlotte, after parting from his wife, married morganatically Louise de Degenfeld, by whom he had five sons and three daughters,—these children being of course excluded from the succession. Madame, in her ill-assorted and personally mortifying marriage, of which she bravely strove to make the best, found all her comfort in writing letters, a very small portion of which have been preserved. All those addressed during her married life to her beloved aunt, the Electress of Hanover, have disappeared, probably destroyed by the judicious aunt herself, for Madame alludes to them as containing secrets she did not write to others. Among the many personages to whom she wrote habitually were: Duke Antoine Ulrich of Brunswick; her two unmarried half-sisters, Louise and Amélie, Countesses Palatine; her step-daughters, to whom she was warmly attached, Marie-Louise, wife of Charles II., King of Spain, and Anne-Marie, wife of Victor-Amadeus, Duke of Savoie and King of Sardinia and Sicily (the mother of Marie-Adélaïde, Duchesse de Bourgogne); and her own daughter, the Duchesse de Lorraine. Besides these, she had a number of correspondents on the other side of the Rhine, such as her cousins the Queen of Prussia and the Duchess of Modena; her old governess in Hanover; Leibnitz in Leipzig; also the Princess of Wales, Wilhelmina-Caroline of Brandebourg-Anspach, in London.

Of these letters (scarcely any remaining extant except those to her half-sisters) fragments first appeared at Stuttgart in 1789, subsequently in Paris, in 1807, 1823, 1832. In 1843 the first edition in a volume was published at Stuttgart by M. Wolfgang Menzel, a translation of which by M. Brunet appeared in Paris in 1853. That translation was made from the German volume, the original letters having disappeared in a conflagration. A subsequent edition, with a few insignificant additions as mentioned above, appeared a few years later, from the last issue of which the present translation has been selected.

M. Brunet remarks in his preface, that "Madame had the habit of reproducing almost in the same terms the details which she gave of the same events to diverse persons. She wrote with extreme rapidity, passing, without any transition, from one subject to another, piling up useless words and insignificant particulars which it would be quite absurd to try to reproduce. Expressions of regret at the deaths or the illnesses of Madame's numerous relatives, interminable protestations of friendship, wearisome repetitions, swelled beyond all measure the letters that came into the hands of M. Menzel, who cut off two-thirds of them, preserving such parts only as had a more or less general interest and an historical value."

The following letters are almost exclusively addressed to her half-sisters, and chiefly to the Comtesse Louise, the Comtesse Amélie having died in 1709. The names of her correspondents do not precede the letters in the French edition, except in a few instances.

Madame needs no interpreter, for even her vituperative faculty conveys its own correction; her hatred to Mme. de Maintenon becomes amusing, and we are quite able to see the justice and the injustice of it. Her favourite term for her enemy is, however, so outrageous (*la vieille guenipe*, the old slut, or any such equivalent—once she descends to saying *la vieille truie*) that it is more agreeable to the reader to keep the word in French than to constantly repeat it in English.

Madame died on the 8th of December, 1722, at the age of seventy, just one year before the death of her son, the regent. She was buried in Saint-Denis, and Massillon pronounced her funeral oration.

The letters of Adélaïde de Savoie, Duchesse de Bourgogne and dauphine, are of little value, as the reader will see, if judged historically, or as a document on the manners and customs of a period. They are placed here as a contemporary record of a tender and pathetic young life on its passage, through frivolity and ill-health, to a premature death just as age had corrected her defects, and the prospect of being, with her husband, the blessing and salvation of France was dawning before her.

Sainte-Beuve possessed a natural spirit of justice which led him (though it did not invariably rule him) to satisfy his literary conscience by returning to the portraits of his personages to correct, modify, and balance his first impressions. It is in this spirit that his picture of Mme. de Maintenon and Saint-Cyr, followed by a number of her own letters and papers on that section of her life, are given here to succeed the prejudiced statements of her two greatest enemies, Saint-Simon and Madame. The picture of Saint-Cyr stands apart in Mme. de Maintenon's career in a frame of its own; it shows her at her very best and as she herself would fain appear to posterity. It is the other extreme of the portraiture, and the reader must form his own judgment as to how the full truth of the nature and conduct of this remarkable woman can be evolved.

CORRESPONDENCE OF MADAME.

I.

LETTERS OF 1695-1714.

To her sister Louise, Comtesse Palatine.

VERSAILLES, 1695.

King James of England is not willing that we should wear mourning for his daughter [Mary]; he has vehemently insisted that nothing of the kind should be done. He is not at all moved by this death, which surprises me, for I should think a man could not forget his children, no matter what wrongs he has against them; blood must surely keep its strength. From the portrait they made me of Prince [King] William, I should not have thought he was so much attached to his wife; and I like him for it.

I am very glad to hear that Charles-Maurice [her half-brother] loves me, though he has never seen me; that is the effect of blood. It is not surprising that I love him, for I saw him come into the world; and besides, I have always retained such respect for his Highness our father that I love all those who are his children. I wish that Charles-Maurice may soon be made a colonel. We die when our time comes; Maurice will not live beyond the period that fate assigns him, whether he stays at Court or goes to war. He had better follow his inclination, for all that is done from liking is better done than when one yields to constraint.

We have here a Comte de Nassau, a very brave man and much respected. He holds a patent from the emperor authorizing him to take the title of prince; but he makes no use of it, for which I think very well of him. Dancing has gone out of fashion everywhere. Here, in France, as soon as the company assemble they do nothing but play *lansquenets*; that is the game in vogue; even the young people do not care to dance. As for me, I do neither. I am much too old to dance, which I have not done since the death of our father. I never play cards for two reasons: first, I have no money; and next, I don't like gambling. They play here for frightful sums, and the players are like madmen; one howls, another strikes the table so hard that the room resounds, a third blasphemes in such a way that one's hair stands on end, and they all seem beside themselves and are terrifying to see.

I beg you to greet for me all our old friends in the Palatinate; I curse this war to-day more than ever. My poor son, who has been seriously ill and is still taking quinine, was engaged in that affair when Maréchal de Villeroy fell upon the rear-guard of the Prince de Vaudemont and put four battalions to flight. Though my son has had the luck to escape a wound, I tremble lest fatigue should bring back his fever. A good peace is much to be desired.

I regard it as great praise that people should say I have a German heart and that I love my country; I shall endeavour, by the grace of God, to deserve that praise to my last day. I have indeed a German heart, for I cannot console myself for what is happening in that unfortunate Palatinate; I cannot think about it; it makes me sad all day. Next Saturday I return, with regret, to Paris, which I think very disagreeable.

There is nothing in the world so miserable as the fate of a Queen of Spain; I know this by the late queen, who used to write me day by day the existence that she led. It is even worse in Portugal, and it shows the truth of the proverb that all is not gold that glitters.

I was too old when I came to France to change my character, the foundations were laid. There is nothing surprising in that; but I should be inexcusable if I were false and did not love the persons for whom I ought to feel an attachment. You have reason to think that I write as I think; I am too frank to write otherwise. The good Duchesse de Guise, cousin of the king and of Monsieur, died five days ago. I have felt much afflicted; she was a worthy, pious woman; we dined together every day. There was only an antechamber between my room and her cabinet. She kept her mind till the last moment, and died tranquilly, without regrets.

VERSAILLES, 1697.

If I had not heard from my aunt that you were going to Holland, I should have been quite surprised at getting your letter from the Hague. My health is now pretty good; as usual, I have driven away the fever by hunting. I have had the satisfaction to do some service to the prisoners who have been brought here. I cannot do much, but I shall spare no pains to be useful to compatriots who may need me.

I remember the Hague perfectly; I always thought it a very agreeable city, but the air is not as good as it is in the Palatinate and everything is so very dear in Holland. King William is not at Loo, but at the head of his army; God grant there may not be a battle, for I can't help trembling at the thought of it because of my son. The fate of those good people of the Palatinate makes me wretched; but I can do nothing to prevent it. Let us all unite in prayers for peace, for it is indeed very needful.

It is deplorable that the priests have brought it about that Christians are divided one against another. If I had my way, the three Christian religions should form but one; we should not ask what people believed, but whether they lived in accordance with the Gospel, and the priests should preach against those who lead bad lives. Christians ought to be allowed to marry and go to church where they like; and then there would be more harmony than there is now.

I think so well of King William that I would rather have him for a son-in-law than the Emperor of Germany. I can say with truth of my daughter that she has no idea of coquetry or gallantry; in that respect she gives me no anxiety, and I think I shall never have anything to fear; she is not handsome, but she has a pretty figure, a good face, and good feelings. I am convinced that she will stay an old maid, for, according to all appearance, King William will marry the Princess of Denmark. I fancy that the emperor will take the second Princess of Savoie, and the Duc de Lorraine the daughter of the emperor, so that no one will be left for my daughter.

I don't know if you remember how gay I was in my youth; all that has gone; I have been more than six weeks without laughing even once. The theatre is what amuses me the most. If you knew all that goes on here you would certainly not be surprised that I am no longer gay. Another in my place would have been dead of grief this long while; as for me, I only grow fat upon it.



Saint-Cloud

SAINT-CLOUD.

I received two weeks ago your letter of May 21, but I could not answer it, for I was not in a state to write, and Mlle. de Rathsamhausen [her lady-of-honour] spells so badly that I do not care to dictate to her.^[3] I must tell you what has happened to me. Once a month I go with Monseigneur the dauphin to hunt a wolf. It had rained; the ground was slippery; we had searched for a wolf two hours without finding one, and then started for another point, where we hoped to do better. As we were following a wood-path a wolf sprang up just in front of my horse, which was frightened and reared on its hind legs and slipped and fell over on its right side, and my elbow coming in contact with a big stone was dislocated. They looked for the king's surgeon who was with the hunt, but could not find him, for his horse had lost a shoe and he had gone to a village to have it put on. A peasant said there was a very skilful barber two leagues off who set legs and arms every day of his life; when I heard he had such experience I got into a calèche and was driven to him—not without very great pain. As soon as he had set my arm I suffered nothing and drove back here at once. My surgeon

and Monsieur's surgeon examined the hurt. I think they were rather jealous that a poor countryman had done the thing so well. They bandaged my arm again and made me suffer beyond measure; my hand swelled up in a horrible manner; I could not move my wrist or lift my hand to my mouth.

It is very true that celibacy is the best condition; the best of men is not worth the devil. Love in marriage is no longer the fashion, and is thought ridiculous. The Catholics here say in their catechism that marriage is a sacrament, but, in point of fact, they live with their wives as if it were no sacrament at all, and, what is worse, nothing is more approved than to see men have gallantries and desert their wives—But not to enlarge upon this subject, I will talk to you about my wolf.

You have heard by this time that peace has been signed with the emperor and the empire; that is a great step towards a general peace. I do not think that war will break out in Poland, for it is not at all certain that our Prince de Conti will go there; he may renounce it, which I think would be much better for him than the crown of Poland; it is a savage, dirty country, and the nobles are too ambitious.

These are dangerous times for young men, and they would do better to go and seek honour in war than stay here doing nothing and leading the most dissolute lives, for which, be it said between you and me, my son has but too great a liking. He says he has taste only for women and not for other debauchery, which is as common here as it is in Italy, and therefore he thinks we ought to praise him and be grateful to him; but his behaviour does not please me at all.

Those who do not know the exact situation of things here imagine that the king and Court are just what they used to be; but everything is changed in a sorry way. If any one who had left the Court at the time of the queen's death returned here now he would think he had stepped into another world. There is much to be said about this, but I cannot confide it to paper, because all letters are opened and read. My aunt used to say that everybody here below is a demon charged to torment somebody else; and that is very true. We know that all things are the result of the will of God, and happen as He has fixed from all eternity, but the Almighty not having consulted us on what He meant to do, we are in ignorance of the causes of what we see going on about us.

FONTAINEBLEAU, 1698.

I have not written to you for several days because I have been to Montargis, whence we have come back here, where we found the courier who brought us the dispensation for my daughter's marriage. It will take place Monday next and two days later she will start. [Mlle. de Chartres married Léopold, Duc de Lorraine, and was the mother of Francis I., Emperor of Germany, the husband of Maria Theresa.] You can easily imagine that my heart is full, and that I am nearer to weeping than laughing, for my daughter and I have never been separated, and now we are to part for a long time. My eyes are full of tears, but I must hide them; otherwise people would laugh at me, for in this country they do not understand how it is that persons should love their relations. One repents very soon of speaking out one's thoughts, and that is why I live such a solitary life. You are very happy in being able to laugh still; it is a long time since I have done so, though formerly I used to laugh more than any one. Persons have only to marry in France and the desire to laugh will soon leave them.

The King of England is not, I think, in much of a hurry to be married. That monarch is certainly, on account of his merit, one of the greatest kings that ever wore a crown; but between ourselves, if I were maid or widow and he did me the honour to want to marry me, I would rather pass my life in celibacy than become the greatest queen in the world on condition of taking a husband, for marriage has become to me an object of horror.

What is worse in this country than in England is that all the persons who conduct themselves ill, men and women, devote themselves to politics and seek to intrigue at Court, which leads to much perfidy and deception. In whatever country we live, if we are married we must drive jealousy out of our hearts, for it does no good; we must wash our hands in innocency and keep our conscience pure, although we may have no pleasant intercourse and nothing but long and weary hours of ennui. I do not fret myself now about the way the world goes on; I despise it, and I have little taste for being in society. One hears of nothing just now but tragical events; they have lately condemned five women who killed their husbands; others killed themselves.

Nothing is so rare in France as Christian faith; there is no longer any vice of which persons are ashamed. If the king wanted to punish all those who are guilty of the worst vices he would find no more princes or nobles or servants about him; there would not be a family in France that was not in mourning.

FONTAINEBLEAU, 1699.

I receive sometimes very friendly letters from the Queen of Spain [wife of Charles II.]. I am sorry that poor queen is so unhappy. It would be a great blessing for Europe if she could have a child, boy or girl would do, provided it lived; for one does not need to be a prophet to divine that if the King of Spain dies without children a terrible war will arise; all the Powers will claim the succession, and none of them will yield to any of the others; nothing but a war can decide.

I have heard with grief of the conduct of Charles-Maurice in Berlin; if he behaves in that way we shall not continue good friends. I am very angry to know that he is dead-drunk nearly half the day. If I thought that scolding him very severely would correct him I would write to him. It is distressing to think that the only remaining son of our father should be a drunkard.

MARLY, 1700.

It is not a mere tale that the King of Morocco has asked in marriage the Princesse de Conti [daughter of Louis XIV. and Louise de la Vallière], but the king repulsed the proposal sharply. That princess was extremely beautiful before she had the small-pox, but her illness has greatly changed her. She still has a perfect figure and charming carriage, and dances admirably; I never saw any engraved portrait that was like her.

I can understand why people go to Rome, like my cousin the Landgrave of Cassel, to see the antiquities, but I cannot imagine that they should go to be present at all those priests' ceremonies, for nothing is more tiresome. Perhaps some people go for the thirty thousand *dames galantes* who are said to be there; but those who like such merchandise have only to come to France, where they will find them in abundance. Those who want to repent of their sins need not go to Rome; to repent sincerely in their own homes is quite as profitable. Here no one cares about Rome or the pope; they are quite convinced they can get to heaven without him.

I seldom see Monsieur here [Marly]; we do not dine together; he plays cards all day, and at night we are each in our own room. Monsieur has the weakness to think that when he is overlooked at cards he has ill-luck; so I never assist at his games. He has frightened us very much by having a quartan fever; this is the day it is due to return, but, thanks to God, he feels nothing of it yet, and he is in the salon, playing cards.

All letters entering or leaving France are opened; I know that very well, but it does not trouble me; I continue to write what comes into my head.

To Madame de Maintenon.

SAINT-CLOUD, June 15, 1701.^[4]

If I had not had fever and great agitation, Madame, from the sad employment of yesterday in opening the caskets of Monsieur's papers, scented with the most violent perfumes, you would have heard from me earlier; but I can no longer delay expressing to you how touched I am by the favours that the king did yesterday to my son, and the manner in which he has treated both him and myself; and as all this is the result of your good counsels, Madame, be pleased to allow me to express my sense of it and to assure you that I shall keep, very inviolably, the promise of friendship which I made to you; I beg you to continue to me your counsels and advice, and not to doubt a gratitude which can end only with my life.

To Louise, Comtesse Palatine.

VERSAILLES, July 15, 1701.

My health is still much weakened; this is the first time for eight days that the fever has left me. Since the blow that struck me I have had eighteen paroxysms of fever, and I thought it was the will of God to end my sad life; but it was not so. I am left with great lassitude and weakness of the legs, which I attribute to the shock of Monsieur's death; they continued to tremble for twenty-four hours as if from a violent attack of fever. Nothing could have been more dreadful than what I witnessed. At nine o'clock in the evening Monsieur left my room, gay and laughing; at half-past ten they called me, and I found him almost unconscious; but he recognized me and said a few words with much difficulty. I stayed the whole night beside him, and the next morning at six o'clock, when there was no longer any hope, they carried me away unconscious.

I am grateful to you for the share you take in my misfortune, which is dreadful, and I thank you with all my heart. I beg

you to let the Queen-dowager of Denmark know how much I am touched that her Majesty has remembered me in my trouble.

I have need to find, in my sad situation, something to divert my thoughts; everything is forbidden to me at present except walking; my greatest comfort is the kindness of the king, of which he continues to give me many proofs. He comes to see me and takes me to walk with him. Saturday was the day when Monsieur was interred, and though I was not present, I wept much, as you can well imagine.

I have every reason to rejoice in the king's favour, and so has my son, whom the king has made a very great seigneur. I am well pleased for him; we live happily together; he is a good lad with very good feelings.

October, 1701.

My health is now perfect, and to keep it so I drive out as much as I can. All the others hunt daily with the king, and go twice a week to the theatre. I am deprived of those things, as you know, and between ourselves, it is not a little privation to be obliged to forego those two amusements. I walk out often on foot and go a good three miles in the forest; that disperses the melancholy that would otherwise crush me; especially when I hear talk about public affairs of which I had previously never heard a word in all my life. I should be very fortunate if I could understand them as you do, but I never could, and at fifty one is too old to begin to learn; I should only make myself as annoying and irritating as a bed-bug. Apropos of bed-bugs, they nearly ate up the little Queen of Spain on her passage up the Mediterranean in the Spanish galleys. Her people were obliged to sit up with her all night. She arrived a few days ago at Toulon, and went from there by land to Barcelona because, so she wrote me, she could not endure the sea any longer. I would not be in her place; to be a queen is painful in any country, but to be Queen of Spain is worst of all.

I must acknowledge that the death of King James has made me very sad; his widow is in a situation to melt a heart of rock. The good king died with a firmness I cannot describe, and with as much tranquillity as if he were going to sleep. The evening before his death he said: "I forgive my daughter with all my heart for the harm she did me; and I pray God to pardon her, and also the Prince of Orange and all my other enemies." The Queen of England cannot be consoled for the death of her husband, though she bears her sorrow with Christian resignation. I have nothing new to tell you; I walk and read and write; sometimes the king drives me to the hunt in his calèche. There are hunts every day; Sundays and Wednesdays are my son's days; the king hunts Mondays and Thursdays; Wednesdays and Saturdays Monseigneur hunts the wolf; M. le Comte de Toulouse, Mondays and Wednesdays; the Duc du Maine, Tuesdays; and M. le Duc, Fridays. They say if all the hunting kennels were united there would be from 900 to 1000 dogs. Twice a week there is a comedy. But you know, of course, that I go nowhere; which vexes me, for I must own that the theatre is the greatest amusement I have in the world, and the only pleasure that remains to me.

You are wrong in supposing that I have ceased to read the Bible; I read three chapters every morning. You ought not to imagine that French Catholics are as silly as German Catholics; it is quite another thing,—one might almost say it is another religion. Any one reads Holy Scripture who chooses. Nobody here thinks the pope infallible, and when he excommunicated Lavardin in Rome everybody laughed and never dreamed of a pilgrimage. There is as much difference in France from the Catholic of Germany as there is from those of Italy and Spain.

Those who wish to serve God in truth and according to His word should read Holy Scripture every day; otherwise we sit in darkness. I am persuaded that good religion is founded on the word of God, and consists in having Jesus Christ in the heart; all the rest is only the prating of priests. Of whatever religion we be, it is only by works that true faith is shown, and only by them can it be judged who does right. To love God and our neighbour is the law and the prophets, as our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us.

I heard yesterday, through a letter from my aunt, the Electress of Brunswick, of the death of our poor Charles-Maurice. I am sincerely afflicted by it, and I pity you from the bottom of my heart. If Charles-Maurice had not loved wine so much he would have been a perfect philosopher. He has paid dear for his fault, for I am sure that drunkenness shortened his life; he could not keep from drinking, and he burnt up his body.

If the Court of France was what it used to be one might learn here how to behave in society; but—excepting the king and Monsieur—no one any longer knows what politeness is. The young men think only of horrible debauchery. I do not advise any one to send their children here; for instead of learning good things, they will only take lessons in misconduct. You are right in blaming Germans who send their sons to France; how I wish that you and I were men and could go to the wars!—but that's a completely useless wish to have. The higher one's position in life the more polite we ought to be in

order to set a good example to others. It is impossible to be more polite than the king; but his children and grandchildren are not so at all. If I could with propriety return to Germany you would see me there quickly. I love that country; I think it more agreeable than all others, because there is less of luxury that I do not care for, and more of the frankness and integrity which I seek. But, be it said between ourselves, I was placed here against my will, and here I must stay till I die. There is no likelihood that we shall see each other again in this life; and what will become of us after that God only knows.

VERSAILLES, 1704.

There are very few women here who are not coquettes by nature; it is excessively rare to meet any. Before God that is perhaps very reprehensible, but before men it is thought a fair game. The coquettes flatter themselves that, our Lord having shown in Holy Scripture so much charity for persons of their stripe, he will certainly have compassion for them; the cases of Mary Magdalen, of the Samaritan woman, and of the woman taken in adultery make them easy in mind. You must not think that they ever tire of coquetry; they cannot do without it, so to speak, and they never get tired of it. Drunkenness is but too much the fashion among the young women; but just now they are all in a state of complete satisfaction. Nothing is thought of but how to amuse the Duchesse de Bourgogne with collations, presents, fireworks, and other rejoicings:

I have not been able to perform the good work of keeping fast this Lent. I cannot endure fish, and I am quite convinced that we can do better works than spoiling our stomachs by eating too much of it.

Are you simple enough to believe that Catholics have none of the true foundations of Christianity? Believe me, the aim of Christianity is the same in all Christians; the differences that we see are only priests' jargon, which does not concern honest men. What does concern us is to live well as Christians, to be merciful, and to apply ourselves to charity and virtue. Preachers ought to recommend all that to Christians, and not squabble as they do over quantities of points, as if they understood them; but this, of course, would diminish the authority of those gentlemen, and so they busy themselves with disputes, and not with what is more necessary and most essential.

I have in no way approved of the ill-treatment of the Reformers; but as to that, one must blame politics, which is a subject to be treated of *tête-à-tête* and not touched upon by way of the post. I shall therefore follow your good example and write of something else.

The jubilee bull has not converted all the abbés, for there are still a goodly number of them in Paris who court the women. I never in my life could understand how any one could fall in love with an ecclesiastic. Neither you nor your sister are coquettes; I can truly say I recognize my blood. What prevents one here from contracting sincere friendships is that one can never be sure of reciprocity; there is so much egotism and duplicity. And so one must either live in a very sad and wearisome solitude, or resign one's self to many griefs.

VERSAILLES, 1705.

I was never scolded for sleeping in church, and so I have acquired a habit of it which I cannot get rid of. In the mornings I do not go to sleep; but in the evenings, after dinner, it is impossible for me to keep awake. I never sleep at the theatre, but I do, very often, at the opera. I believe the devil cares very little whether I sleep or not in church; sleep is not a sin, but the result of human weakness. I see you are too devout to go to the theatre on Sunday; but I think that visiting is more dangerous than the theatre; for it is difficult in a visit not to say harm of your neighbour, which is a much worse sin than seeing a comedy. I should never approve of going to the theatre instead of going to church; but after having fulfilled one's duties to God, I think the theatre is less dangerous for a scrupulous conscience than conversation.

Many Frenchwomen, especially those who have been coquettish and debauched, as soon as they grow old and can no longer have lovers, make themselves devout—or, at least, they say they are. Usually such women are very dangerous; they are envious and cannot endure others. But I must stop, my dear Louise; I am sweating in a terrible way. The heat is extraordinary; it is two months since a drop of rain has fallen, and the leaves are frying on the trees.

I know very well what it is to be exposed in hunting to a burning sun; many a time I have stayed with the hounds from early morning till five in the evening, and in summer till nine at night. I come in red as a lobster, with my face all burned; that is why my skin is so rough and brown. No one pays any attention here to the dust; I have seen in travelling such clouds of it that we could not see each other in the coach, and yet the king never ordered the horsemen to keep back. The

good night air does no one any harm; at Marly I often walk out by moonlight.

VERSAILLES, 1706.

Amélie [another sister, Comtesse Palatine] writes me that she has answered the king of Prussia, and makes many jokes about it. I would reply to her in the same tone, but since the day before yesterday I have lost all desire to laugh and joke. We received news that, the orders of my son [with the army of Italy] not having been followed, the lines before Turin have been forced; my son has two severe wounds: one in the thigh, but a flesh wound only; the other through the right arm, without the bone being broken. The surgeons assure us there is no danger to life; God grant it! For two days I have done nothing but weep; they tell me he is not in danger, but his sufferings grieve me; my eyes are so swollen and red I cannot see out of them.

The siege of Turin and the catastrophe that has ended it, almost costing me the life of my son, makes me sigh more than ever for peace. I have been so harassed for the last three days that I think I should have lost my mind if the anxiety had lasted longer. I have constantly said that they ought to make those two kings of Spain [she means the claimants of the throne, Philippe V. and the Archduke Charles] wrestle together, and whichever had the strongest wrist should win; such a singular combat to settle the fate of a kingdom would be more Christian than to shed the blood of so many men.

We have here a species of pietists who are what they call quietists; but they are much better than the pietists of Germany; they are not so debauched. The King of Siam, when our king wanted to convert him to Christianity, replied that he thought people could be saved in all religions, and that God, who had willed that the leaves of the trees should be of different colored greens, wished to be worshipped in diverse manners; therefore the King of France ought to continue to serve God in the way to which he was accustomed; while, for himself, he should adore God in his way, and if God wished him to change He would inspire him with the will to do so. I think that king was not far wrong. I believe that a long time will elapse before the last judgment; we have not yet seen Antichrist.

I thank you for the medals you have sent me; but I should like to receive those that are made against France. I already have the most insulting,—those that were struck in the reign of King William. The king and the ministers have them, therefore you need not hesitate to send them to me on the first occasion.^[5]

I have received your letters from Heidelberg and Frankfort, and I answered them; but my letters to you, dear Louise, are all in the packet to my aunt which has been detained so long that we are nearly crazy about it. But that is what the all-powerful dame and the ministers succeed in—far better than they do in governing the kingdom.

VERSAILLES, 1709.

Never in my life did I know so gloomy a period. The people are dying of cold like flies. The mills are stopped, and that has forced many to die of hunger. Yesterday they told me a sorrowful story about a woman who stole a loaf of bread from a baker's shop in Paris. The baker wanted to arrest her; she said, weeping, "If you knew my misery you would not take the loaf away from me; I have three little children all naked; they ask me for bread; I cannot bear it, and that is why I have stolen the loaf." The commissary before whom they took the woman told her to take him where she lived; he went there, and found the three little children sitting in a corner under a heap of rags, trembling with cold as if they had the ague. "Where is your father?" he asked the eldest. The child answered, "Behind the door." The commissary looked to see why the father was hiding behind the door, and recoiled with horror—the man had hung himself in despair. Such things are happening daily.

I am very much deserted here, for every one, young and old, runs after favour. The Maintenon cannot endure me, and the Duchesse de Bourgogne likes only what that lady likes. I have done my best to conciliate that all-powerful person, but I cannot succeed in doing so. So I am excluded from everything, and I never see the king except at supper. I can only act according to the will of others. I was less bound when Monsieur was living. I dare not sleep away from Versailles without the king's permission. It is not wrong, therefore, that I should wish to be with you in our dear Palatinate; but God does not will that here below we should be fully satisfied. You and Amélie are free, but your health is bad; I am lonely, but my health, thank God, is perfect.

You are mistaken if you think that no lamentations are heard here; night and day we hear of nothing else; the famine is so great that children have eaten each other. The king is so determined to continue the war that yesterday he gave up his gold service and now uses porcelain; he has sent every gold thing he has to the mint to be turned into coin.

All that one sees and hears is dreadful; we are living in a very fatal epoch. If one leaves the house one is followed by a crowd of poor creatures who cry famine; all payments are made in notes; there is no coin anywhere; all one's contentment is destroyed till better days appear.

The old lady who is here in such great favour hates me; I have done my best to obtain her good will, but I cannot succeed; she has vowed to me and to my son an implacable hatred. One must do what is reasonable and walk a straight path: God will see to it all.

But that all-powerful lady has always been against me. In the days of Monsieur his favourites feared that I should tell the king how they pillaged Monsieur, and how they troubled me with their profligate lives, and so they wished to get that lady on their side; and to do so, they told her they knew her life, and that if she was not for them, they would tell all to the king.^[6] (I knew from the lady herself that a union existed between them, but she did not tell me its cause, which I learned from a friend of the Chevalier de Lorraine.) She has persecuted me all her life, and she does not trust a hair of my head because she thinks me as vindictive as she is herself—which I am not—and so she tries to keep me away from the king. There is another reason besides: the affection that she has for the Duchesse de Bourgogne. As she knows very well that the king, whom I love and respect much, has no antipathy to me, and that my natural humour does not displease him, she is afraid that he might prefer a woman of my age to so young a princess as the Duchesse de Bourgogne; and that is one reason why she wants to keep me away from the king—which she takes every possible means to do, so that there is no chance of changing matters.

MARLY, 1709.

I wish you could be with us here, just to see how beautiful the gardens are; but one ought to be able to walk about them with kind and agreeable people, and not with persons who hate and despise one another mutually,—sentiments that are met with here more frequently than those of friendship. Last Wednesday I went to Paris; every one was in alarm about the bread-famine. As I was going to the Palais-Royal, the people called out to me: “There is a riot; forty persons are killed already.” An hour later the Maréchal de Boufflers and the Duc de Grammont had appeased it all; we went tranquilly to the opera and returned to Versailles on Saturday.

VERSAILLES, June, 1710.

I have to inform you of the marriage of my grand-daughter [Marie-Louise-Élisabeth] to the Duc de Berry. Monday, the king came to my room at Marly and announced to me that he should declare it publicly the next day. I had been told of it the night before, with an express injunction not to breathe it to a living soul. Tuesday I went to Saint-Cloud to congratulate the princess; Wednesday she came to Marly; her mother and I presented her to the king, who kissed her and presented her to her future husband. She will be fifteen in August, and she is already two inches taller than I. The dispensations from Rome have been sent for, and as soon as they arrive the marriage will take place. I own it causes me a most sincere joy.

VERSAILLES, July, 1710.

This afternoon at five o'clock the contract will be signed in the king's cabinet, and the marriage will take place on the 11th, in the morning, without any pomp; but at night there is to be a grand reception and supper, with the king, of all the royal family. It is a very queer history how this marriage was brought about; but it cannot be written *by post*; it is to hatred rather than attachment that we owe it; but, at any rate, this marriage is better assorted than that of the Landgrave of Homburg, for the husband is nine years older than the wife, which is much better than when the wife is older than the husband.

MARLY, April, 1711.

We have just met with a great misfortune. Monsieur le dauphin [Monseigneur] died on Friday, at eleven o'clock in the evening, just as they thought him out of danger. He first had a putrid fever, which changed into small-pox, to which he succumbed. The king spent the night with him, but forbade us to go there. I went to see Monseigneur's children and found them in a state that would have melted the heart of stones.^[7] The king is extremely affected, but he shows a firmness and

a submission to the will of God which I cannot express. He speaks to every one, and gives orders with resignation. What consoles him is that Monseigneur's confessor assures him that his conscience was in a very satisfactory state; he had taken the communion at Easter and he died in very religious sentiments. The king expresses himself in such a Christian way that it goes to my heart, and I cried all day long yesterday.

VERSAILLES, May, 1711.

I am unworthy to hear good sermons, for I cannot help sleeping; the tones of the preachers' voices send me off at once. We are here in the greatest grief. I have told you already how poor Monsieur le dauphin died unexpectedly. His illness was dreadful. The Duchesse de Villeroy only spoke to her husband, who had been in the dauphin's room at Meudon, and she was infected and died of it.

The king is a good Christian, but very ignorant in matters of religion. He has never in his life read the Bible; he believes all the priests and the canting bigots tell him; it is therefore no wonder he goes astray. They tell him he must act in such and such a way; he knows no better, and thinks he will be damned if he listens to other advice than that of his regular counsellors.

The dauphin was not without intelligence; he was quick to seize on all absurdities, his own as well as those of others. He could relate things very amusingly when he chose, but his laziness was such that it made him neglect everything. He would much have preferred an indolent life to the possession of all empires and kingdoms. In his life he never opposed the king's wishes, and he was as submissive as anybody to the Maintenon. Those who assert that he would have retired from Court had the king announced his marriage to the *guenipe* did not know him; he had himself a villanous *guenipe* for mistress, whom it was thought he had married secretly; her name was Mlle. Choin; she is still in Paris. What prevented the old Maintenon from being declared queen were the good reasons given against it to the king by the Archbishop of Cambrai, M. de Fénelon; and that is why she persecuted that good and respectable prelate till his death.

VERSAILLES, June, 1712.

I thank you for the share you take in my grief on account of the death of the great personages whom we have lost,^[8] and also on account of the frightful calumnies that are being spread about against my son, who is innocent. The fabricators of those lies are confounded, and now ask pardon: but was it not horrible to invent such tales?

I cannot endure either tea, coffee, or chocolate; what would give me pleasure is good beer-soup; but it cannot be procured here; beer in France is worthless.

I hoped that, the king having taken medicine yesterday, H. M. would not hunt to-day, and that I should thus have time to write you a reasonable letter; but the demon of contretemps, as they say here, has come and put himself against it. We hunted this morning, and I did not get back to dinner till mid-day; I have answered my aunt and written her fourteen sheets, so now I have but little time left before supper.

Happily for me I no longer like cards, for I am not rich enough to risk my whole fortune as other people do, and I have no taste for little stakes. Though I do not play, time does not seem long to me when I am alone in my cabinet. I have quite a fine collection of gold coins and medals; my aunt has given me others in silver and bronze; I have two or three hundred engraved antique stones; also many brass pieces which I like equally; I read with pleasure, and therefore I am never bored, be the weather good or bad; I have always something to do, and I write a great deal. When, in one day, I have written twenty sheets to H. H. the Princess of Wales, ten or twelve to my daughter, twenty in French to the Queen of Sicily [Anne-Marie, Monsieur's daughter by Henrietta of England] I am so tired that I cannot put one foot before the other.

MARLY, May, 1714.

We have lost the poor Duc de Berry, who was only twenty-seven years old, and was stout and so healthy he ought to have lived a hundred years. He shortened his life by his own imprudences—but I don't want to talk of such sad matters; it makes me sick at heart and does no good.

It is a good thing for me that he had ceased for several years to love me, otherwise I could not be comforted for his loss.

I own that at first, and even for some days afterwards, I was greatly moved; but having reflected that if I had died he would only have laughed, I consoled myself promptly.

July, 1714.

I cannot express the grief into which I am plunged by the death of my aunt [Sophia, Electress of Hanover, mother of George I. of England, who had brought Madame up, being the sister of her father]; and I have, besides, the misery of being forced to suppress my sorrow, because the king cannot endure to see sad faces round him; I am obliged therefore to hunt as usual.

II.

LETTERS OF 1714-1716.

FONTAINEBLEAU, 1714.

We are here since yesterday; having slept at the house of the Duc d'Antin, called Petit-Bourg, a charming residence; the gardens, especially, are magnificent. I did not come with the king, because two days before leaving Versailles I caught a bad cold in my head accompanied by a terrible cough, and I feared to disgust the king and make the young people laugh by spitting and blowing my nose; so I came in my own carriage with my ladies and dogs. Yesterday they hunted, but I could not go; it used to be great pain to me to lose a hunt, but now I do not care.



A Hunt at Fontainebleau

You think my life is spent in pleasure-parties and amusements; to undeceive you I will tell you just how my existence is regulated. Usually I get up at nine o'clock; I go where you can guess; next, I say my prayers and read three chapters in the Bible, one in the Old Testament, one in the New, and a psalm; then I dress myself and receive the visits of many of the Court people; at eleven I return to my cabinet, where I read and write. At twelve I go to church; after which I dine alone, which amuses me very little, for I think there is nothing so tiresome as to be alone at table, surrounded by servants who look at everything you put in your mouth; and besides, though I have been here forty-three years, I have not yet accustomed myself to the detestable cooking of this country. After my dinner, which is usually over by a quarter to two, I return to my cabinet and rest half an hour, and then I read and write till it is time for the king's supper; sometimes my ladies play *ombre* or *brelan* beside my table. Madame d'Orléans or the Duchesse de Berry, or sometimes my son, comes to see me between half-past nine and ten. At a quarter to eleven we take our places at table and wait for the king, who sometimes does not come till half-past eleven; we sup without saying a word; then we pass into the king's room, where we stay about the length of a Pater; the king makes a bow and retires into his cabinet; we follow him,—though *I* have only done so since the death of the last dauphine; the king talks with us; at half-past twelve he says good-night, and all retire to their own apartments; I go to bed; Mme. la Duchesse plays cards, the game lasting all night till the next day. When there is comedy I go to it at seven o'clock, and thence to the king's supper; when there is hunting it is always at one o'clock; then I get up at eight and go to church at eleven.

I have seen Lord Peterborough twice; he said the oddest things; he has got a mind like the devil, but a very strange head, and he talks in a singular way. He said, in speaking of the two kings of Spain, "We are great fools to let ourselves be killed for two such boobies."

I am really vexed that that old and odious Duchesse de Zell should still be living, whereas our dear electress is dead already.

You probably have heard of the taking of Barcelona. I approve of the people being faithful to a master so long as he shows himself worthy of their affection; but when he abandons them it would be better not to shed so much blood, and to submit peaceably. But those cursèd monks are afraid they cannot live as they choose and be respected as much as they have been under a king of France, and so they preached up and down the streets that Barcelona must not be surrendered. If my advice were followed they would put those rascals in the galleys, instead of the poor Reformers who are languishing there.

October, 1714.

This is, unhappily, the last letter that I shall write you from my dear Fontainebleau; we leave Wednesday, and on Monday our last hunt will take place in the beautiful forest. I feel that the fine air and exercise do me much good; they disperse and drive away sad thoughts, and nothing is so counter to my health as sadness. Last Thursday we hunted a stag that was rather malicious; but one gentleman slipped round a rock behind him and wounded him in the shoulder, so that not being able to butt with his head he was no longer dangerous. Behind my calèche was another carriage in which were three priests,—the Archbishop of Lyons and two abbés; fearing to be attacked by the stag two of them jumped out and flung themselves flat on their stomachs on the ground. I am sorry I did not see that scene, which would have made me laugh, for we old hunters are not so afraid of a stag.

As for what concerns our king in England [George I.] I find it hard to rejoice in his elevation, for I would not trust the English with a hair of my head. I have seen recently what the fine talk of my Lord Peterborough is worth. I wish that our elector, instead of becoming King of England, had been made Roman Emperor, and that the King of England who is here were in possession of the kingdom to which he has a right. I fear that those English, who are so inconstant, will do something before long which will not be to our liking. No one ever became king in a more brilliant manner than King James, being crowned amid cries of joy from the whole nation; yet his people persecuted him so pitilessly that he could scarcely find a spot in which to rest after countless sufferings. If one could only trust the English I should say that it was well for the parliament to be over King George; but when one reads about the revolutions of the English one sees what eternal hatred they feel to kings, and also their inconstancy. The English cannot endure each other; we saw that at the Court of Saint-Germain; they lived there like cats and dogs. I never heard of that philosopher Spinoza; was he a Spaniard? the name sounds Spanish.

King George sent me word by M. Martini that as soon as he reached England he should write to me and keep up a correspondence. Yesterday M. Prior brought me a letter from the king, but it was written by a secretary and not by his own hand. I should not have expected that after the compliment by M. Martini; but I ought not to feel astonished when I think what that king has always been to me—just the reverse of his mother. Whatever happens, I shall ever remember that he is the son of my aunt, and I shall wish him all sorts of prosperity, as I have to-day written to him. The Princess of Wales grieves me; I esteem her sincerely, for I find the best sentiments in her—a rare thing at the present day.

VERSAILLES, 1715.

Yesterday great news arrived about the Princesse des Ursins,—she who has so long governed Spain, and who had gone to meet the new queen, whose *camarera-mayor* she expected to be. Her pride has ruined her; she had written letters against the young queen, to whom they were shown. When she went to meet the queen she would only go half-way down the staircase; then she criticised her dress, and blamed her for being so long upon the road, and said that if she had been in the king's place she might have sent her back.^[9] Thereupon the queen ordered an officer of the body-guard to take that crazy woman out of her presence and arrest her, and at the same time she sent a courier to the king, making great complaints of the lady. The king answered that she could do what she liked in the matter. So at eleven o'clock at night the princess was put into a carriage with a single maid, lacqueys, and guards, and orders were given to take her to France, which was done.

I cannot pity her, for she has always persecuted my son in a horrible manner; she persuaded the king and queen (the one that is dead) that my son wanted to dethrone them and was conspiring against their lives; which is so false that, do what she could, she was unable to justify her accusations, no matter how slightly, in the eyes of the world. For this reason I do not afflict myself at what has happened to her, and that is natural. I am uneasy lest that malignant devil should come here, for she would not fail to fling her poison on my son and on me, from which may God preserve us! I will tell you later whatever happens in regard to that old woman.

We have just received the sad news of the death of the Archbishop of Cambrai [Fénelon]. He is much regretted. He was a great friend to my son. Also the good Maréchal de Chamilly, who was a very brave and worthy man, died two days ago [The Marquis de Chamilly; to him were addressed the famous “Portuguese Letters”].

There is nothing new here. Everybody is talking of the Persian ambassador who made his entry yesterday, February 6, into Paris. He is the oddest-looking being that was ever seen. He has brought a soothsayer with him, whom he consults on all occasions to know if days and hours are lucky or unlucky. If it is proposed to him to do anything and the day does not prove to be a lucky one, he flies into a fury, grinds his teeth, draws his sabre and his dagger, and wants to exterminate everybody. But I am called to go to church and I cannot tell you more just now.

April, 1715.

To-day I am, as they say in our dear Palatinate, as cross as a bed-bug; and I will give you one specimen. The king, wishing to reward the Princesse des Ursins, who has behaved so horribly to my son, trying to make him out a poisoner, has given her a pension of 40,000 francs. There are two other things that have put me out of temper, which are not worth more than that. Such injustices disgust one with life; but we must hold our tongue and never say what we think.

After dinner my grandson, the Duc de Chartres, came to see me, and I gave him an entertainment suited to his years: it was a triumphal car drawn by a big cat, in which was a little bitch named Andrienne; a pigeon served as coachman, two others were the pages, and a dog was the footman and sat behind. His name is Picard; and when the lady got out of the carriage Picard let down the steps. The cat is named Castille. Picard also allows himself to be saddled; we put a doll on his back and he does all that a circus horse would do. I have also a bitch, whom I call Badine, who knows the cards and will bring whichever I tell her—but enough of such nonsense.

England certainly owes much to the Duchess of Portsmouth. She is the best woman of that class that I ever saw in my life; she is extremely polite and is very agreeable company. In the days of Monsieur we often had her at Saint-Cloud; so I know her very well.

You cannot be surprised, my dear Louise, if I often have reason to be sad; for you must have read the long letter I sent to my aunt, our dear electress, by the hands of M. de Wersebé. The rancour that the *vilaine* has against me will end only with her life; all that she can imagine to do me harm and grieve me she never omits. She is more angry with me now than ever because I would not see her great friend whom the Queen of Spain dismissed. My son had begged me not to see her, because she has a furious enmity against him and tried to make him out a poisoner. He has not been contented with proving his innocence; he has insisted that all the documents of the inquiry should be taken to Parliament and preserved there. It is therefore very natural that I should refuse to see such a woman; but the *vilaine* is angry—for like meets like, as the devil said to the coal-heaver. So I must take patience, and not look as if I resented the wrongs done to us.

This morning, as I was washing my hands, my son came into my room and made me a very fine present. He gave me seventeen antique gold coins, as fresh as if they had just come out of the mint. They were found near Modena, as you may have read in the Holland Gazette; he had them secretly carried to Rome. This attention on his part has given me the greatest pleasure,—not so much for the value of the present as for the attention.

As soon as I return to Versailles I will have a copy made of my portrait by Rigaud, who has seized my likeness in a wonderful manner; you will then see, my dear Louise, how old I have grown.

VERSAILLES, August 15th, 1715.

Our king is not well, and that worries me to the point of being half ill myself; I have lost both sleep and appetite. God grant I be mistaken, for if what I fear should happen it would be the greatest misfortune I could meet with. Were I to explain to you all that, you would see; it is so abominable that I cannot think of it without becoming goose-flesh. Say nothing to any one in England of what I have now said to you, but I am very anxious about it.

Mme. de Maintenon has not been ill; she is fresh and in good health; would to God that our king were as well, and then I should be less troubled than I am.

August 27th.

MY DEAR LOUISE,—I am so troubled that I do not know any longer what I do or what I say; and yet I must answer your kind letter as best I can. I must first tell you we had yesterday the saddest and most touching scene that can be imagined. The king, after preparing himself for death, after having received the sacraments, had the dauphin brought to him, gave him his benediction, and talked to him. He sent for me next, also for the Duchesse de Berry and all his daughters and grandchildren. He bade me farewell in words so tender that I wonder I did not fall down senseless. He assured me that he had always loved me and more than I knew, and that he regretted to have sometimes caused me grief. He asked me to remember him sometimes, adding that he thought I should do so willingly, for he was certain I had always loved him. He said also that he gave me his blessing and offered prayers for the happiness of my whole life. I threw myself on my knees and, taking his hand, I kissed it. He embraced me and then he spoke to the others. He told them that he urged harmony among them. I thought he said that to me, and I answered that for that object as for all else I would obey him as long as I lived. He smiled and said: “It is not for you that I said that; I know you do not need such urging; I said it for the other princesses.”

You can believe in what a state all this has put me. The king has shown a firmness beyond all expression; he gave his orders as if about to start on a journey. He said farewell to all his servants, and recommended them to my son, and made him regent, with a tenderness that penetrated the soul through and through. I think I shall be the next person in the royal family to follow the king if he dies; in the first place, on account of my advanced age, and next because as soon as the king is dead they are going to take the young king to Vincennes and we shall all go to Paris, where the air is so very bad for me. I shall have to stay there in mourning, deprived of fresh air and exercise, and, according to all appearance, I shall fall ill. It is not true that M^{me}. de Maintenon is dead. She is in perfect health in the king’s chamber, which she never leaves either day or night.

If the king dies, and there is no means of doubting it, it will be to me a misfortune of which you can form no just idea; and that because of certain reasons which must not be written down. I see nothing before me but misery and wretchedness. Residence in Paris is intolerable to me.

September 6th.

It is long since I have written to you, but it was impossible I should do so. The king died Sunday last, at nine o’clock in the morning. You can believe that I have had many visits to make and receive, and that I have received and written many letters. I am extremely troubled both by the loss of the king and by the fact that I must go and live in that cursed Paris. If I spend a year there I shall be horribly ill; for that reason I want to quit it as soon as I can and go to Saint-Cloud. All this worries me much, but complaining does no good. I am very frank and very natural, and I say out all that I have in my heart. I must tell you that it is a great consolation to me to see the whole people, the troops and parliament rallying to my son and publicly proclaiming him regent. His enemies, who plotted round the death-bed of the king, are now disconcerted, and their cabal has lost ground. But my son takes these matters so much to heart that he has no rest either day or night; I fear he may fall ill, and many sad ideas come into my head, but I must not tell them.

My son has pronounced a speech in Parliament and they tell me he did not speak badly. The young king is very delicate; the ministers who governed under the late king keep their places, and as there is no doubt that they are quite as curious as they ever were, letters will continue to be opened. It is quite impossible that I should keep my health in Paris, for what preserved it was fresh air and exercise, hunting, and walking. But I ought to learn to resign myself to the will of God; the frightful wickedness and falseness of this world disgust me with life; I cannot hope to make the people love me—I am called to sit down to table, so I cannot read over my letter; excuse its faults.

PARIS, September 10th, 1715.

Here we are in this sad town. Last night I spent in weeping, and have given myself a bad headache. My son has given me a new apartment which is, beyond comparison, much superior to the old one; but I am always uncomfortable here. This morning I began to write, but could only accomplish a few lines, I have such a fearful crowd of people about me, and my head aches so that I know not what I write or what I do. Yesterday they took the late king to Saint-Denis. The royal household is dispersed; the young king was taken yesterday to Vincennes; M^{me}. de Berry went to Saint-Cloud; my son’s wife and I came here; and my son came too, after accompanying the king to Vincennes; I don’t know where the others have gone.

I am not surprised, my dear Louise, that the king’s death touched your heart; but what I wrote you was nothing to what we

saw and heard. The king, of himself, was kind and just. But the old woman ruled him so completely that he did nothing except by her will and that of the ministers; he had no confidence in any but her and his confessor; and as the good king was very little educated, the Jesuits and the old woman on one side, and the ministers on the other, made him, between them, do exactly as they pleased,—the ministers being, for the most part, creatures of the old *vilaine*. So I can say with truth that all the evil that was done was not the king's own act; he was misled and imposed upon.

Yesterday they took the young king to parliament for his first *lit de justice*. The regency of my son was enregistered; so now it is a sure and certain thing.

I know that my son wants me to find pleasure in living here; but it is not in his power to make it so. I wish I could have a fever; for I have promised not to leave Paris unless I am ill, and headaches, which I am sure to have as long as I am here, will not count; but as soon as I have a fever I can return to my dear Saint-Cloud. My son has many other things to do than to think of my pleasures and conveniences. He greatly needs that we should pray to God for him; he seems to me resolved to follow the king's last orders and live in amity with his relations. I think that anything he directs himself will go well; but many things must, necessarily, escape his direction. To show that he does not wish to govern without other law than his own caprice, he has already created various councils,—one for civil affairs, one for ecclesiastical matters; there is also a council for foreign affairs, and for war. He can do nothing but what has already been decided upon in those councils; it is difficult to believe that the council on ecclesiastical matters, which is composed of priests, will be favourable to the Reformers. I am quite determined not to meddle in anything. France has too long, to its sorrow, been governed by women; I will not, so far as concerns me, give a handle to any one to lay that blame on my son; and I hope that my example may open his eyes, and that he will not allow himself to be ruled by any woman.

Saint-Cloud is to me a spot of enchantment; and with good reason, for there is not in the world a more delightful residence. But if I had gone there, as I wished, all Paris would have detested me, and out of consideration for my son, I was bound to abstain from going. Do not think, dear Louise, that the king's death has rendered me, as I desired, freer in my actions; we are forced to live according to the customs of the country, and are in no wise masters of our own conduct. In my situation, one is truly the victim of greatness, and one must be resigned to do that for which we have no inclination. Do not be grateful to me for writing to you in the midst of my troubles; nothing soothes the heart so much as to tell our griefs to those we love, who give to our afflictions a real sympathy.

It is true that everybody thought the king dead when Mme. de Maintenon left him; but he had only lost consciousness for a time, and afterwards recovered it. I do not want to say anything more about these sad matters, which affect me cruelly. The king showed the greatest firmness up to his last moment. He said to Mme. de Maintenon, smiling: "I have always heard it said that it was difficult to die; I assure you that I find it very easy." He remained twenty-four hours without speaking to any one; but during that time he prayed and repeated constantly: "My God, have pity upon me; Lord, I am waiting to appear before you; why do you not take me, my God?" He then repeated with much fervour the Lord's prayer and the Creed, and he died recommending his soul to God.

September 17th, 1715.

Parliament has recognized my son's rights to the regency, rights which his birth bestowed upon him indisputably. The king had told him he had made a will in which he would find nothing to complain of; and yet that will is found to be wholly in favour of the Duc du Maine; it is not therefore difficult to divine who dictated it—but do not let us talk of it.

My son has too often heard me speak of you not to know you and appreciate you, and he bids me offer you his affectionate compliments. The duties with which he is charged are far from easy; he finds everything left in a very miserable state; time is necessary to repair the situation; nothing presents itself that is not care and trouble, and for my son, as for me, the future does not appear under flattering colours. More than forty placards attacking him have been posted in Paris, and the dukes and peers are caballing against him in Parliament; but my son is so beloved by the people and the troops that his enemies are having their trouble for their pains, and all they get is the shame of it. I admit, however, that I am very uneasy in seeing him the target of so much animosity.

Ah! my dear Louise, you do not know this country. They laud my son to the skies, but only for the purpose, each man for himself, of getting some profit from it; fifty persons want the same office, and as it can only be given to one, forty-nine malcontents are made, who become rabid enemies. My son works so hard from six in the morning till midnight that I fear his health will suffer.

October, 1715.

I have been to Saint-Cloud while the Duchesse de Berry came here. Between ourselves, I wish to have nothing to do with her; we do not sympathize. I live politely with her, as I would with a stranger, but I do not see her often, and I will not concern myself with anything that she does, or that her mother and her sisters do; I busy myself about my own affairs. The Court is not what it is in Germany, and no longer what it was in the days of Monsieur, when we dined together, and all of us met every evening in the state salons. In these days we live apart; my son takes his meals alone; I the same; his wife the same; she is so lazy she is never able to resolve at a given moment to do the slightest thing; she lies on a sofa all day, and Mme. de Berry follows that example at the Luxembourg; so you see, my dear Louise, that there cannot be any Court. Ah! you do not know the French; as long as they hope to obtain what they want they are charming; but out of fifty aspirants, forty-nine enemies are made, who cabal and play the devil. I know the Court and State too well to rejoice for a moment that my son is regent.

I have kept the word I gave you, and have earnestly entreated for the poor Reformers who are at the galleys; I have obtained a promise—but just now *No* is said to none. I do not know what my son may have said to Lord Stair about the Reformers, but I can assure you that when I spoke to him he gave me good hope, saying at the same time that there were very strong reasons which prevented him from doing the thing promptly.

In the days of Cardinal Mazarin they wrote horrible books against him. He appeared much irritated, and sent for all the copies as if he intended to burn them up. When he had got them all he sold them secretly and made ten thousand crowns out of them. Then he laughed and said: “The French are pretty fellows; as long as I let them sing and write, they will let me do just as I choose.”

Mme. de Maintenon is at Saint-Cyr, in the institution which she founded herself. She was never the king’s mistress, but something much higher. She was governess to Mme. de Montespan’s children, and from that she got a footing in salons, but she went much farther. The devil in hell cannot be worse than she has been; her ambition has flung all France into wretchedness. La Fontanges was a good girl; I knew her well; she was one of my maids-of-honour, handsome from head to foot, but she had no judgment.

I think that many people will declare themselves against King George, for the Chevalier de Saint-George has gone to Scotland. They told me to-night the details of his departure. He was at Commercy with the Prince de Vaudemont and was hunting a stag. After the hunt they sat at supper till midnight. On retiring to his chamber he said he was tired, and told his servants to let him sleep till he called them. Two hours after noon, as he gave no sign of life, his servants were frightened; entering his apartment and not finding him in his bed, they ran in terror with the news to the Prince de Vaudemont. The latter behaved as if he knew nothing, and said that a search must be made immediately. At the end of an hour the prince ordered all the portcullises raised, so that no one was able to leave the château for three days. During this time the chevalier reached Bretagne, and jumped into a fishing-boat which took him out to a Scotch vessel in which there were several lords, with whom he went to Scotland. If to-morrow I hear anything new about this, and do not die in the course of the night, I will tell you more.

No one knows what will be the result of the affair, but I am pained for both rivals. King George is the son of my dear aunt, the electress, which makes him as dear to me as if he were my own child. On the other hand the Pretender is also my relation; he is the best man in the world; on all occasions he and the queen, his mother, have shown me the greatest friendship. I cannot wish harm to either the one or the other.

I ought to tell you that it would be sovereignly unjust on the part of Lord Stair to accuse my son of conniving in the flight of the Chevalier. How could he know what happened at Commercy, or guess that the Pretender was going incognito to Bretagne? My son did not know it for a week; when he heard it the affair was over. The Chevalier de Saint-George is the best and most polite man in the world. He asked Lord Douglas: “What can I do to win the sympathy of my people?” Douglas answered: “Embark, take a dozen Jesuits with you, and as soon as you arrive, hang them publicly; nothing will please the people like that.”

M. Leibnitz, to whom I sometimes write, assures me that I do not write German badly; this has given me great pleasure, for I should not like to forget my mother tongue.

The third daughter of Mme. d’Orléans, Louise-Adélaïde, is well brought up and is not ugly. She firmly persists in being a nun; but I think she has no vocation for it. I do my best to turn her from the notion; but she has always had this folly in her head. She has very pretty hands and a skin that is naturally white and pink.

Mme. d’Orléans has had six daughters. The first died when she was two years old; the second is the Duchesse de Berry;

the third is seventeen, they call her Mlle. de Chartres, and it is she who wants to be a nun; she is the prettiest of them all both in face and figure; the fourth is Charlotte-Agl  , Mlle. de Valois; she will be fifteen in October. Then comes the Duc de Chartres, who is twelve in August. The fifth girl, Louise-  lisabeth, Mlle. de Montpensier, who is in a convent at Beauvais, was six on the eleventh of this month;^[10] and finally Mlle. de Beaujolais, who is only a year old; Mme. d'Orl  ans is again pregnant. No one ever thought of marrying Mlle. de Chartres to the Chevalier de Saint-George; it is true that it was rumoured about, but the persons whom it concerned never thought of it.

Mme. d'Orl  ans is not of my opinion as regards her daughters; she would like to have them all nuns. She is not stupid enough to fancy that that would take them to heaven; but she desires it from pure laziness; for she is the laziest woman in the world, and she is afraid, if she has them near her, of the trouble of bringing them up. So she does not trouble herself about them; she lets them quarrel and do what they like. All that is without my approbation; and they must get out of it as they can. I am convinced that Mme. d'Orl  ans' ailments and weaknesses come from the fact that she is always in bed or on a sofa; she eats and drinks lying down. It is pure indolence in her. That is why we cannot take our meals together. She has not spoken to me since the death of the king.

Mme. de Berry is red. When she wishes to please she ought to talk, for she has natural eloquence. She keeps around her those who constantly deceive her. I say nothing to her now; she has intelligence, but has been very ill brought up. I no longer consider her as one of my grandchildren; she goes her way, and I go mine; I do not concern myself with her, nor she with me.

PARIS, 1716.

There never were two brothers so different as the late king and Monsieur; and yet they loved each other much. The king was tall with fair hair, or rather a light-brown; he had a manly air and an extremely fine face. Monsieur was not disagreeable in appearance, but he was very small, his hair was black as jet, the eyebrows thick and brown, with large dark eyes, a very long and rather narrow face, a big nose, a very small mouth, and shocking teeth; he had the manners of a woman rather than those of a man; he did not like either horses or hunting; he cared for nothing but cards, holding a court, good eating, dancing, and dressing himself; in a word, he took pleasure in all that women like. The king loved hunting, music, the theatre; Monsieur liked nothing but great assemblies and masked balls; the king liked gallantry with women; but I do not believe that in all his life Monsieur was ever in love. He was so fond of the sound of bells that he always went to Paris to spend All Saints night expressly to hear them ring as they do there the livelong night. He laughed about it himself, but declared that ringing gave him the greatest pleasure. I never let him go anywhere alone, except by his express orders. Monsieur was very devout; but he was brave. The soldiers in the army used to say of him: "He is more afraid of sun and dust than he is of guns," and that was very true. The Chevalier de Lorraine was a wicked man, but the rest of his dear friends were no better. Some years before the late Monsieur's death he begged my forgiveness.

My son has studied much, he has a good memory, he seizes everything with facility. He does not resemble either his father or his mother. Monsieur had a long, narrow face, whereas my son has a square one. His walk is like that of Monsieur, and he makes the same motions with his hands. Monsieur had a very small mouth and villanous teeth; my son has a large mouth and beautiful teeth. He is too prejudiced in favour of his own nation. Though he sees every day how false and deceitful his compatriots are, he firmly believes there are no people on earth to be compared with the French.

I assure you that everything passed in all honour between my son and the Queen of Spain. I do not know whether he had the good fortune to please the queen, but he never was in love with her. He says she has a good expression, and a fine figure, but that neither her features nor her manners are to his taste. I certainly cannot deny that he is a lover of women; but he has his caprices, and everybody does not please him. The grand style suits him less than the dissipated, loose ways of the opera-dancers. I often ridicule him for it.

Our little king is now in the Tuileries in perfect health; he has never been really ill; he is very lively, and does not keep in one position for a single instant. To tell you the truth, he is very badly brought up; they let him do just what he likes for fear of making him ill. I am convinced that if they corrected him he would be less quick-tempered; and they do him great harm by letting him follow his caprices. But everybody wants to gain the good graces of a king, no matter how young he is.

Mme. la Duchesse learned from her mother and her aunt [Mmes. de Montespan and de Thiange] to turn people into ridicule; they never did anything else; everybody was a butt for their satire under pretext of amusing the king. The children, who were always there, never knew or heard aught else. It was a bad school, but not so dangerous as that of the

children's governess; for the latter went seriously to work, without any intention of amusing, and told the king all sorts of evil of everybody, under pretence of religion and charity and reforming the neighbour. In this way the king was given a bad opinion of the whole Court, and the old woman was able to prevent the king from liking to be with any others than herself and her creatures—they were the only perfect beings, exempt from all faults. This was really the more perilous because *lettres de cachet* sending persons to prison or exile, followed on such denunciations,—things which Mme. de Montespan never procured. When she had well laughed at any one she was satisfied and went no further.

Mme. la Duchesse has three charming daughters; one of them, Mlle. de Clermont, is very beautiful, but I think her sister, the young Princesse de Conti, is much more agreeable. The mother is not more beautiful than her daughters, but she has more grace, a better countenance, and more engaging ways; wit sparkles in her eyes, also malice. I always say she is like a pretty cat which lets you feel her claws even while she plays. She laughs at everybody; but is very amusing, and turns things into ridicule in such a pleasant way that you can't help laughing. She is very good company,—always gay, and makes the liveliest sallies; she is very insinuating, and when she wants to please a person she can take all shapes; in her life she never was out of temper, and if she is false (as she really is) there never was any one more agreeable; she knows how to adapt herself to every one's humour, and you would think she had a genuine sympathy for those to whom she shows it, but you must not trust her.

PARIS, 1716.

Cardinal de Noailles is certainly a virtuous cardinal of great merit, which all cardinals are not. We have four here, each different. Three have this in common, that they are all as false as gibbet-wood, but in face and temper they are quite different. Cardinal de Polignac is well-bred; he has capacity; he is insinuating, his voice is soft; he is too much given to politics and sycophancy, which makes him commit the faults for which people blame him. Cardinal de Rohan has a fine face, like his mother [Mme. de Soubise, one of Louis XIV.'s mistresses], but he has no figure; he is vain as a peacock, full of whims, intriguing, a slave to the Jesuits; he thinks he governs everything, but really governs nothing; he believes that he is without an equal in this world. Cardinal de Bissy is ugly; he has the face of a clumsy peasant; he is proud, malignant, and false; more dissimulating than any one imagines; a sickening flatterer, you see his falseness in his eyes; he has capacity, but uses it only to do harm. These three cardinals could put the Noailles in a sack and sell him without his knowing it, as the proverb says; they are all three far more shrewd than he. Bissy and Tartuffe are as like as two drops of water; Bissy has just Tartuffe's manners.

Wolves are going about in bands of eight and ten and attacking travellers; the extreme severity of the cold is the reason of this; it is causing great misfortunes. In Paris eight poor washerwomen were at work on a boat; the ice cut the rope like a razor; the boat was crushed into bits; one of the women had the presence of mind to jump from one cake of ice to another, and they had time to throw her a rope and save her; but all the others perished. The head of one was cut off by the ice, and the body of another was cut through; that was an awful thing, and what made it more terrible was that the woman was pregnant, and when the ice cut her open the head of a child appeared. What can be imagined more dreadful than that!

PARIS, 1716.

I had completely won my husband during the last three years of his life; I had brought him round to laugh with me at his weaknesses, and to take what I said pleasantly without being irritated. He no longer allowed any one to calumniate and attack me in his presence; he had a just confidence in me; he always took my part. But previously to that I had suffered horribly. I was just about to become happy when our Lord God took away my poor husband, and I saw disappear in one instant the result of all the cares and pains I had taken for thirty years to make myself happy. I am subject to attacks of the spleen, and when anything agitates me my left side swells up as big as a child's head. I do not like to stay in bed; as soon as I wake I want to be up.

Three or four years before Monsieur's death I had, to please him, been reconciled with the Chevalier de Lorraine; after which he did me no more harm. The chevalier died so poor that his friends had to pay for his burial. He had, however, an income of three hundred thousand crowns; but he was a bad manager, and his people robbed him. As long as they gave him a thousand pistoles for his gambling and debauchery he let them dissipate and pillage his property as they chose. La Grançay contrived to get a great deal of money out of him. He came to a dreadful end. He was sitting with Mme. de Maré, sister of Mme. de Grançay, and was telling her how he had passed the night in debauchery, relating the

utmost horrors, when he was struck with apoplexy, lost his speech at once, and never recovered consciousness.

If I could have given my blood to prevent the marriage of my son I would have done it; but after the thing was done I consulted only concord. Monsieur felt much attachment to his daughter-in-law during the first months, but after he imagined that she looked with too favourable an eye on the Chevalier de Roye [Marquis de la Rochefoucauld] he hated her like the devil. To prevent him from bursting out I was obliged to represent to him daily with all my strength that he would dishonour himself, and his son too, by making a scene, which would lead to nothing but unhappiness with the king. As no one had wished for that marriage less than I, my advice was not suspicious; it was plain I spoke, not from attachment to my daughter-in-law, but for the purpose of avoiding scandal and from love of my son and his family. So long as an outburst could be prevented the thing was at least doubtful to the eyes of the public; an opposite behaviour would have given proof that it was true.

I am now satisfied with Mme. d'Orléans; she shows me great respect, and I, too, do my best to please her in everything, and I live with her now as politely as possible. She never could resolve to dine with the king, her father, therefore she cannot take that pains for me. She is always lying down when she eats, with a little table and her favourite, the Duchesse Sforza, beside her. At mid-day my son is always with her.

PARIS, 1716.

There is nothing surprising in the fact that the dauphin [the Duc de Bourgogne] was in love with the dauphine. She had much intelligence and was very agreeable when she chose to be. Her husband was devout and rather melancholy in temperament, while she was always gay; that served to animate him and disperse his gloom; and as he had a strong liking for women (humpbacked persons always have), but was so pious that he thought he committed a sin by looking at any other woman than his wife, it is very simple that he was much in love with her. I have seen him squint to make himself ugly when a lady told him he had fine eyes; though it was not necessary, for the good soul was ugly enough without endeavouring to make himself more so. He had a shocking mouth, a sickly skin, was very short, humpbacked, and deformed. His wife lived very well with him, but she did not love him; she saw him as others did; and yet I think she was touched by the passion he had for her; it is certain that no greater attachment could be than that of the dauphin for his wife. He had many good qualities; he was very charitable and helped great numbers of officers, though no one knew it. At his birth the public rejoicings were universal. The dauphine could make him believe whatever she liked; he was so in love with her that whenever she looked favourably at him he went into ecstasy and was quite beside himself. When the king scolded him he seemed so distressed that the king was obliged to soften down. The old aunt [Mme. de Maintenon] would also seem so troubled that the king had enough to do to tranquillize her. In short, to get peace the king at last left the old mistress to direct all such domestic matters, and no longer concerned himself about them.

Nangis, who commanded the king's regiment, was not displeasing to the dauphine, but he had more liking for the little La Vrillière. The dauphin was fond of Nangis, and thought it was to please him that his wife talked to Nangis; he was convinced that his favourite had gallant relations with Mme. de La Vrillière.

My son is no longer a young man of twenty; he is forty-two, and therefore they cannot pardon him in Paris for running after women like a hare-brained youth when he has all the weighty affairs of the kingdom on his hands. When the late king took possession of his crown the kingdom was in a state of prosperity, and he could then very well divert himself; but to-day it is not the same thing; my son must work night and day to repair what the king, or rather, his faithless ministers, ruined.

I cannot deny that my son has a great inclination for women; he has now a sultana-queen, named Mme. de Parabère. Her mother, Mme. de la Vieuville, was lady of the bed-chamber to the Duchesse de Berry, and that is where he made her acquaintance. She is now a widow, with a fine figure, tall and well-made; her skin is dark and she does not paint; she has a pretty mouth, and pretty eyes, but very little mind; she is a fine bit of flesh. My son has become alarmingly delicate; he cannot kneel down without dropping over from weakness. When he drinks too much he does not use strong liquors, only champagne; he does not care for any other wine.

PARIS, 1716.

Cardinal de Richelieu, in spite of all his talent, used to have fits of madness; he fancied sometimes he was a horse, and would gallop round a billiard-table, neighing, and making a great noise for a hour, and trying to kick his attendants. After

that they would put him to bed and cover him up to induce perspiration, and when he woke up he had no recollection of what had happened.

The late king used to say: "I own I am piqued when I see that with all my authority as king over this country, I have complained in vain against those tall head-dresses; for not one person has shown the least desire to please me by lowering them. And yet a stranger arrives, an English nobody, with a flat cap, and suddenly all the princesses have gone from one extreme to the other."

Mme. d'Orléans looks older than she is, for she puts on a great deal of rouge, and her cheeks and nose are pendent; moreover the small-pox has left her with a trembling of the head like that of an old woman. She is so indolent she expects to have larks drop roasted into her mouth, but as we do not live in a land where things are to be had for the asking, that is past wishing for. She would like very well to govern; but she does not understand true dignity, she is too badly bred for that; she knows how to live as a simple duchess but not as a grand-daughter of France.

My son's intentions are always good and upright; if some things happen that ought not to be, they are certain to be the doing of some one else. He is too easy and is not sufficiently distrustful; consequently he is often deceived; for wicked people know his kindness and abuse it shamefully. It is a fact that my son has enough education to keep him from ever being bored; he knows music well, and composes, not badly; he paints very prettily; he understands several languages, and he likes to read; he is well-informed about chemistry and comprehends without trouble very difficult sciences. And yet, all that does not keep him from being bored by everything. I have reason myself to be satisfied with him. He lives very well with me and gives me no ground to complain of him. He pays me much attention, and I know few persons in whom he has more confidence than he has in me.

In early days they always called me sister-pacificator, because I did my best to keep the peace between Monsieur and his cousin la Grande Mademoiselle, and also her sister, the Grand-duchess of Tuscany. They quarrelled often, and like children, for the merest nonsense. Monsieur was very jealous of his children; he kept them as much as he could away from me; he let me have more authority over my daughter and the Queen of Sicily than over my son; but he could not prevent me from telling him plain truths. My daughter never in her life did anything to cause me uneasiness.

Monsieur did not like hunting. He never could bring himself to mount a horse—except at the wars. He wrote so badly that he frequently brought me the letters he had written to get me to read them to him, saying with a laugh, "You are so accustomed to my writing, madame, do read that to me, for I don't know what I said." We often laughed over this with all our hearts.

The Duc du Maine thought he could have married my daughter, but certain merchants who were in Mme. de Montespan's apartment overheard her speaking to Mme. de Maintenon of the marriage,—those ladies thinking such common persons would not understand them. But the merchants spoke up and said, "Mesdames, don't try that; it will cost you your lives if you make that marriage." That prevented the thing; for Mme. de Montespan was so frightened she went to the king and begged him not to think of it any longer.

The King of Denmark, Frederick IV., seems to me rather a fool; he wants to pass himself off as being in love with my daughter; in dancing he presses her hand and rolls his eyes up to heaven; he began a minuet at one end of the hall and ought to have ended it at the other, but he stopped in the middle to be told what to do. That distressed me for him; so I rose, took him by the hand, and led him back to his place; I think without that he would be still in the same spot. The good soul does not know what is and what is not the thing to do.

The Pretender has been well received in Scotland and proclaimed king; but I cannot tell you more, for we have very little news from England. The Queen of England is so happy in hearing of her son's safe arrival and good reception. The poor woman is not accustomed to rejoice; her satisfaction has been so great that a fever which she had has passed off. I know from a good source that the pope and the King of Spain furnished the money for the Pretender. The pope gave thirty thousand crowns, and the king three hundred thousand; as for my son, he did not give a penny.

Religion used to be very reasonable in France before the old *guenipe* reigned here; but she ruined everything and introduced all sorts of silly devotions,—rosaries and such-like. If any persons wanted to reason upon that matter she and the confessor sent them to prison or exiled them. Those two caused all the persecutions that were levelled in France against the poor Reformers and Lutherans. That Jesuit with the long ears, Père La Chaise, began the work in union with the old *guenipe*, and Père Tellier finished it; it was thus that France has been utterly ruined.

The old woman was implacable, and when she had once taken a dislike to any one it was for life, and that person became the object of a secret persecution that never ceased. I experienced this; she laid many traps for me, which I

escaped by the help of God. She was dreadfully weary of her old husband, who was always in her room. Some persons assert that she poisoned Mansard; they say she discovered that Mansard intended that very day to show certain papers to the king which would prove how she had made money from the post without the king's knowledge. Never in his life did the king hear of this adventure, nor of that of Louvois, because no one was inclined to be poisoned—that kept all tongues respectful.

Long before his death the king was entirely converted and no longer ran after women; when he was young the women ran after him; but he renounced all that sort of life when he imagined that he became devout. The real truth was that the old witch watched him so closely he dared not look at a woman; she disgusted him with society, to have him and govern him alone, and this under pretence of taking care of his soul. She controlled him so well that he even exiled the Duchesse de la Ferté who posed as being in love with him. When that duchess could not see him she had his portrait in her carriage, in order to look at him constantly. The king said she made him ridiculous, and sent her an order to go and live on her estates. It was suspected, however, that the Duchesse de Roquelaire, of the family of Laval, had made a conquest of the king; certainly his Majesty was not angry about her as he was with the Duchesse de la Ferté. Gossip had a great deal to say about this intrigue, but I never put my nose into it.

PARIS, 1716.

A Frenchman, a refugee in Holland, used to write to me how the affairs of the Prince of Orange were going. I thought that I should do the king a service in communicating to him what I thus heard; I did so. The king was much obliged and thanked me; but in the evening he said, laughing: "My ministers insist that you are ill-informed; they say there is not a word of truth in what was written to you." I answered: "Time will show who is best informed, your ministers, or the person who wrote to me; my intentions were good, monsieur." Some time later, after it was proved that King William had gone to England, M. de Torcy came to me and said that I ought to inform him of the news I received. I replied: "You assured the king that I received false news; on which I ordered that nothing more should be written to me; for I do not like to spread false reports." He laughed, as he usually did, and said: "Your news is always very good." To which I answered: "A great and able minister must have surer news than I, for he knows all things." That evening the king said to me: "You have been ridiculing my ministers." I replied: "I only returned them what they gave."

III.

LETTERS OF 1717-1718.

PARIS, 1717.

M. le dauphin [Monseigneur] never really loved or hated, but he was malicious; his greatest pleasure was in giving pain; when he had a trick to play on any one he began by treating them graciously. In every respect he had the most inconceivable character that could be imagined. When one thought him angry he was often in the best humour; when he seemed content he was cross; never could we guess correctly. He had not heart enough to know what true friendship was; he loved only those persons who procured him amusement, and disliked all others. For over twenty years, as long as he was in the hands of the *grande* Princesse de Conti,^[11] I was on very good terms with him and he had great confidence in me; but after he passed into those of Mme. la Duchesse he completely changed. He behaved as if he had never seen or known me in his life, and as, after Monsieur's death, I never hunted with his Highness I had very few relations with him to his death. If he had had good sense he would have preferred the Princesse de Conti to Mme. la Duchesse, for she had a much better heart; she loved him unselfishly, whereas the other loved nothing in the world, and thought only of her pleasures, her interests, and her ambition. As long as she attained her ends she cared very little for the dauphin, who gave clear proof of his weak-mindedness by his dependence upon her.

When the King of Spain [his son, the Duc d'Anjou] departed the king wept bitterly, and the dauphin too, but he had previously never given to any of his sons the slightest sign of attachment. He never had them in his apartments morning or evening; when he was not hunting he was always in those of the Princesse de Conti, or, later, in those of Mme. la Duchesse. No one would ever have guessed that the sons were his; he treated them as strangers and never called them "my son," always "M. le Duc de Bourgogne," "M. le Duc d'Anjou," "M. le Duc de Berry;" and they called him "Monseigneur."

He lived very well with his wife for two or three years; that is to say, as long as the old woman was satisfied with the dauphine; but as soon as there came a little coolness between them she set herself to make the dauphin believe that his wife did not love him, that she cared only for Bessola [her maid], and that everybody thought him a fool for spending his time in a room where more German was talked than French. He was told also that Bessola was the confidante of the dauphine's gallantries, and helped her to make pleasure-parties with the maids-of-honour. I heard all these details from the dauphine herself [Marie-Anne-Victoire of Bavaria], for her husband, who still loved her, related them to her. But the old witch returned so often to the charge, and gave the dauphin so many opportunities, that he finally became enamoured of Mlle. de Rambure, afterwards Mme. de Polignac, and as soon as that amour began all his friendship for the dauphine departed.

At times the dauphine was not ugly, when, for instance, she had a fine colour. If she had not had such a passion for that faithless Bessola, she might perhaps have been happy. But that woman, in order to rule her and to maintain herself with the Maintenon, made the poor princess the most wretched creature upon earth. She died tranquil and resigned, but they sent her into another world as surely as if they had put a pistol to her head. In giving birth to the Duc de Berry she was so badly managed that she became deformed; before that she had a very pretty figure. From that time she never had an hour's health. The evening before her death, while the little Duc de Berry was sitting on her bed, she said to him: "My dear Berry, I love you much, but you have cost me dear." M. le dauphin was not affected. They had told him so much harm of his wife that he did not care for her, and when he muffled himself up in his great mourning-cloak he burst out laughing. The old *guenipe* hoped (as really happened) to govern the dauphin through his mistresses, which she could not have done had he continued to love his wife. That old woman had conceived such a terrible hatred to the poor princess, that I believe she had given orders to Clément, the *accoucheur*, to manage her ill. What confirms me in this idea is that she nearly killed the dauphine by going to see her in perfumed gloves; she afterwards said it was I who wore them, which was not true.

The dauphine often said to me: "We are both unhappy, but the difference between us is that your Excellency endeavoured as much as you possibly could to avoid your fate; whereas I did my best to come here, and so I deserve what has happened to me." She loved the dauphin as a husband, but more as if he were her son. They tried to make her pass for crazy when she complained. An hour before her death she said to me: "I shall prove to-day that I was not crazy when I complained and said that I was ill." The old *guenipe* sent her agents among the populace to spread a rumour that the dauphine hated France and wanted to create new taxes and lay burdens on the people.



The Dauphine wife of Monseigneur

PARIS, 1717.

Though the late Monsieur received much property with me, I was obliged to give it all up to him,—jewels, furniture, pictures, in short, all that came to me from my family; and I really had not means to live according to my rank and maintain my household, which is very considerable. I have been ill-used in this respect, but it was rather the fault of the Princess Palatine, who allowed my marriage-contract to be so ill-drawn. All the Madames have had pensions from the king; but as these are established on the old footing, they do not afford sufficient means to reach the end of the year. I have been obliged to cede my jewels to my son; otherwise I could not live as I should and keep up my establishment, which is very large; but to do so is, to my thinking, more commendable than to be decked with jewels.

I cannot see why people should have so many different garments. All I have are either full-dress gowns, or my hunting habit for horseback. I never in my life had a dressing-gown, and I have but one wrapper [*robe de nuit*] in my wardrobe to go to bed and get up in.

I was very glad when the late Monsieur, after the birth of his daughter, took a bed to himself, for I never liked the business of making children. When his Highness made me the proposal I said: “Yes, with all my heart, Monsieur; I shall be very glad of it, provided you do not hate me and continue to be a little kind to me.” He promised me that, and we were always very well satisfied with each other.

It was very annoying to sleep with Monsieur; he could not endure that any one should disturb his sleep; I was obliged to keep myself on the very edge of the bed, so that sometimes I fell out like a sack. I was therefore extremely pleased when Monsieur, in good friendship and without bitterness, proposed that we should sleep in separate rooms. I am like you; I cannot imagine that any one should remarry; there is but one motive that I can conceive, and that is dying of hunger and getting one’s bread that way.

I never had but one hundred louis for cards until the death of my mother; after Monsieur received the money of the Palatinate he doubled that allowance.

The Maréchale de Villars runs after the Comte de Toulouse; my son is also in her good graces, and he is not discreet. The Maréchal de Villars came to see me one day, and as he assumes to know much about medals he asked to see mine. Baudelot,^[12] a very honourable and learned man, who is in charge of them, was obliged to show them. Baudelot is not the most discreet of men, and moreover he is little informed as to what goes on at Court. So he made a dissertation on one of my medals to prove, against the opinion of other savants, that a head with horns which appears upon it is that of Pan, and not that of Jupiter Ammon. To prove his erudition the worthy soul said to M. de Villars, “Ah! monseigneur, here is one of the finest medals Madame has; it is the triumph of Cornificius; he has all sorts of horns. He was a great general like yourself, monseigneur; he has the horns of Juno and of Faunus. Cornificius, as you know, monseigneur, was a very able general.” I interrupted him. “Go on,” I said; “if you stop to talk about each medal, you will not have time to show them all.” But, full of his subject, he replied: “Oh, Madame, this one is worth all the rest. Cornificius is really one of the rarest medals on earth. Consider it, Madame, look at it; here is a crowned Juno crowning that great general.” In spite of all I did, I could not prevent Baudelot from harping on horns to the marshal. “Monseigneur knows all about such things,” he said, “and I want him to judge whether I am not right in saying that those horns are the horns of Pan, and not of Jupiter Ammon.” Everybody in the room had all they could do not to laugh. If it had been done on purpose it could not have been more complete. When the marshal had gone, I laughed out; but I had the greatest difficulty in convincing Baudelot that he had blundered.

PARIS, 1717.

It is certain that the Comtesse de Soissons, Angélique-Cunégonde, daughter of François-Henri de Luxembourg, has much virtue and capacity, though, like all the world, she has defects. One may say of her indeed that she is a poor princess. Her husband, Louis-Henri, Comte de Soissons, is very ugly. If her children had been like their mother they would have been very handsome, for all her features are fine; eyes, mouth, and lines of the face could not be better; her nose is a little too large, and her skin not delicate. All her sons, except Prince Eugène, have not been worth much, and any one who resembles Eugène cannot be good-looking. When he was young he was not so very ugly; but he has grown ugly in growing old; he never had a fine countenance or the noble air; his eyes are not bad, but his nose spoils his face; his teeth are too large and protrude from his mouth; he is always dirty, and he wears greasy hair which he never curls. I think a good deal of Prince Eugène, for he is not selfish. He did a fine action: he left behind him here a great many debts; after he entered the service of the emperor and acquired a fortune he paid to the last farthing all that he owed, even to those who had no bill or written engagement with him and never dreamed of being paid. Therefore it is impossible that a man who acted with such loyalty could have betrayed his master for money. The accusations of the traitor Nimtsch are lies and the work of that devil of an Alberoni. I see from the “Gazette of Vienna” which you sent me that Prince Eugène does not intend to let so horrible an accusation drop, but will pursue the Comte de Nimtsch to the death. That is right.

I thank you for the silver coin you send; it comes extremely *à propos*. I have also the Doctor Luther in gold and in silver. I am convinced that Luther would have done much better not to make a separate Church, but to have confined himself to opposing the abuses of the papacy; more good would have come from it.

To go back to what I was beginning to tell you on Wednesday—I assure you that my son has more enemies than friends. His brother-in-law [the Duc du Maine] and his wife are working with the greatest ardour to rouse the hatred of the populace against him. Mme. du Maine is circulating writings against him. The children of the Montespan come of a malignant race.

The little king has a pretty face and much judgment, but he is a spiteful child; he loves no one in the world but his governess, Mme. de Ventadour; he takes aversions to people without any cause, and likes to say the most wounding things to them. I am not in his good graces, but that does not trouble me; for when he is of an age to reign I shall not be in this world and dependent on his caprices. When I advise my son to be on his guard against all these wicked people, he only laughs and says: “You know, Madame, that we cannot avoid what God has ordained for us throughout all time; therefore, if I am to perish I cannot avoid it; therefore I shall do only what is reasonable for my preservation, but nothing extraordinary.”

[This is a favourable opportunity to reveal Madame’s French spelling; the letter is in German, but she quotes her son in French, as follows:

“Vous saves bien, Madame, qu’on ne peust Evitter ce que Dieu vous a de tout temps destines; ainsi, sije le suis à perir, je ne Le pourris Evitter; ainsi je feres que ce qui est raisonnable pour ma Conservation, mais rien dextraordinaire.”]

My son has studied much; he has a good memory; he expresses himself well on all sorts of subjects; above all, he speaks extremely well in public; but he is a man, he has his faults like others. They do harm to himself only, for he is only too kind and good to other people. I tell him every day he is too kind; he laughs and asks me if it is not better to be kind than harsh. I don't know where he gets his great patience; Monsieur had none, nor I either.

When he was fourteen or fifteen years of age he was not ugly; but since then the sun of Italy and Spain so burned him that his skin became a deep red. He is not tall, and yet he is stout, with fat cheeks; his bad sight makes him squint, and his eyes protrude; and he has a bad walk. And yet I do not think he is disagreeable-looking. When he dances or rides on horseback he makes a good appearance; but when he goes about in his usual way he does not appear to advantage. Close by he sees very well, and can read the finest writing, but at the distance of half the length of a room he recognizes no one without spectacles. Though he talks well on matters of science or knowledge, one can easily see that they give him no pleasure; on the contrary, they bore him. I have often observed this to him; he admits that at first he has the greatest desire to know a thing, but as soon as he thoroughly knows what he studies it gives him no longer the least satisfaction. I love him from the bottom of my heart, but I cannot understand how women should be enamoured of him; for he has in no way the manners of gallantry, and he is not discreet; besides, he is incapable of feeling a passion and of being attached for any length of time to the same person. On the other hand, his manners are not polite or seductive enough to make him beloved. He is very indiscreet and relates all that happens to him. I have told him a hundred times that I am amazed that those women run after him so madly when I should think they would rather run away from him. He laughs and says: "You don't know the loose women of the present day. To say you have been their lover pleases them."

PARIS, 1717.

I am very glad that my letters have reached you at last. M. de Torey is no friend of mine; if he could find occasion to do me harm he would not let it escape him; but I do not trouble myself about that. My son knows me well; he knows how sincere my attachment to him is, and it would be difficult to make us quarrel. There is no use in sealing letters with wax; they have a species of composition, made of quicksilver and other substances, which lifts the wax, and when the letters have been opened, read, and copied, they seal them up so adroitly that no one can perceive that they have been opened. My son knows how to manufacture that composition; they call it *gama*. The Queen of Sicily once wrote and asked me if I no longer walked with the king, as in her day. I answered with these lines:—

“Those happy days are gone; the face of all is changed
Since to these parts the gods have brought
The daughter of the Cretan king and Pasiphaë.”

Torey took them to the *guenipe*, as if I meant her—which was true enough; and the king was sulky with me for a long time about it.

The late king contracted a great many debts because he would not retrench his luxury in anything; and that has been the cause of great malversations on the part of business men and their partisans; for when one sou had been lent to the king they turned it by agreement with their creatures into a pistole. Thanks to their rascality, on which no check was put, they have enriched themselves, but the king, and now the country, have been impoverished. My son works night and day, with no thanks from anybody, to bring things back to a good condition. He has many enemies, who pour out against him all sorts of horrid threats, and do all they can to rouse the hatred of the people against him; in which they succeed easily, especially because he is no bigot. He is so little self-interested that he has never touched a farthing of what comes to him as regent, although he has great needs because of his numerous children. The young king has around him persons who are very ill-disposed towards my son,—one especially, though he is his brother-in-law; but he is also the falsest of hypocrites. He has an air as if he would eat the very images of saints, but he is none the less the most wicked man on earth. In the days of the late king when that man flattered any one and spoke to him kindly it was taken as a proof that he had played him some evil trick. He contributed to get his mother sent away from Court so as to please the old woman, and he was so anxious to prevent her return to Versailles that he ordered her furniture turned out of doors, as it were. You can imagine what a man of that nature is capable of doing. I fear him for my son as I do the devil; and I think that my son is not sufficiently on his guard against him. The old woman wants his life; all that they say of that diabolical woman is below the truth.

When my son reproached the Maintenon quite gently for slandering him, and asked her to look into her conscience, where she knew that what she said were falsehoods, she replied: "I spread that rumour because I believed it."

My son said: “No, you could not have believed it, for you knew the contrary.”

Thereupon she answered insolently (and I admired the patience of my son): “Did not the dauphine die?”

“Could she not have died without me?” asked my son, “was she immortal?”

The old woman replied: “I was in such despair at her loss that I blamed the person who they told me had caused it.”

My son said to her, “But, madame, you knew of the report that was rendered to the king; you knew that I had done nothing, and that Mme. la dauphine was not poisoned at all.”

“That is true,” she replied, “I will say no more about it.”

That humpback Fagon, the favourite of the old *guenipe*, used to say that what displeased him in Christianity was that he could not raise a temple to the Maintenon and an altar for her worship.

PARIS, 1717.

I have received to-day a great visit,—that of my hero, the czar [Peter the Great]. I think he has very good manners, taking that expression in the sense of the manners of a person without affectation or ceremony. He has much judgment; he speaks bad German, but he makes himself understood without difficulty, and he converses very well. He is polite to everybody, and is much liked.

He went to Saint-Cyr and saw the old *guenipe*, who keeps herself completely retired there; no one can say that she has meddled in the slightest thing; which makes me think that woman has still some project in her head, though I can't imagine what it can be. She used to reproach me, and say it was a shame I had no ambition and never took part in anything, and one day I answered: “If a person had intrigued a great deal to become Madame, might she not be permitted to enjoy that title in tranquillity? Imagine that to be my case, and leave me in peace.”

She said, “You are very obstinate.”

I answered: “No, madame, but I like my peace and I regard your ambition as pure vanity.” I really thought she would burst her skin, she was so angry.

She said: “Make the attempt; you will be aided.”

“No, madame,” I replied; “when I think that you, who have a hundred-fold more cleverness than I, have not been able to maintain yourself at Court as you wished, what would happen to me, a poor foreigner, who knows nothing of intrigues and does not like them?”

She was angry and said: “Fie! you are good for nothing.”

She never could forgive the king for not having declared her queen. She gave herself out to the King of England as so pious and humble that the queen took her for a saint. The old *guenipe* knew very well that I was a German who could never in my life endure a misalliance, and she imagined that it was partly because of me that the king would not acknowledge his marriage. The hatred she bore me came from that; as long as the queen lived she did not hate me. After the death of the king, and since we left Versailles, my son has not seen the old woman. The mistresses of the late king did not tarnish his glory as much as she did; she has drawn upon France the greatest misfortunes. She occasioned the persecution of the Reformers; she caused the price of wheat to rise, which brought a famine; she helped the ministers to rob the king; she was guilty of the death of the king in consequence of the worry she caused him about that Constitution [the bull Unigenitus]; she made the marriage of my son, and tried to put the bastards on the throne. In short, she threw all things into confusion and ruined them. The ministers also served the king very ill. The king never thought that his will would be sustained. He said to several persons: “They made me write my will and other things; I did it to get peace, but I know that all that will not stand hereafter.”

PARIS, 1717.

I will tell you frankly why I will not interfere in anything. I am old; I need to rest, and do not care to torment myself. I am not willing to undertake anything that I cannot be sure of carrying through to a good end; I have never learned to govern; politics I do not understand, nor State affairs, and I am much too old now to learn such difficult things. My son, thanks to God, has capacity enough to guide things without me; besides, I should excite the jealousy of his wife, and his eldest

daughter, whom he loves better than he does me; from this, perpetual quarrels would result, and that is something that would in no wise suit me. I have been much urged and tormented to use my influence, but I held firm. I said I wished to set a good example to the wife and daughter of my son. This kingdom has, to its sorrow, been too long governed by women, young and old. It is time to let men take the helm. I have therefore adopted the course of meddling in nothing. In England women can reign; but in France, in order to have things go well, men must govern. What advantage should I gain by tormenting myself night and day? I ask for only peace and rest. All my own nearest ones are dead; for whom, therefore, should I give myself cares? My life is nearly over; there remains to me only enough to prepare for a tranquil death, and it is difficult in great public matters to keep one's conscience peaceful.

I was born at Heidelberg, in September, 1652. When I can by my influence help those poor people of the Palatinate in the councils which decide their affairs, I employ it with all my heart. If it succeeds I am very glad; if it fails I think it is the will of God, and I am still content.

The king had a better opinion of my brain than it deserves. He wanted with all his might to make me regent with my son. God be praised it was not done. I should have gone crazy very quickly.

I have never had French manners and I never could assume them; I have even made it a point of honour to be a German woman, and to preserve German manners and ways, which are little to the taste of people here. In the matter of soup, I never eat any but milk soup, or beer or wine soup; I cannot endure broths; I am made ill at once if there is the merest little broth in the dishes I eat; my body swells up, I have colics, and I am forced to be bled; blood puddings^[13] and ham settle my stomach.

The king used to say of me: "Madame cannot endure misalliances; she is always mocking at them." But all the great ladies who contract such marriages are well rewarded; they are usually unhappy in wedlock and ill-treated by their husbands. That is the case of the Princesse de Deux-Ponts, who married her equerry. She finds herself very badly off, but I do not pity her; she deserves it. I can't help laughing when I think how I forewarned her of what would happen. She was with me at the opera and wanted with all her might to have that equerry sit behind us. I said, "For the love of God, Madame, let your Highness keep quiet, and not worry yourself so about Gersdorf; you do not know this country; when people show such anxiety about their servants it is always supposed they are in love with them."

"Cannot persons feel an interest in their people?" she asked.

I said, "Yes; and they can take them to the opera, but there is no need to have them close beside us." I did not know then that I had guessed true.

PARIS, 1717.

For the last six months, in consequence of a terrible blow my son received in the face when playing tennis, one of his eyes is all inflamed and full of blood. He consulted an oculist who prescribed good remedies and made him promise, above all, to restrain himself in eating and drinking, etc.; but he cannot resolve to keep that promise and he leads his usual life. The condition of the eye has therefore grown much worse; my son has had recourse to all the remedies, but he will not interrupt his pleasures, or his business, which gives him a great deal of reading and writing to do. Yesterday, he let himself be bled and purged; to-day he is trying a powder which a priest gave him, having got it from Germany. This powder has begun by causing a great inflammation; he will have to use it two or three times. I really fear it will end in his losing his sight; and you cannot think into what anxiety that idea throws me.

To answer the other points in your letter, I must tell you that it is not allowable to take the communion in one's chamber, unless in case of illness. I should like very much to hear sermons in Advent; but after dinner it is impossible; for if I listen to preaching just after eating it does not depend on me not to go to sleep.

The Princess of Wales is, thank God, safely delivered of a son. It is quite common that pregnancies should be delayed, like hers, to the tenth month. As for me, I have had three children, but without anything extraordinary. I never had a miscarriage, and bore them all to the end of the ninth month. I lost my first son; my doctor, old M. Esprit, killed him as if he had shot him through the head; but all that is ancient history. He was called the Duc de Valois; but as that name is unlucky, Monsieur would not let my second son bear it; that is why he received the name of Duc de Chartres, which he bore till the death of his father; then he took the name of Duc d'Orléans, and his son is now the Duc de Chartres.

PARIS, 1717.

The moment I get an instant of liberty I go to the chapel to pray for my son, whose eye is rather better. He could not at one time distinguish colours; but Cardinal de Polignac came to see him to-day when I was with him, and my son could perfectly discern the cardinal's red robe; which proves him really better. As long as he was taking remedies he kept himself from excesses of eating and drinking and ill-conduct of every kind, but I fear that as soon as he is cured he will go back to his disorderly life. Those loose women will run after him again and get him back to their little suppers, and then his eye will inflame once more. After the visit to my son I sat down to table, and after dinner I read four chapters of the Book of Job, four psalms, and two chapters of Saint John. The two others I put off till this morning.

It is quite true, as you say, that my son's mistresses if they really loved him would think about his life and health; but I see, my dear Louise, that you know nothing about Frenchwomen. Nothing leads them except selfishness and a liking for debauchery; these mistresses think of nothing but their pleasure and money; for the individual himself they would not give a hair. That inspires me with utter disgust; and if I were in my son's place I should find nothing seductive in such connections. But he is so accustomed to them; it is all the same to him what those women are, provided they amuse him. There is also another thing I cannot comprehend. He is never jealous; he will let his own servants have relations with his mistresses. That seems to me dreadful, and proves that he has no love for them. He is so accustomed to eat and drink and lead that debauched life that he cannot tear himself from it. It often afflicts me to the bottom of my heart; but I hope that God will in the end draw him through this labyrinth and wrench him from the hands of these wicked people, who are only wanting to get money from him. But that is saying enough about vexations.

The little king makes me two visits a year much against his will; he cannot endure me. I think that is because I told him once it did not become a great king to be so refractory and obstinate as he is. He was in despair one day because Mme. de Ventadour left him. She said: "Sire, I shall return this evening; be very good during my absence." "No, my dear mamma," he replied, "not if you leave me."

He is well made and has the straightest figure that was ever seen and beautiful brown hair in abundance. His face is pretty, but he only speaks to those persons who habitually surround him. He has intelligence, that is very certain, but he ought to talk more. He has invented an Order which he gives to the boys who play with him; it is a blue and white ribbon, from which hangs an oval piece of enamelled metal, on which is a star and the outline of a little tent which stands on the terrace where he plays. He has eyes as black as jet, and what may be called a noble look; the eyes are much softer than he really is, for he has a violent little temper. His vanity is already dreadful, and he knows very well what reverence is.

PARIS, 1717.

The late king told me a story about the Queen of Sweden, Christina. She never wore night-caps, but she twisted a towel round her head. Once, not being able to sleep, she had music played beside her bed. As the concert pleased her she suddenly protruded her head beyond the curtains and called out, "Devil's death! how well they play!" The eunuchs and Italians, who are not the bravest of the brave, were so terrified at the aspect of that singular figure that they were struck speechless, and the music had to stop. We can still see at Fontainebleau in the great salon the blood of the man she caused to be murdered there. She did not wish that all that he knew about her should come to be known, and she thought certain things would surely be divulged unless she put an end to his life. He had already begun to tattle, out of jealousy for another man who had supplanted him in her good graces. She was very vindictive and given to all sorts of debauchery. If she had not had so much intellect no one could have endured her. She owed her vices to Frenchmen, especially to old Bourdelot, who was the doctor of the great Condé; he encouraged her in her license. She talked of things that the worst men only could have imagined. She was considered to be an hermaphrodite. The Frenchmen who were with her in Stockholm were very depraved men, and it was they who led her into such licentiousness. Duke Frederick Augustus of Brunswick was charmed with Christina; he said that in all his life he had never met with any woman who had so much intellect and was so agreeable and diverting; he never found the time long when he was with her. I told him I heard that her talk was most licentious; he said that was true, but that she knew so well how to present things that they did not inspire disgust. This queen could never please women, because she despised them one and all.

PARIS, 1718.

My last letters from England are to the 16th of January; everything is in a sad state there. They say in Paris that the

refugees are doing their best to excite the king and the Prince of Wales against each other in the hope that a regent may be chosen by the parliament, and that the country will thus escape the authority of the prince. That seems very likely to be true; but it also seems to me that father and son ought to perceive the scheme and thus be led to reconciliation with each other; if not, great evils will result. There is no motive in the world which can justify a son in not submitting to a father, and when, moreover, that father is his king. I believe there has never existed any tenderness between them; our dear Electress used to say it was the son who was in fault. The dear Princess of Wales inspires me with such compassion that yesterday I wept over her. Her departure from Saint James' palace as Countess of Buckenburgh [*sic*] was described to me; it was truly deplorable; she fainted several times when her three little princes, all in tears, took leave of her; that touched me deeply. The King of England, if I may dare to say so, treats her too harshly. She has done nothing to justify his forbidding her to see her children, whom she loves with such tenderness. Where can they be better brought up than beside so sensible and virtuous a mother? According to my ideas, the whole thing is very blamable.

King George was always an artful, dissimulating egoist. I have known that for a long time. Whatever marks of friendship I gave him he never gave me any sign of confidence, and sometimes would scarcely speak to me. I had to drag his words from him, one by one, which is a very unpleasant thing to do; he is completely devoid of good natural feelings. I am not surprised that he takes no notice of you. He cares for no one; but it happens to him, as it does to such people, that in return nobody cares for him. He piques himself on not being civil; I saw this by the manners of those who frequented his Court in Hanover. It is not possible to meet any one more sulky and surly than young Count Platten; if he had not been warmly recommended to me by my aunt, and if his father and mother had not been my good friends, I would have let him be put in a place where he would have had time to make reflections and learn how to live; he fully deserved the Bastille, but serious reasons led me to save him.

PARIS, 1718.

My Lorraine children have arrived; my daughter was beside herself with an excess of joy. I do not find her much changed, but her husband is, dreadfully. He used to have a fine skin and now he has turned to a red-brown and he is stouter than my son. I can say now that my children are fatter than I.

My daughter is gay and content; but her husband seems preoccupied. Yesterday she had a strong attack of fever: God grant it may not be the forerunner of small-pox; for neither the Duc de Lorraine nor my son have had it, and the duke would not fail to be with his wife; three of his brothers have died of that terrible malady; therefore I am very anxious about this. I will write you more about it on Wednesday.

They told me yesterday that a nun has just died who was one hundred and thirty years old; she had a long old age; I don't envy it; if one could stay young it would be another thing and would make one's mouth water for it.

The poor Princess of Wales causes me real pain. In a letter of the 3rd of this month she tells me that her husband and she have three times asked pardon of the king as they would ask it of God, and could not obtain it. I cannot understand such a thing. I fear that the prince may be concerned in his mother's trouble. I have an idea that the King of England believes he is not his son; for it does not seem possible that he should act with his own child as he has been acting. But, in any case, it appears to me that if he publicly recognizes him as his son he ought to treat him as a son, and not behave so rigorously to a princess who, in all her life, never did anything against him and has always honoured and loved him as a father. From what I see and know, I think no good will ever come of it; the irritation is too great. But the king had better put an end to the matter, for it leads to a hundred impertinent things being said, and renews certain old and villanous tales that had better be forgotten. May God guide all for the best! I have been told that a sort of petition has been sent to the Prince of Wales in which it was said that if he had any honour he would admit that the kingdom did not belong to him, but to the legitimate sovereign, now called The Pretender; who was the son of James II. as surely as he, the prince, was the son of Comte Königsmarck. It was terribly insolent.

PARIS, 1718.

My Lorraine children leave me in three days; my heart is full; my daughter would gladly have stayed longer; but the duke was anxious to return. My daughter is, thank God, so firmly fixed in good principles that she can mix in all society without fear of contamination. But nothing was ever seen like the youth of the present day; it makes one's hair stand on end. I know a daughter who encourages the debauchery of her father; she is not ashamed to procure him a pretty waiting-maid, and her mother looks on and lets it be done, so that she may be left in peace [evidently the Duchesse de Berry]. In

short, one sees and hears of nothing but shocking things. My daughter tells me that though I wrote them to her she could not believe me, until she saw them daily with her own eyes. Youth no longer believes in God, and neglects all exercise of religion; consequently God abandons it. It is sad to live in a period when honest people have such surroundings; it inspires universal disgust. I thank God that my daughter knows what virtue is and has a righteous horror for the life that people are leading; that is a great comfort to me.

I hear that in Germany the princesses are beginning to go about and act as they do in France; it was not so in my day. The times have come, as Holy Scripture says, when seven women run after one man; never were women what they are at present; they act as if their only happiness was sleeping with men. What one sees and hears here daily, even about the most eminent personages, is not to be written down. When my daughter lived here it was not so; therefore she is in a state of astonishment that puts her sometimes beside herself and has more than once made me laugh. She cannot accustom herself to see, openly at the opera, women who bear the noblest names behave to men with a familiarity that indicates something very different from hatred. She says to me sometimes, "Madame! Madame!"

I answer: "Well, my daughter, what can I do? those are the manners of the day."

"But such manners are infamous," she replies, with truth. Never was the mercy of God needed as it is now, for this epoch of ours is terrible. One hears of nothing but quarrels, disputes, robberies, murders, and vices of all kinds; the old serpent, the devil, has shaken off his chains and reigns in the air. It behooves all good Christians to give themselves up to prayer.

The Princess of Wales writes me that the Countess of Shrewsbury [Madame spells the name Schoresburg] flung herself at the knees of the king to ask pardon for her brother, who is condemned to be hanged. The king replied that if he granted that pardon he should rouse the anger of the English, who would say the guilty man was spared because he was a foreigner, whereas were he English he would be hanged without pity. He deserved severe punishment, but I pity his sister; it is a dreadful thing for nobles to hang on a gibbet. Things are going from bad to worse in England, and I dare write nothing more upon that subject. All Paris says that King George intends to declare publicly that the Prince of Wales is not his son, and, to injure him still further, that he means to marry the Schulenberg, now Duchess of Munster. I told this to Lord Stair; he answered that nothing of the kind would happen, and I need not trouble myself.

In England, and in France too, the dukes and lords have such excessive pride that they think themselves above everybody; and if allowed to have their way they would consider themselves superior to the princes of the blood; some of them are not really nobles. I rebuked one of our dukes very neatly one day. As he was placing himself at the king's table above the Prince de Deux Ponts I said, quite loud: "How comes M. le Duc de Saint-Simon to be pressing up to the Prince de Deux Ponts? does he want him to take one of his sons as page?" Everybody laughed so loud that he had to go away.

PARIS, 1718.

Mme. de Berry has made my daughter a very pretty parting present; it is a commode, or rather a table with drawers, in which are all kinds of stuffs, scarfs, coiffures, etc., in the last fashion. The commode is decorated with gilt ornaments worth a thousand pistoles. My son gave his sister a *necessaire*, that is to say, a small square chest containing whatever is necessary for taking tea, coffee, and chocolate. The cups are in white porcelain with raised designs in gold and enamel.

My daughter has postponed her departure till Wednesday; the day will come soon enough, for whatever grieves us comes more surely and quickly than what gladdens us. The king owes a great deal of money to the Duc de Lorraine, and on account of that debt he has given him one hundred thousand francs to pay the costs of this journey.

The Prince of Wales has done a fine action, and if that does not touch the King of England nothing will ever restore peace between them. Emissaries went to the prince and urged him to put himself at the head of their party. He answered that never in his life would he belong to any party against his father and king. The King of England is a bad man; he had no consideration for his mother, who loved him tenderly, and without whom he never would have been King of England. None of her children, even the Queen of Prussia, whom she adored, ever treated her as they ought.

My Lorraine children are satisfied with me, and I with them. I am also more satisfied with my grand-daughter the Duchesse de Berry, who behaved very well to them. She has good judgment and she shows a disposition to return to religion and a disgust for vice. I hope that God will have pity upon her and grant her the mercy of a sincere conversion. If she had been properly brought-up she would have turned to better things, for she has capacity, and a good heart; also

she has, undoubtedly, intellect, and is never captious. I tease her sometimes, and tell her she only fancies she likes hunting; for at bottom it is only a liking for change of place. She really cares for nothing but the death of the game, and she prefers that of a boar to a stag, because it procures her good blood-puddings and sausages. She amuses herself as much as she can; one day she hunts, another she drives, on a third she goes to a fair; sometimes to see the rope-dancers, or to the comedy or the opera; but always in a scarf, never in a gown with a body to it. She sometimes laughs about her figure and her waist. Her flesh is very firm, and her cheeks are as hard as stones.

I once made the Comtesse de Soissons laugh with all her heart when she asked me: "How is it, Madame, that you never look at yourself when you pass a mirror, as other people do?" I answered: "Because I have too much vanity to like to see myself, ugly as I am." There cannot be in the whole world more villanous hands than mine. The late king often reproached me for them, and made me laugh heartily myself. As I never in my life could boast of having anything pretty about me, I took a way of laughing myself at my own ugliness; and that has answered, for indeed I have often found cause to laugh.

Mme. de Berry does not eat much at dinner, and it is impossible that she should, because she makes them bring her, before she gets up, all sorts of things to eat; she never stirs from her bed till mid-day; at two o'clock she sits down to table, and does not leave it till three; she takes no exercise; at four they bring her eatables of all kinds, fruits, salad, and cheese; at ten she sups, and goes to bed between one and two o'clock; she drinks the strongest brandy.

The youth of both sexes in France lead the most reprehensible life; the more licentious it is, the better they think it. That may be very nice, but I confess I do not think it is. They do not follow my example in having regular hours; but I am determined not to alter my conduct to suit theirs, which seems to me that of sows and hogs.

Nothing in the world disgusts me so much as the taking of snuff; it makes all noses horrible and spreads a fetid odour. I have known persons with sweet breath who in six months after they took to tobacco, smelt like goats. With noses besmeared with snuff they look, forgive me the expression, as if they had tumbled into a cesspool. The king detested the habit, but his children and his grandchildren persisted in it, though they knew how he disliked it. Persons should abstain altogether, for if they take a little they soon want to take much. People call it the magic herb, because those who once begin to use it cannot go without it.

PARIS, 1718.

I received a letter yesterday from my daughter; she and her husband are, thank God, safely back at Lunéville in good health. She sends me the measure of the height of her eldest son, taken the week before he was eleven years old; he is just as tall as the Duc de Chartres, who will be fifteen next July. I am afraid my grandson Lorraine is going to be a giant, for the Duc de Chartres is not small for his age. All my Lorraine children are robust; their mother is healthy and always well; she is not good for nothing like Mme. d'Orléans. Never did any one hear of such laziness as hers. She has had a sofa made on which she can lie while playing lansquenet; we laugh at her, but it does no good. She plays cards lying down; she eats lying down; she reads lying down; in short, she spends nearly all her life lying down. It must be bad for her health; and in fact, she is almost always ill; one day she complains of her head, another of her stomach. But it seems, in spite of that, she can make robust children; her three eldest daughters are strong and healthy; the first and third are tall and stout; they are built like men,—Mlle. de Valois especially.

The Montespan, the *guenipe*, and all the waiting-women made Mme. d'Orléans believe that she did my son great honour in consenting to marry him. She cannot endure any contradiction on the subject of her vanity in being daughter of the king; she does not comprehend the difference between legitimate and bastard children; her nature is proud and full of vanity; my son often calls her in jest Madame Lucifer. She takes all the flattering things that are said to her as her right. She thinks her husband prefers his eldest daughter, the Duchesse de Berry, to her; the daughter has no great affection for her mother.

PARIS, 1718.

The person whom I hope to see correct herself [the Duchesse de Berry] has judgment and a good heart. One might hope for her return to better ways if she were not in the midst of such bad company; her aunts and cousins on the maternal side also set her a bad example, for they lead the most irregular lives. The mother acts only from caprice; one day she hates her daughter without knowing why; another she approves of all she does, good or bad; that makes me fear that the good

resolutions made at Easter will have no results, and that the devil will return to the house he left, accompanied by seven other evil spirits more wicked than himself, as Holy Scripture tells us. In short, one sees and hears nothing here but grievous things; I can do nothing; and I am most sincerely afflicted. My daughter did not stay here long enough for her good example to have any effect. They asked me how I managed to bring her up so well; I answered: by always talking reason to her; by showing her why such or such a thing was good or bad; by never passing over any foolish caprice; by striving as much as possible that she should not see bad examples; by not disheartening her with attacks of ill-humour; by praising virtue, and inspiring her with a horror of vice of all kinds. That is how I brought up my daughter, who, thanks be to God, has won the respect of all. But it is not to be supposed that we can bring up children without giving ourselves great trouble; vigilance and activity are indispensable.

In Germany there is one good thing: those who put no curb upon their conduct are despised. Here it is not so; youth imagines that the lectures of old persons are simply the result of bitterness in those who did the same things themselves in other days. People with bad reputations are just as well received and treated as those who have always led good lives; and it is that sight which ruins youth.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1718.

I write you with a troubled heart, and yesterday I wept the whole morning. The good and pious Queen of England died at seven o'clock yesterday morning at Saint-Germain. Assuredly she is now in heaven. She did not keep a penny for herself, but gave all she had to the poor; she supported whole families; she never said an unkind thing of any one, no matter who, and if others began to talk to her about their neighbours, she would say: "If it is harm of any one, I beg you not to tell me." She bore her misfortunes with perfect resignation; she was polite and agreeable, though far from being handsome; she was always cheerful and was constantly praising our Princess of Wales. I loved her well, and her death grieves my heart. She died with sincere satisfaction, thanking God for delivering her from this world. I think, as you do, that we may look upon her as sainted; more so than her husband; though I believe that he is also in heaven; he suffered with great resignation. The queen had great firmness, and true royal qualities, much generosity, politeness, and judgment. She used to joke me about my liking for the theatre. She told me once, laughing, that there had been a time when she could not go out, because her horses were dead and she had no money to buy others, but she never complained of her misfortunes.

She was very thin, but more so in the body than in her face, which was long, the eyes spiritual, the teeth white and large, the skin wan, which showed all the more because she never wore rouge; she had a good expression of countenance, and was always very clean. My son, out of compassion for her poor servants, has allowed quite a number of them to keep their pensions.

It is perfectly false that she left great sums of money behind her. She supported her son, as well as her household; she gave pensions to most of her ladies; she maintained whole families of English people, and deprived herself of necessaries to succour the poor in hospitals. In the matter of cupidity she was not an Italian, for she never laid a penny aside. It may truly be said that she had all the royal virtues. Her sole fault (for no one is perfect) was in pushing her piety to such extremes; but she paid dear for that, as it was really the cause of all her misfortunes. She could not make any savings while living in France, for her pension was paid irregularly, and she was forced to borrow money and make debts. It is not true that her servants pillaged her furniture. She was lodged at Saint-Germain, where the furniture belongs to the king. Few queens of England have been happy; and the kings themselves in that land have not had much to make them so.

PARIS, 1718.

Mme. de Berry has nursed her mother through an illness with the devotion of a Gray Sister. I should be very ungrateful if I did not feel attachment to her, for she shows me all possible friendship and treats me with such politeness that I am often quite touched by it. The Maintenon was so afraid that the king would like the Duchesse de Berry, and thus be detached from the dauphine, that she did her as many ill-turns as she could. But after the death of the dauphine she patched matters up, though, to tell the truth, the liking of the king for the duchess was never great.

Nothing new from England: the king is defiant and suspicious. The English are wily and think only of their own interests; they see very well that they can fish in troubled waters, and that as long as there is ill-will between father and son, the king will not think of tightening his authority upon them. They therefore endeavour to keep up the ill-temper that is natural

to him. I do not believe he will return to Hanover as soon as some people think. I heard from the Princess of Wales yesterday that she had written to the king a most submissive letter; the king answered it harshly and made her many reproaches on her behaviour. He will get himself laughed at for behaving in that way; for the good reputation of the princess is perfectly established. I cannot comprehend the king's behaviour.

IV.

LETTERS OF 1718-1719.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1718.

Historians often tell lies. They say in the history of my grandfather, the King of Bohemia, that my grandmother, the queen, carried away by her ambition, never left her husband a moment's peace until he declared himself king. There is not a single word of truth in all that. The queen thought of nothing but seeing comedies and ballets and reading novels. They also say in the history of the late king that it was from generosity he retired from Holland and consented to make peace. The truth is that Mme. de Montespan, after giving birth to a daughter (now Mme. la Duchesse), had returned to Versailles, and the king longed to see her.

They also attribute the first war in Holland to the king's ambition, whereas I am positively sure that war was undertaken because M. de Lionne, then minister, was jealous of his wife on account of Prince William of Furstemberg. To get the prince out of France he began the war against Holland and the emperor. If historians lie in that way about things that have passed before our noses, what are we to believe as to the things that are far away from us and happened a great many years ago? I think that histories, except those in Holy Writ, are as false as novels; the only difference is that the latter are more amusing.



Mme. la Duchesse

Nothing new here. I am told that yesterday a man, wanting to beat his wife, with whom he was displeased, prayed thus: "My good God, command that the blows I am about to give thy servant may correct her and make her virtuous."

I went to Paris yesterday to see my son and his family and be present at the representation of a new play, called "Artaxerxes," in which there was nothing extraordinary, though there were one or two fine points. On entering my box they gave me your letter of the 7th.

I am so well at Saint-Cloud, where I am tranquil and happy, whereas in Paris I am never allowed an instant of rest; one person brings me a petition, another requests me to use my influence, another solicits an audience, another demands an answer to all the letters he has written, until I really cannot bear it any longer. And then people are surprised that I am not charmed with my fate! In this world great people have their troubles as well as little people; that is not surprising; but what is very annoying for the first is that they are always surrounded by a crowd, so that they cannot hide their griefs nor indulge them in solitude; they are always on exhibition.

My son does not like the country, he cares for nothing but the life of cities. In that he resembles Mme. de Longueville, who was extremely bored in Normandy, where her husband lived. Those about her said, "Good God! madame, ennui is gnawing you to death; why not take some amusement? Here are horses and dogs and forests; will you hunt?"

"No," she said, "I don't like hunting."

"Will you embroider?"

"No, I don't like embroidery."

"Will you take a walk, or play at some game?"

"No, I don't like either."

"Then what will you do?" some one asked her.

She answered: "I can't say; but I don't like innocent pleasures."

This Duchesse de Longueville was sister of the Prince de Condé. She had led a very irregular life, but afterwards repented and did penance, and never ceased to fast and pray for the rest of her days. She changed so much that no one could imagine she had ever been handsome; her figure alone preserved its grace—but these are old tales.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1718.

Nothing new, except that my son came here yesterday afternoon and brought me the decree which alters the legal value of the currency. The *louis d'or* will henceforth be worth thirty-six francs; those who have a great deal of money will profit finely. I am not of that number; it is a long time since money and I have kept company.

You ask me if foreigners professing the Lutheran religion can obtain military employments here. No, they are never admitted except into the Alsace regiment and the Swiss corps.

All parliament is unchained against my son, and it is certainly sustained by the eldest of the bastards [Duc du Maine] and his wife. As soon as any one speaks ill of my son and shows himself dissatisfied, the duchess invites him to Sceaux, cajoles and pities him, and spares nothing to excite him still further against my son. I am amazed at his patience. He has courage, goes his straight road, and does not fret himself about anything. The parliament of Paris has made an appeal to all the other parliaments of France to unite with it; but none as yet have committed that folly; on the contrary, they have shown themselves faithful to my son. Everything has been done to rouse the people against him by spreading libels, but so far without effect; I think more would have been produced if the bastard and his wife had not been mixed up in the matter, because they are detested in Paris. I think what prevents my son from acting with vigour against the Duc du Maine is, first, that he dreads the tears and anger of his wife, and next, that he loves his other brother-in-law, the Comte de Toulouse.

My son will soon find means to pay the debts of the late king, for Law (or Lass as they call him in France) is an Englishman who has great talent. The people are not more pressed than they were in the days of the king, but they are not relieved, and my son's enemies profit by that unfortunate circumstance to rouse the public hatred against him. It is false that he accumulates money; he has never touched what comes to him as regent. I do not believe there exists in the world a more disinterested being; he is even too much so; he makes beggars of his children. Nearly all the tales told in the gazettes about him are lies.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1718.

I thought M. Law was an Englishman but it seems he is a Scotchman; and in point of fact horribly ugly; but he appears to be a worthy man and he has much talent; he came near dying yesterday of an attack of colic. Parliament is not quiet yet; it

still makes remonstrances. Everything is so horribly ruined in the kingdom that my son will never in all his life have rest or satisfaction again.

The wife of the humpback [Duchesse du Maine] desired to have an interview and explanation with my son. She spoke with emphasis, as she does when she acts comedy, and told him he ought not to believe that the answer to Fitzmaurice's book emanated from her; that a princess of the blood like herself did not condescend to write libels; that Cardinal de Polignac [her lover] had been employed in far too great affairs to meddle in such trifles; and that M. de Malézieux was too great a philosopher to know about anything but science; and as for herself, she was solely occupied in bringing up her children and making them worthy of the rank of princes of the blood—of which they were unjustly deprived. My son confined himself to saying: "I have reason to believe that those libels were written in your house and for you; persons in your service have sworn that they saw them written; I cannot be made to either believe or disbelieve things." As to her last words he said nothing in reply, and went away. The lady boasted everywhere of the energy and firmness with which she spoke to him.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1718.

Parliament thwarts my son and tries more than ever to excite the bourgeoisie and the populace of Paris against him, and great calamities may result. Every night in going to bed I thank God that no evil has happened during the day. Many persons here would like to have the King of Spain for king; he is a weak man and could be managed more easily than my son. Every one thinks solely of his own interest. It is asserted that the King of Spain has rights to the throne of France, and that a great wrong was done when he was induced to renounce his country. All this is said in view of the possible death of the little king. If he should die, my son would be king, but he would not be in greater safety than he is at this moment, and that death would be a great misfortune for him.

I have never known such a summer as this. It has not rained for weeks and the heat increases every day; the leaves on the trees are shrivelled as if a fire had gone over them. There are prophecies that rain will begin to fall on Wednesday. God grant it! but until it rains no one will see me in Paris. We think it is hot here, but every one who comes from Paris exclaims, "Oh! how cool Saint-Cloud is!" Paris is horrible, very hot and stinking; the streets have such a shocking smell one can't endure it; the extreme heat has made the meat and the fish rot, and that, joined to the crowds of people who relieve themselves in the streets, makes an odour so detestable that it cannot be borne.

SAINT-CLOUD, August 30, 1718.

Parliament had formed the fine project, if my son had postponed action twenty-four hours, to make the Duc du Maine ruler of France by declaring the king major and giving to the duke the sole direction of affairs. But my son has disconcerted all this by removing the Duc du Maine from the king and degrading him to his proper rank. They say that the president of parliament was so frightened that he sat petrified as if he had seen the head of Medusa. But Medusa herself could not stop the fury of the Duchesse du Maine. She launched into horrible threats, and said publicly she would soon find means to give the regent a fillip that should make him bite the dust. It is thought the old *guenipe* is intriguing underhand in this matter with her pupil.

I went this morning to Paris where there is great uproar. My son made the king hold a *lit de justice*, to which the parliament was summoned, and was formally enjoined, in the king's name, not to meddle with the government, but to keep to its own province, that of judging cases and doing justice. The new Keeper of the Seals was installed in office, and as it was known positively that the Duc du Maine and his wife were exciting parliament against the king and against my son, the superintendence of the king's education was taken from him and given to M. le Duc; he was also deprived, he and his children, of the right to be treated as princes of the blood; but they maintained the younger brother in all his privileges because he has always conducted himself well.

The parliament people and the Duchesse du Maine are so furious against my son that I am constantly afraid they will assassinate him. The duchess makes the most insulting speeches; she said at table: "They say that I push parliament to revolt against the Duc d'Orléans; but I despise him too much to take such a noble vengeance against him—I shall know how to avenge myself otherwise." You see what a fury that woman is, and whether I have not good reason to be in a continual agony.

I know all about the tragical affair of the czarewitch; an exact account of it has been rendered to my son by the people over there. There are many lies about it in the newspapers; the czar is not as barbarous as he was before he travelled here and to other Courts. The czarewitch had taken part in a plot the object of which was to kill his father; it was from papers written by his own hand that he was condemned to death. He began by denying everything, and they could not have convicted him if his mistress had not betrayed him and given up his papers. My son told me last night at the theatre that the czar had assembled a great Council, in which were the bishops and all the councillors of State. He had his son brought before them, embraced him, and said: "Is it possible that after I spared your life you were trying to assassinate me?" The prince denied everything. Then the czar gave to the Council the letters which had been seized, and said: "I cannot judge my own son; judge him, and let him find mercy and not be proceeded against by the full rigour of the law." The Council unanimously condemned the prince to death. When the czarewitch heard the sentence he was overcome with emotion and remained some hours without being able to speak. Then he asked to see his father once more before he died. He confessed everything to him and begged his forgiveness with tears. He lived two days after that, and he died in the greatest repentance. Between ourselves, I think they poisoned him, so as not to have the shame of seeing him in the hands of the executioner. It is a dreadful story and has the air of a tragedy; it is like those of Livius Andronicus.

I am still very uneasy on the subject of my son. He has unfortunately many enemies, but still more false friends; everything is to be feared from both. One of my grand-daughters is determined to be a nun, in spite of my wishes and those of her father. The mother has brought her children up in a way that is a matter of derision and shame; I am forced to see it daily; but all that I could say would do no good.

My heart is full when I think that is the day when our poor Mlle. de Chartres is to make her profession. I have represented to her all I could think of to turn her from that cursed resolution, but without result. In convents the nuns take the names of saints; my grand-daughter has taken that of Sister Batilde. No one is afflicted to the point of weeping, which would surely have happened to me had I been present at her profession. I do not know the motives that determined her; she only told me that she felt herself perfectly capable of enduring the life.

Mlle. de Valois, the fourth daughter, is not on good terms with her mother, who tried in vain to make her marry the Prince de Dombes, the eldest son of the Duc du Maine. The mother constantly reproaches the daughter and tells her that if she had married her nephew the misfortune which has fallen upon her brother would never have happened. She is so unwilling to have her daughter before her eyes that she has asked me to keep her for a while with me.

The old *guenipe* must think herself immortal to still wish to reign though she is eighty-three years old. The blow which struck the Duc du Maine has shaken her roughly. But she has not lost all hope, and she is so little scrupulous as to the means of reaching her ends, that I am very uneasy, for I know what usage she can make of poison. What has happened to the Duc du Maine is a terrible blow to her, and my son is never upon his guard; he goes about the environs at night in strange carriages; he sups in one place and then in another with his companions, among whom are many who are quite worthless; they are clever enough, but have no good quality.

People talk in diverse ways of the Duchesse du Maine. Some people say she beat her husband and broke the mirrors in her room to bits, also everything else that was breakable when she received the news of his overthrow. Others say she never said a word and only wept. M. le Duc is charged with the education of the king. He said that he did not in the beginning ask for that office because he had not reached his majority; but now in the actual state of things he did demand it, and he obtained it.

I must tell you of a most amusing dialogue between Lord Stair and the Spanish ambassador, Prince Cellamare. The latter had reported all over Paris that it was entirely false that the English fleet had beaten the Spanish fleet; and the partisans of Spain who are here managed so well that the news of the defeat was no longer believed, when, suddenly, the son of Admiral Byng arrived, bringing the official account of the action and a list of the ships which the English had captured, burned, or sunk. Lord Stair, having received these documents, said to Prince Cellamare: "Well, monsieur, what do you say now about your fleet?"

"I say," replied the ambassador, "that the fleet is safely at Cadiz."

"I am not talking about the fleet at Cadiz," said Stair. "I mean that of Messina."

"The fleet of Cadiz and all the galleons richly laden have entered the port of Cadiz," returned the prince; and no other answer could be got from him.

The little dwarf [Duchesse du Maine] says she has more courage than her husband, her sons, and her brother-in-law, and, like another Jael, she will kill my son by hammering a nail into his head. My son does not trouble himself about her threats. When I tell him he ought to be upon his guard, he laughs and shakes his head as if I were talking nonsense. But the perils that surround my son's existence make me spend many a sleepless night, and certainly his regency has not been to me a subject of satisfaction.

PARIS, 1718.

The affair of the Duc du Maine is not one of those things that can be forgotten, at least not so long as those two old hussies are living [Mme. de Maintenon and the Princesse des Ursins]; for they stir him up, together with his little devil of a wife, to all sorts of secret plotting against my son. Mme. des Ursins has one good thing about her, however: she does not call upon the good God to assist her intrigues. My son is not in safety, and that troubles me extremely. I do my best to be resigned to the divine will and to accept whatever it provides; but the heart of a mother is too tender about an only son.

You may move lions and tigers and all sorts of wild beasts sooner than wicked people when ambition and cupidity are the cause of their enmity. All arguers on the condition of the country do not know the deplorable state in which my son found the kingdom. When the change in the government occurred each person imagined he would grow rich; they praised my son and expected marvels of him; as these marvels have not been realized, because they were impossible, blame is now substituted for praise. There would be little harm if such complaints exhaled in words, but the discontented are forming intrigues and plots. The French will not stop at anything, and they do not know what gratitude is.

PARIS, 1718.

When I first came to France I saw here many persons such as one may not find again in centuries. There was Lulli, for music; Beauchamp, for ballets; Corneille and Racine, for tragedy; Molière, for comedy; la Chamelle and Beauval, actresses; Baron, Lafleur, Torilière, and Guérin, actors. All these persons excelled in their vocations. La Duclos and la Raisin were equally good; the latter had a great deal of charm. Her husband was also excellent in comic parts. There was likewise a good harlequin and a capital scaramouch. There were good singers at the opera, Clédière, Pomerueil, Godenarche, Duménil, la Rochechouard, Mauvry, la Saint-Christophe, la Brigogne, la Beauceux. All that one sees and hears now does not come up to such talents.

Everything goes to beat of drum between my son and his mistresses, without the least gallantry. It reminds me of the old patriarchs who had so many women. My son has a good deal of King David about him; he has courage and spirit, he is a good musician, he is small, brave, and ready to love any woman; he is not particular in that respect; provided they are good-humoured, very shameless, and can eat and drink a great deal, he does not mind about their faces.

The Duc du Maine and his party have let his sister [the Duchesse d'Orléans] know that if my son dies she will be made regent, and they have promised her they would then act in all things by her will, and she would be the greatest figure that there was in the world. They told her they meant no harm to my son, but that he could not live long, his life was so disorderly; that he must die soon, or else become blind, in which case he would consent to her exercising the regency. I heard all this from a person to whom the Duc du Maine himself told it; and when one knows it one is not surprised that Mme. d'Orléans wanted to force her daughter to marry the Duc du Maine's son.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1719.

Thank God, my son is now in perfect health; he came here last night and supped and slept, and returned this morning to Paris; he was very gay indeed. He told us that in Spain they have enormous grapes that intoxicate like wine, and that once after eating only one grape his head swam; he went to a convent and said all sorts of foolish things to the nuns, without knowing what he was talking about.

Mme. du Maine is not larger than a child of ten. When she shuts her mouth she is not ugly, but she has villanous, irregular teeth. She is not very plump, has pretty eyes, and is white and fair, but puts on a horrible quantity of rouge. If she was as good as she is bad there would be nothing to say against her; but her malignancy is intolerable. She is easy during the day, which she spends playing cards, but when evening comes the tempers and the follies begin; she torments her

husband, her children, and her servants till they do not know how to bear it. She is no beauty, but she has a great deal of intelligence; she is very well educated and can talk on all sorts of subjects, and that attracts to her learned men; she knows how to flatter the discontented and excite them against my son. She is lord and master of her husband. He holds many offices and can give places to a great many persons: in the regiment of the guards, of which he is general; in the artillery, of which he is grand-master; in the carbineers, to which he appoints all officers; he has also his own regiment; and these favours rally to him a great many persons.

PARIS, December 18, 1718.

My son has found himself obliged to arrest Prince Cellamare, because they found on his messenger, who was the Abbé Porto-Carrero, letters from the ambassador which revealed a conspiracy against the king and against my son. The ambassador was arrested by two of the Councillors of State. In his secret despatches he warned Alberoni to be very careful not to be on good terms with my son, because as soon as the treaty was signed he meant to poison the little king; the ambassador added that he would see that my son had his hands too full to think of war, for he had brought a number of provinces to promise to revolt; that their party was strong in Paris, and that Alberoni had only to send money and not spare it. I believe the lamester, brother of my daughter-in-law, will be found in this affair. The ambassador has been interrogated by the two Councillors of State, and he admitted, laughing, that he wrote the letters in order to avoid the evils of war, and wanted simply to frighten my son. When they asked him why he had said such infamies of the regent, he replied that he must admit there had been a little poison in his remarks, but that poison was necessary to compose an antidote. What is very strange is that the Maréchal de Noailles, once my son's sub-governor, is implicated in the plot; that is because he is related to that devil incarnate, the Princesse des Ursins, who will pursue my son to the death,—her sole motive being that he thought her too old to wish to be her lover. Cellamare's letters have been printed, so that every one can see the thread of the conspiracy.

If the Abbé Dubois were at his first lie he would be dead long ago; he is passed master in the art of lying, above all when it is to his personal advantage; if I wrote down all that I know about that, it would make a long litany. It was he who clandestinely told the king at the time of my son's marriage what he had better say and do to bring it about; he also had conferences on that subject with the Maintenon. He behaves now as if he thought that he and I were perfectly agreed, and no matter what disagreeable things I say to him, he turns them all into jest. I will do him justice and say he is a man of capacity; he talks well and is good company; but he is false and selfish as the devil; he looks like a fox, his deceitfulness can be read in his eyes. His portrait might be made as a fox crouching on the ground to pounce on a hen. But he can express himself so well as an honest man that I regarded him as such till the marriage of my son; it was then I discovered his trickery. If that abbé were as good a Christian as he is an able man, he would be excellent; but he believes in nothing, and it is that which makes him false and a scoundrel. He is well-informed, no doubt of that, and he gave my son a good education; but I wish he had never seen him, and then this miserable marriage, which I deplore, would never have taken place. Except the Abbé Dubois, no priest has any favour with my son.

PARIS, 1719.

It is certain that my son is much to be pitied on account of his wife, and for this, if there were no other reason, I cannot comprehend why he should like the Abbé Dubois as he does; for it was that abbé who persuaded him to consent to the marriage and plunged him into all that affliction. My son sees his wife every day; if she is in a good humour he stays a long time with her; if she is out of temper, which often happens, he goes away and says nothing.

I used to be attached to the Abbé Dubois because I thought that he truly loved my son and only thought of his good and his advantage; but when I found he was a faithless dog looking to nothing but his own interests, and did not care in the least for my son's honour, but was helping to precipitate him to eternal damnation by letting him plunge into debauchery, all my esteem for that little priest changed to contempt. I heard from my son himself that the abbé met him once as he was about to enter a bad house, and instead of taking him by the arm and leading him away, he only laughed. By such laxity and by my son's marriage he proved that neither faith, fidelity, nor decency was in him. I am not wrong in suspecting him of taking part in that marriage. What I know I have from my son himself and from the persons around the old *vilaine* in the days when the abbé went to her secretly at night to help her intrigues and betray the young master whom he sold.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1719.

I am so troubled that my hand trembles: my son has come to tell me that he has been obliged to decide on arresting his brother-in-law, the Duc du Maine and the duchess. They are the leaders of the shocking Spanish plot. All is discovered; the papers of the ambassador of Spain were seized, the persons arrested have confessed. The duchess, being a princess of the blood [daughter of M. le Prince de Condé], was arrested by four captains of the guard; her husband, who was in the country, by a lieutenant. That makes a great difference between them. The duchess was sent to Dijon, and her husband to Doullens, a little fortress. Their people who were in the plot have been put in the Bastille.

Mme. d'Orléans is much distressed, but is much more reasonable than Mme. la Duchesse. She says that, as her husband was compelled to adopt such rigorous measures against his brother-in-law, there must have been strong reasons.

There is great discord among the clergy. The bishops are disunited; some are for the pope and the doctrine of the Jesuits; others support the Jansenists. I wish that both sides took more care to live like Christians and die well; leaving disputes to those who find them to their taste. I do not trouble myself about either party.

Cardinals cannot be arrested, but you can exile them. Cardinal de Polignac has therefore received orders to retire to one of his abbeys and stay there. Love turned his head. He was formerly a good friend to my son, but he changed as soon as he attached himself to that little frog. Magny is not yet arrested; he is hiding from convent to convent among the Jesuits. My son showed me a letter that Mme. du Maine had written to Cardinal de Polignac, which was seized among his papers. A most virtuous and estimable person she is, truly! In this fine letter she says: "We go to-morrow to the country; I will arrange the apartments so that your room can be near mine; try to manage as well as last time, and we will give ourselves heart-joy."

PARIS, 1719.

I wrote you that the Duc and Duchesse du Maine were the leaders of the plot; since then the proof of the duke's culpability has been found in a letter to him from Alberoni, in which are these words: "As soon as war is declared, fire all your mines." Nothing can be clearer. They are great wretches.

Though the treason is discovered, all the traitors are not yet known. My son laughs and says: "I hold the head and tail of the monster, but not its body as yet." The Duc and Duchesse du Maine have written on all sides to justify themselves. There is such wickedness and falsehood in what they say that I cannot endure the thought of it. No one can imagine the libels they have spread in the provinces about my poor son; they have also sent them to foreign countries.

Parliament is now on good terms with my son, and has rendered a judgment wholly in his favour; that shows how the du Maines had stirred it up against him. The Jesuits may, very likely, be secretly plotting against my son, for all the partisans of the Constitution [bull Unigenitus] are his adversaries; but they keep themselves quiet, and nothing is shown to compromise them. They are clever people. Mme. d'Orléans is beginning to laugh and show satisfaction; which worries me, because I know she has consulted the president of parliament [Mesmes] and other persons to learn whether in case of her husband's death, she could be appointed regent with her son. The president answered no; that the regency would devolve on M. le Duc, which answer seemed to greatly disturb her.

My son made me laugh yesterday. I asked him how the Maintenon was; he answered, "Wonderfully well." I said, "How can that be, at her age?" to which he replied: "Don't you know that the good God to punish the devil makes him stay a very long time in a villanous body?"

PARIS, April 20, 1719.

Saturday evening we lost a pious soul at Saint-Cyr, the old Maintenon. The news of the arrest of the Duc du Maine and his wife made her faint away, and it may have been the cause of her death, for from that moment she had no rest. Anger and the loss of the hope to reign through him turned her blood and gave her the measles, and for twenty days she had continual fever. A storm which came up made the disease strike inward, and it stifled her. She was eighty-six years old. I have it in my head that what grieved her most at the last was leaving my son and me behind her in good health.

She died like a young person. She gave herself eighty-two years, but she was really eighty-six. If she had died twenty years ago I should have cordially rejoiced, but now it gives me neither pleasure nor pain. There is nothing to wonder at in her dying like a young person. In the other world, where all are equal and there is no difference in rank, it will be decided whether she stays with the king or the paralytic Scarron; but if the king knows then all that was hidden from him

in this world, there is no doubt he will return her very willingly to Scarron.

PARIS, 1719.

It appears that the Duc de Richelieu was not in the conspiracy of the Duc and Duchesse du Maine, but had a plot of his own, which has put him in the Bastille. He took it into his head that he was so considerable a person he could not be refused a certain marriage far above his just pretensions. When that hope vanished, he began, in his vexation, to plot. He is an arch-debauchee, and a coward; he believes in neither God nor His word; in all his life he never has done, and never will do a worthy thing; he is ambitious and false as the devil. He is not yet twenty-four years old. I do not think him as handsome as the Court women do, who are mad about him. He has a pretty figure and fine hair, an oval face and very brilliant eyes, but everything about him indicates a rascal; he is graceful and is not without cleverness, but his insolence is great; he is the worst of spoiled youths. The first time he was put in the Bastille was for saying he was an actual lover of the Duchesse de Bourgogne and all her young ladies; which was a horrible lie.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1719.

You ask me what has recently made me so angry; I cannot tell it in detail, only in the gross. It is the horrible coquetry of Mlle. de Valois with that cursed Duc de Richelieu, who has shown the letters that he had from her, for he only loves her from vanity. All the young seigneurs of the Court have read the letters in which she assigns him rendezvous. Her mother wanted me to take her here with me, which I refused curtly; but she is now returning to the charge. I am horribly vexed; the human species disgusts me. I cannot endure the idea of having her; but I must, to avoid worse scandal; the very sight of that heedless creature will make me ill. All this is the result of the apathy and nullity of the mother; may God forgive her! but she has brought up her daughters very ill.

The Duc de Richelieu is bold and full of impertinence; he knows the kindness of my son and abuses it; if justice were done he would pay for his manœuvres and his temerity with his head; he has triply deserved it. I am not cruel, but I could see him hanging from a gibbet without a tear. He is now walking about on the rampart of the Bastille, curled and bedecked, while the ladies are standing in the street below to see that beautiful image. Many tears will be shed in Paris, for every woman is in love with him; I don't know why, for he is a little toad in whom I can see nothing agreeable. He has no courage; he is impertinent, faithless, and indiscreet; he says harm of all his mistresses; and yet a princess of the blood-royal [Mlle. de Charolais, grand-daughter of M. le Prince de Condé] is so in love with him that when he became a widower she wanted to marry him. Her grandmother and brother formally opposed it, and with reason, for independently of the misalliance she would have been, all her life, most unhappy. He has had each of his mistresses painted in the various habits of the religious orders: Mlle. de Charolais as a Franciscan nun,—they say it is an excellent likeness; the Maréchale de Villars and the Maréchale d'Estrées in the Capucin habit.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1719.

I do not mingle in any way with what is going on in Rome. The pope and I have no relations with each other; therefore no one need address himself to me to get a dispensation.

It is not true that I have changed my name; I cannot be called in France by any other title than that of Madame, for my husband, as brother of the king, bore the title of Monsieur, and I as his wife cannot bear any other than that of Madame. The daughters of the king are also called so, but, to distinguish them, the baptismal name is added; for instance, the three daughters of Henri II. were called: Madame Élisabeth, who became Queen of Spain; Madame Henriette, who became Queen of England; and Madame Christine, who was afterwards Duchesse de Savoie. The daughters of the king's brother are called Mademoiselle; the eldest bears that title with nothing added to it; the others add the name of their appanage; that is how it is there is a Mademoiselle de Chartres, Mademoiselle de Valois, Mademoiselle de Montpensier. It is the same with the grandsons of the king; they should be called Monsieur with the names of their appanages attached; it was always an abuse to say the Duc de Bourgogne, the Duc de Berry: they ought to have been called Monsieur de Bourgogne, Monsieur de Berry.

I went last Sunday to see the Duchesse de Berry and found her in a sad state. She had such frightful pains in the soles and toes of her feet that the tears came into her eyes. I saw that my presence prevented her from screaming and so I came away. I thought she looked very ill. They have had a consultation of three physicians, who decided on bleeding from the

foot. It was difficult to bring her to consent, for the suffering in her feet is so unbearable that she screams if the sheets merely touch them. However, the bleeding succeeded and she has suffered less since. It was gout in both feet.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1719.

I went yesterday to see the Duchesse de Berry; she is better, thank God, but she cannot walk yet. Two great boils have come upon the soles of her feet, which burn them as if with red-hot iron; it is a very singular illness. Twice a week they give her medicine, and the other days an enema; both do her good. It seems that her illness comes from the frightful gluttony in which she indulged last year.

I told you my son had a fever; he is better now; but I fear a relapse, for he is, to say the least, as much of a glutton as his daughter; and he will not listen to any advice.

The English nation is a wicked nation, false and ungrateful. Most of the persons of rank who were at Saint-Germain, whom the late queen supported (imposing upon herself personally the greatest privations in order to do so) now declaim against her, and tell a thousand lies of that good and virtuous queen. All this fills me with wrath.

My son is really too kind; that little Duc de Richelieu having assured him that he had fully intended to reveal to him the plot, he believed him and has set him at liberty. It is true that the duke's mistress, Mlle. de Charolais, never left my son a moment's peace about it. It is a horrible thing for a princess of the blood to declare in the face of all the world that she is as amorous as a cat, and that her passion is for a scoundrel of a rank so beneath her own that she cannot marry him, and who is moreover unfaithful to her, for he is known to have half a dozen other mistresses. When she is told of that she replies: "Pooh! he only has them to sacrifice them to me and to tell me all that passes between them." It is really an awful thing.

If I believed in sorcery I should say that that duke possessed a supernatural power; for he has never yet found a woman who opposed him the slightest resistance; they all run after him, and it is literally shameful. He is not handsomer than others, and he is so indiscreet and gabbling that he says himself if an empress beautiful as an angel fell in love with him and wished to be his on condition that he would not tell of it, he should prefer to leave her on the spot and never look at her again. He is a great poltroon, but very insolent, without heart or soul. I revolt at the thought that he is the petted darling of women, and I am quite sure he will only show ingratitude for my son's kindness—but I will not say another word about that personage; he puts me out of all patience.

The harm that is said of M. Law and his bank is the effect of jealousy; for nothing better could be found. He is paying off the fearful debts of the late king, and he has diminished the taxes, lessening in that way the burdens that are weighing down the people; wood does not cost the half of what it did; the duties on wine, meats, in fact, all that is consumed in Paris have been abolished; and that has caused great joy among the people, as you may suppose. M. Law is very polite. I think a great deal of him; he does all he can to be agreeable to me. He does not wish to act secretly, like those who have preceded him in the management of the finances, but publicly, with honour. It is quite false that he has bought a palace from the Duchesse de Berry; she has none to sell; all the houses she has return to the king,—such as Meudon, Châville, and La Muette.

Law is so pursued that he has no peace day or night; a duchess kissed his hands in sight of everybody, and if duchesses kiss his hands, what will not the other women kiss? Impossible to have more capacity than he, but I would not for all the gold in the world be in his place; he is tormented like a lost soul; besides which his enemies are spreading all sorts of wicked tales about him. I am tired out with hearing of nothing but shares and millions, and I cannot hide my ill-humour. People are flocking here from all corners of Europe; during the last month there have been in Paris two hundred and fifty thousand more persons than usual; they have had to make rooms in lofts and barns, and Paris is so full of carriages that there is great difficulty in getting through the streets, and many persons have been crushed. One lady meaning to say to M. Law, "Give me a concession," called out in a loud voice, "Ah! monsieur, give me a conception;" to which M. Law replied: "Madame, you have come too late; there is no way at present by which you can obtain one."

SAINT-CLOUD, 1719.

I am afraid that the excesses of the Duchesse de Berry in eating and drinking will put her underground. The fever never leaves her and she has two paroxysms of it daily. She shows neither impatience nor anger, though she suffered greatly from the emetic they gave her yesterday. She has become as thin and shrunken as she was fat; yesterday she confessed

and received the communion.

July 17, 1719.

The Duchesse de Berry died last night between two and three o'clock; her end was very gentle; they say she died as if she fell asleep. My son remained beside her until she had entirely lost consciousness. She was his favourite child.

The poor duchess took her own life as surely as if she had put a pistol to her head; she secretly ate melons, figs, milk; she owned it to me herself, and her physician told me she locked her door against him and all the other doctors for fourteen days in order to do as she liked. When the storm came up, as it did, she turned to death. She said to me last night: "Ah! Madame, that peal of thunder did me great harm,"—and indeed it was very visible. She received the last sacraments with such firmness that it wrung our hearts.

My son has lost the power to sleep; his poor daughter could not have been saved; her head was full of water; she had an ulcer in the stomach, another in the hip, the rest of her inside was like *bouillie* and the liver attacked. She was taken at night, secretly, with all her household, to Saint-Denis. Such embarrassment was felt about her funeral oration that it was judged best to have none at all. She said she died without regret, because she was reconciled with God, and that if her life were prolonged she might offend Him again. That touched us in a way I cannot express. At heart she was a good person; and if her mother had taken more care of her and had brought her up better there would be nothing but good to say of her. I own that her loss goes to my heart—but let us talk of something else; this is too sad.

The reason you could not read my last letter was that it was partly torn by one of my dogs just as I finished it. I see you do not like dogs, for if you loved them as I do you would forgive their little faults. I have one, named *Reine inconnue*, which understands as well as a man, and never leaves me an instant without weeping and howling as long as I am out of her sight.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1719.

Yesterday, directly after my dinner, I went to Paris, and found my poor son in a state to melt a heart of rock. He is afflicted to the soul, and all the more because he sees that if he had not shown such excessive indulgence to his dear daughter, if he had better acted a father's part, she would now be living and healthy.

With all her revenues she leaves behind her debts amounting to 400,000 francs, for my son to pay. Those people about her robbed and pillaged the poor princess horribly; but that is always the way with a brood of favourites. Her marriage with that toad's head [Rion] is unhappily but too true. He is not, however, of a bad stock; he is allied to good families; the Duc de Lauzun is his uncle, and Biron his nephew; but, for all that, he was not worthy of the honours that came to him. He was only a captain in the king's regiment. Women ran after him. I thought him ugly and repulsive, and sickly looking besides. When the news of the Duchesse de Berry's death reached the army, the Prince de Conti went to find Rion and made him this pretty speech: "She is dead, your milch cow, and you need not talk any more about her." My son feels rather stung; but he does not wish to seem to know of it.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1719.

I promised to tell you about my journey to Chelles [to witness the installation of her grand-daughter as abbess of the convent of Chelles]. I started Thursday at seven o'clock, with the Duchesse de Brancas, Mme. de Châteauiers, and Mme. de Rathsamhausen; we arrived at half-past ten. My grandson, the Duc de Chartres, had already arrived; my son came a few minutes later; then Mlle. de Valois. Mme. d'Orléans had herself bled expressly to be unable to come. She and the abbess are not very good friends; and besides, her extreme laziness would prevent her from getting up so early.

We went to the church. The *prie-dieu* of the abbess was placed in the nun's choir; it was violet velvet covered with gold *fleur-de-lis*; my *prie-dieu* was against the balustrade; my son and his daughter were behind my chair, because the princes of the blood cannot kneel upon my carpet; that is a right reserved to the grandsons of France. The whole of the king's band was in the loft. Cardinal de Noailles said mass. The altar is a very fine one of black and white marble with four thick columns of black marble; there are four beautiful statues of sainted abbesses, one so like our own abbess you might think it was her portrait; it was, however, carved before my grand-daughter was born, for she is only twenty-one years old.

Twelve monks of her Order, robed in splendid chasubles, came to serve the mass. After the cardinal had read the epistle, the master of ceremonies entered the nun's choir and brought out the abbess; she came with a very good air, followed by two abbesses, and half a dozen nuns of her own convent. She made a deep curtsy to the altar, then to me, and knelt down before the cardinal, who was seated in a great armchair before the altar. They brought in state the confession of faith, which she read, and after the cardinal had recited many prayers, he gave her a book containing the rules of the convent. She then returned to her place; and after the *Credo* and the offertory had been read, she came forward again, accompanied by an abbess and her nuns. Two great wax tapers and two loaves of bread, one gilt, the other silvered, were brought, with which she made her offering. After the cardinal had taken the communion, she again knelt before him and he gave her the crozier. Then he took her to her seat, not at her *prie-dieu*, but to her seat as abbess, a sort of throne surmounted by the dais of a princess of the blood with the *fleurs-de-lis*. As soon as she was seated the trumpets and the hautboys sounded, and the cardinal, followed by all his priests, placed himself near the altar on the left side, crozier in hand, and they chanted the *Te Deum*. Next, all the nuns of the convent came forward, two and two, to testify their submission to their new abbess, making her a deep obeisance. That reminded me of the honours they pay Athys when they make him high priest of Cybele in the opera, and I almost thought they were going to sing, "Before thee all bow down and tremble," etc.

After the *Te Deum*, we entered the convent about half-past twelve and sat down to table, my son and I, my grandson, the Duc de Chartres, the Princesse Victoire de Soissons, the young Demoiselle d'Auvergne, daughter of Duc d'Albret, and my three ladies. The abbess went to a table in her refectory with her sister, Mlle. de Valois, the two ladies who accompanied her, twelve abbesses, and all the nuns of the convent. It was droll to see so many black robes round a table. My son's people served a very fine repast; and after dinner was over they let the people come in and pillage the dessert and confectionery. At a quarter to five my carriage came, and I returned to Saint-Cloud.

You ask me if my Abbé de Saint-Albin and his brother the Chevalier d'Orléans have the same mother; no. The chevalier is legitimized, but the poor abbé has not been so at all. He has the family look, and strongly resembles the late Monsieur; he is something like his father and is very like Mlle. de Valois. He is some years older than the chevalier and is very grieved to see his younger brother so much above him. The chevalier, who for some time past has been the grand-prior of France in the Order of Malta, is the son of Mlle. de Séry, formerly my maid-of-honour; she now calls herself Mme. d'Argenton. The mother of the abbé is an opera-dancer named Florence. My son has also a daughter by the left hand, whom he does not recognize; he has married her to a Marquis de Ségur; her mother was Desmares, one of the best actresses in the king's troupe. I love the Abbé de Saint-Albin, and he deserves it. In the first place, he loves me sincerely, and in the next he conducts himself extremely well. He has intellect; he is reasonable, and there is no canting bigotry about him. He is not in as much favour with my son as he deserves, but he is the best young man in the world; well brought-up, pious, and virtuous; he is well educated but has no conceit. He is more like the late Monsieur than he is like his father; but it is plain where he comes from; my son cannot deny him; and it is a great pity that he is not my son's legitimate child.

The enormous wealth that is now in France is inconceivable. All the talk is in millions. I cannot understand it; but I see plainly that the God Mammon reigns in Paris absolutely. The late king would gladly have employed M. Law in the finances; but as he was not a Catholic the king said he could not trust him. Nothing is now thought of but Law's bank; a hundred tales are told of it. A lady gave her coachman an order to upset her in front of it, and when M. Law ran out, supposing from the cries that she had broken her neck or legs, she hastened to acknowledge it was only a stratagem to get speech with him. It is certainly a droll thing to see how everybody runs after that man, jostling each other merely to see him or his son.

M. le Duc and his mother have made, they say, two hundred and fifty millions; the Prince de Conti rather less, though people declare his gains amount to many millions; the two cousins never budge from the rue Quincampoix. But the one who has gained the most money is d'Antin, who is terribly grasping.

M. Law has abjured at Melun; he has become a Catholic, and so have his children; his wife is in despair. He is not avaricious; he does much in charity, without letting it be known, and gives away great sums; he helps large numbers of poor people.

V.

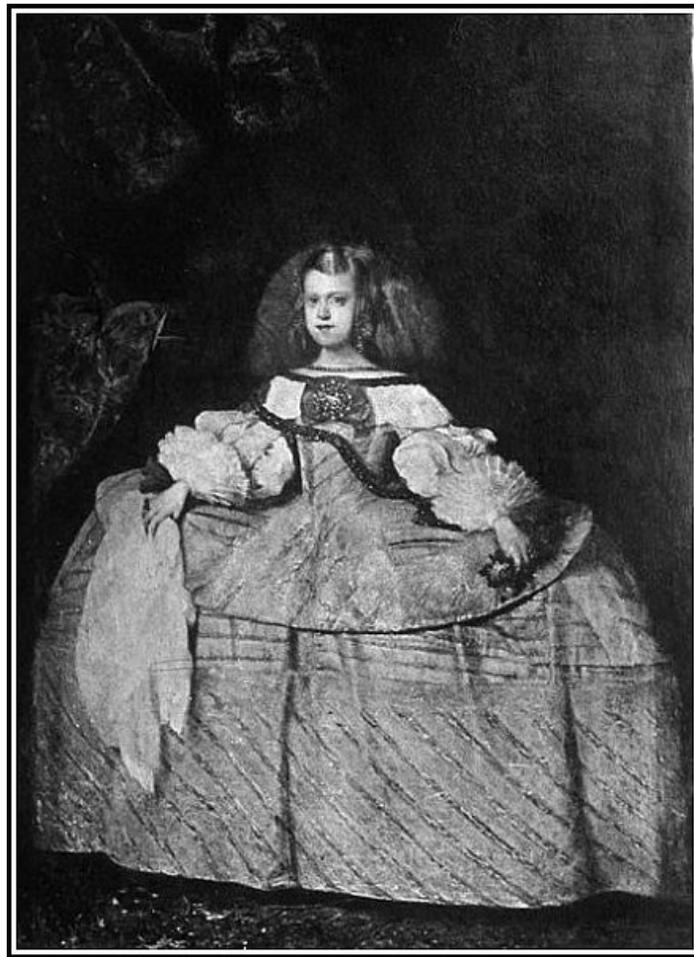
LETTERS OF 1720-1722.

PARIS, 1720.

I have often walked about at night in the gallery of the château of Fontainebleau, where they say the ghost of the late king François I. appears; but the good man never did me the honour to appear to me; perhaps he does not think my prayers sufficiently efficacious to call him out of purgatory; and in that he may be right enough.

I was very gay in my youth; that is why they called me in German *Rauschen petten Knecht*. I remember the birth of the King of England [George I.] as if it had been yesterday. I was a very roguish, inquisitive child. They put a doll in a clump of rosemary and tried to make me believe that it was the child that I was told my aunt was going to have; but just at that moment I heard her scream, which did not agree with the baby in the rosemary bush. I pretended that I believed them, but I slipped into my aunt's chamber as if I were playing hide and seek with young Bulau and Haxthausen, and hid behind a great screen they had placed beside the chimney next the door. Presently they brought the child to the fireplace to bathe it, and I ran out of my hiding-place. I ought to have been whipped, but in honour of the happy event I was only well scolded.

The late king was so attached to the old customs of the royal family that he would not have allowed any of them to be changed for all the world. Mme. de Fiennes used to say that they clung so to old ways in the royal household that the queen died with a frilled cap on her head such as they tie on children when they put them to bed. When the king wished a thing he never allowed any one to argue against it; the thing he ordered must be done at once without reply. He was too used to "such is our good pleasure" to brook an observation. He was very severe in the etiquette he established about him. At Marly it was quite another thing; there he allowed no ceremony. Neither ambassadors nor envoys were invited to go there, and he never gave audiences; there was no etiquette, and everything went along pell-mell. On the promenades the king made the men wear their hats, and in the salon every one, down to the captains and sub-lieutenants of the foot-guards, was allowed to sit down. That gave me such a disgust for the salon that I never chose to stay there. My son is like all the rest of the family, he wants the things to which he has been accustomed from his youth to go on forever. That is why he cannot part with the Abbé Dubois, though he knows his knavery. That abbé wanted to persuade me, myself, that the marriage of my son was very advantageous for him. I replied: "And Honour, monsieur, what can repair that?" The Maintenon had made great promises to him and also to my son, but, thanks be to God, she did not keep her word to either of them.



Infanta Maria Theresa wife of Louis XIV

We have had few queens in France who have been perfectly happy. Marie de' Medici died in exile; the mother of the king and Monsieur was miserable as long as her husband lived; and our own queen, Marie-Thérèse, used to say that since she became queen she had never had but one day of true contentment. She was certainly excessively silly, but the best and most virtuous woman on earth; she had grandeur, and she knew well how to hold a Court. She believed all the king told her, good and bad. Her accoutrements were ridiculous; and her teeth were black and decayed, which came, they said, from eating chocolate, and she also ate a great deal of garlic. She was clumsy and short, and had a very white skin; when she neither danced nor walked she looked taller than she was. She ate frequently, and was very long about it, because it was always in little scraps as if for a canary. She never forgot her native land, and many of her ways were Spanish. She loved cards beyond measure, and played at *bassette*, *reversi*, and *ombre*, sometimes at *petit prime*, but she never won, because she could never learn to play well. While she and the first dauphine lived there was never anything at Court but modesty and dignity. Those who were licentious in secret affected propriety in public; but after the old *guenipe* began to govern and to introduce the bastards among the royal family everything went topsy-turvy.

The queen had such a passion for the king that she tried to read in his eyes what would please him, and provided he looked at her kindly she was gay all day. She was glad when the king passed the night with her, for being a true Spanish woman she did not dislike that business; whenever it happened she was so gay everybody knew of it. She liked to be joked about it, and would laugh, wink her eyes, and rub her little hands.

She died of an abscess which she had under the arm. Instead of drawing it outside, Fagon, who by great ill-luck was just then her doctor, bled her; that made the abscess break within; the whole of it fell upon the heart, and the emetic which he gave her choked her. The surgeon who bled her said to Fagon: "Monsieur, have you reflected? This will be the death of my mistress." Fagon replied: "Do as I order you, Gervais." The surgeon wept and said to Fagon: "Do you compel me to be the one to kill my mistress?" At eleven o'clock he bled her; at twelve Fagon gave her a great dose of emetic, and at three the queen departed for another world. We may indeed say that the happiness of France died with her. The king was much moved, but that old devil of a Fagon did it on purpose, in order to bring about the fortunes of the old *guenipe*. The king always showed consideration for his wife, and required his mistresses to respect her. He liked her because of her

virtue and the sincere attachment she felt for him in spite of his infidelities. He was sincerely afflicted when she died.

PARIS, 1720.

One hears of nothing every day but bank-bills. I think it very hard not to see gold. For forty-eight years I have always had fine gold pieces in my pocket, and now there is nothing to be seen but silver money, and that of little value.

It is very certain that M. Law is now most horribly disliked. My son told me something in the carriage to-day which moved me so much that the tears came into my eyes. He said: "The populace said a thing that touched me to the heart; I feel it deeply." I asked him what it was, and he replied that when the Comte de Horn was executed the people said: "If anything is done against the regent personally he forgives it all; but if anything is done against us, he listens to no nonsense, but does justice." M. Law has no bad intentions; he buys landed property and shows in that way that he means to stay in France. I do not believe that he is sending money to England, Holland, and Hamburg.

We no longer know here what a Court is. No ladies come to see me, because I will not allow them to present themselves before me as they do before Mme. d'Orléans, with scarfs, and no bodies to their loose gowns. Those are things that I will not tolerate. I prefer to see no one at all than to permit such familiarities. Mme. d'Orléans has spoiled these women; she does not make herself respected and does not really know what rank is. Mmes. de Montesson and de Maintenon, who brought her up, did not know either. She is too proud to be willing to learn anything from me; she thinks it would be beneath her, believing herself far superior to me when she sees how her room is filled and mine is empty. She would not imitate me, neither would I imitate her; and so each of us keeps to her own way.

PARIS, May, 1720.

My son has been obliged to dismiss Law, who has hitherto been adored as a god. He is no longer controller-general, though still the director of the Bank and the Company of the Indies. They are obliged to give him a guard, for his life is not safe; and it is pitiable to see how great his terror is. All sorts of satires are being written and spread about him.

The jewellers refuse to work; they value their merchandise at three times the price it can now bring on account of paper-money. I have often wished that hell-fire would burn up those bank-bills. They give my son more trouble than comfort. There is no describing all the results they have brought about. My son spares himself no trouble, but after working from morning till night he likes to amuse himself at supper with his little black crow [the regent's name for Mme. de Parabère].

According to public clamour things are going horribly ill. I wish Law had been at the devil with his system, and had never set foot in France. The people do me too much honour in saying that if my advice had been listened to things would have gone better; I have no advice to give in matters concerning the government; I meddle in nothing of the kind. But Frenchmen are so accustomed to see women with their fingers in everything that it seems to them impossible that I should be aloof from what happens. The good Parisians, with whom I am in favour, choose to attribute to me whatever is good; I am very much obliged to those poor souls for the affection they feel to me, but I do not deserve it. The Parisians are the best people in the world, and if the parliament did not excite them they would never revolt. Poor people, they touch me very much, for while they shout against Law they do not attack my son, and when I passed in my carriage through the crowd they called out benedictions. That touched me so much I could not help crying. It is not surprising that they do not like my son as much as they do me, for his enemies spare nothing to decry him and make him out a reprobate and a tyrant; whereas he is really the best man in the world—he is too good. I have never understood the system of M. Law, but I have firmly believed that no good would come of it. As I cannot disguise my thoughts I have always told my son plainly what I think of it. He assured me I was mistaken and he wanted to explain the matter to me; but the more he tried to make me comprehend it, the less I could understand a word of it.

Law is like a dead man, pale as linen; he cannot get over that last fright of his. His good friend, the Duc d'Antin, wants to get his place as director of the Bank. No one was ever more terrified than M. Law; my son, who is not intimidated in spite of the threats addressed to him, laughs till he makes himself ill over Law's cowardice. Though everything at present is quiet here, Law does not dare go out; the market-women have placed spies round his house to know if he leaves it, which bodes no good to him, and I fear some new disturbance. But I never in my life knew an Englishman or a Scotchman so cowardly as Law; it is the possession of fortune that destroys courage; men do not willingly give up wealth.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1720.

For the last week I have had a number of letters threatening to burn me at Saint-Cloud and my son in the Palais-Royal. My son never tells me a word of such things; he follows the example of his father, who used to say: "It is all well, provided Madame knows nothing about it."

M. Law has gone to Brussels. Mme. de Prie [M. le Duc's mistress] lent him her post-chaise; in returning it he wrote to thank her, and sent her a ring worth a hundred thousand francs. M. le Duc had given him relays and sent four of his servants with him. On taking leave of my son Law said to him: "Monseigneur, I have made great mistakes; I made them because I was human; but you will find neither malice nor dishonesty in my conduct." His wife would not leave Paris till all their debts were paid; he owed his provision man alone ten thousand francs.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1720.

I am firmly persuaded that my days are counted, but I do not occupy my mind with that thought for a moment. I place all in the hands of Almighty God, and do not give myself any anxiety as to what may come to me; for it would indeed be great folly in men and women to imagine that human beings are not equal before God, and that He would do special things for any of them. I have not, thanks to God, either such presumption or such pride. I know who I am and I do not deceive myself in that respect.

I am irritated when I look back and think how ill they speak of the late king, and how little his Majesty has been regretted by those to whom he did most good.

The daughter whom he loved best was the tall Princesse de Conti. She did not stand ill with the Maintenon; who thought it an honour to herself to pay attentions to the princess, who had always led a regular life and renounced frivolity. She lived at last in great devotion, and when they told her that death was near she said: "Dying is the smallest event of my life."

The king often complained that in his youth he had never been allowed to mingle with people and converse with them. But that is a matter of nature, for Monsieur, who was brought up with the king, was always ready to talk with anybody. The king said, laughing, that Monsieur's gabble had disgusted him with speech. "Good God!" he used to say, "must I, in order to please people, talk such paltry and silly nonsense as my brother?" It is true, however, that Monsieur was more beloved in Paris than the king on account of his affability. But when the king wanted to please any one he had the most seductive manners in the world, and he could win hearts much better than my husband. Monsieur (and it is the same with my son), was very amiable to everybody, but he did not distinguish persons sufficiently; he only showed regard to those who liked the Chevalier de Lorraine and his other favourites.

After Monsieur's death the king sent to ask me where I wished to go, whether to a convent in Paris or to Montargis, or elsewhere. I answered that as I had the honour to belong to the royal family I could not wish for any other residence than that of the king, and I wished to go at once to Versailles. That pleased him; he came to see me; but he rather piqued me by saying that he had not thought I should wish to stay in the same place with himself. I replied I did not know who could have made to his Majesty such false reports about me, and that I had more respect and attachment to him than those who had accused me falsely. Then the king made every one leave the room and we had a grand explanation, in which the king reproached me for hating Mme. de Maintenon. I said it was true that I hated her, but it was only out of attachment to him, and because of the evil offices she did me with him; nevertheless, I added, if it would be agreeable to him that I should be reconciled with her I was ready to be so. The good lady had not foreseen that, otherwise she would never have let the king come near me; but he was acting in such good faith that he continued friendly to me to his last hour. He sent for the old woman and said to her: "Madame is very willing to be reconciled with you;" he made us embrace and the affair ended that way. Ever after he wished her to live on good terms with me; which she did outwardly, but she played me, underhand, all sorts of tricks. I should not have minded making a trip to Montargis, but I did not want it to look like a disgrace,—as if I had done something to deserve being sent from Court. There was also danger that I should be left there to die of hunger; I much preferred to be reconciled with the king. As for retiring to a convent, that was not at all my reckoning—though it was just what the old woman would have liked to make me do. The château de Montargis is my dower-house; at Orléans there is no house; Saint-Cloud is not an appanage, it is private property which Monsieur bought with his own money. Now my dower is nothing; all that I have to live upon comes from the king and my son. At the beginning of my widowhood I was left without a penny till they finally owed me three hundred thousand francs which

was never paid till after the king's death. What would have become of me, therefore, had I chosen Montargis for my residence?

SAINT-CLOUD, 1720.

The king forgot La Vallière as completely as if he had never seen her or known her in his life. She had as many virtues as the Montespan had vices. The sole weakness that she had for the king was very excusable. The king was young, gallant, and handsome; she herself very young; all the world led her and drove her to her fault. At bottom she was modest and virtuous, with a most kind heart. I told her sometimes that she had transposed her love and carried to God just that which she had for the king. They did her the utmost injustice in accusing her of loving any one but the king—but lies cost the Montespan nothing. It was at her instigation that the king so ill-treated La Vallière. The poor creature's heart was pierced; but she fancied she was offering the greatest sacrifice to God in immolating to him the source of her sin on the very spot where the sin was committed. Therefore, she stayed on, as penance, with the Montespan. The latter, who had more cleverness, laughed at her publicly, treated her ill, and made the king do likewise. Yet she bore it with patience.

Her glance had a charm that can never be described; she had a graceful figure, but her teeth were vile; her eyes seemed to me much more beautiful than those of Mme. de Montespan; her whole bearing was modesty itself. She limped slightly, but it was not unbecoming. When the king made her a duchess and legitimized her children she was in despair, for she thought till then that no one knew she had them. When I came to France she had not yet retired to a convent; in fact, she remained two years longer at Court. We became intimately acquainted at the time she took the veil. I was greatly touched to see that charming creature persist in her resolution, and when they put her beneath the pall I wept so bitterly I could not see the rest. When the ceremony was over she came to me to comfort me, and told me that I ought to congratulate her and not pity her because she was beginning, from that instant, to be happy; she said she should never in her life forget the favour and friendship I had shown to her, which she had never deserved to receive from me. Shortly after, I went to see her again; I was curious to know why she had remained so long as a servant to the Montespan. God, she told me, had touched her heart, and had given her to know her sin; she then thought that she ought to do penance and suffer in the way most painful to her,—that of sharing the king's heart with another, and seeing him despise her. During the three years that the king's love was ceasing she had suffered like a lost soul, and had offered to God her sorrow in expiation of her past sin, because, having sinned publicly, she thought her repentance should be public also. They had taken her, she said, for a silly fool who noticed nothing, and it was precisely then that she suffered most, until God put into her mind to leave all and serve Him only, which she had now done, although on account of her vices she was not worthy to live among the pure and pious souls of the other Carmelites. I saw that what she said came from the depths of her spirit.

You tell me that you are never fatigued listening to your two preachers. I must confess to my shame that I know nothing more wearisome than a sermon; opium could not make me sleep more soundly. I cannot go to church in the afternoon, for I fall asleep at once; and as I am not in a pew here, but facing the pulpit in an armchair where everybody sees me, it would be a real scandal. Besides, since I have grown old, I snore very loud, which would make people laugh, and the preacher himself might be disconcerted.

I have three fine Bibles: that of Mérian, which my aunt, the Abbess of Maubuisson, bequeathed to me; an edition of Luneburg which is very fine, and another sent to me last year by the Princess of Oldenbourg. The latter is like me, short and thick, and neither the print nor the engravings are as good as in the two others. When I came to France every one was forbidden to read the Bible; for the last few years it has been permitted, but lately the Constitution (Unigenitus), about which there has been so much talk, has again forbidden it. It is true no one minds the injunction. As for me, I laugh and say I am perfectly willing to obey the Constitution, and will bind myself to read no French Bible; in fact, I never open any but my German ones. The Bible is good and wholesome nourishment; and what is more, very agreeable. But the German Catholics never have recourse to it, they are so inclined to superstition.

When a person has lived like M. Leibnitz I cannot believe that he needs to have priests about him; they can teach him nothing, for he knows more than they. Habit does not form a true fear of God, and the communion, considered as the result of habit, has no moral value if the heart is devoid of praiseworthy feelings. I do not doubt M. Leibnitz's salvation, and I think he is very fortunate not to have suffered longer.

I know a person who has been the very intimate friend of a learned abbé. That abbé knew most particularly well the celebrated Descartes at the time when he was living in Amsterdam, before he went to Sweden to visit Queen Christina. The abbé often told my friend that Descartes used to laugh at his own system and say: "I have cut them out a fine piece of work; we'll see who will be fool enough to take hold of it" [or "be taken in by it." *Je leur ai taillé de la besogne; nous*

verrons qui sera assez sot pour y donner].

I have seen that other philosopher, M. de La Mothe Vayer; with all his talent he scurried along like a crazy man. He always wore furred boots and a cap lined with fur, which he never took off, very broad neck-bands, and a velvet coat.

As long as I was at Heidelberg I never read a novel; his Highness, my father, would not let me do so; but since I have been here I have compensated myself finely. There are none that I have not read: "Astrée," "Cléopâtre," "Aléfie," "Cassandra," "Poliesandre" [Madame's own spelling]. Besides which I have read lesser ones: "Tarcis et Célie," "Lissandre et Calixte," "Caloandro," "Endimiro," "Amadis" (but as to the last I only got as far as the seventeenth volume, and there are twenty-four); also the "Roman des Romans," "Théagène and Chariclée," of which there are pictures at Fontainebleau in the king's cabinet.

The monks of Saint-Mihiel have the original of the "Memoirs of Cardinal de Retz," and they have printed and sold them at Nancy. Many things are lacking in that edition. But Mme. de Caumartin, who possesses the memoirs in manuscript, where not a word is missing, is obstinate in not letting them be seen, so that the work is incomplete.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1720.

I think that Madame [her predecessor] was more wronged than wronging; she had to do with very wicked people, about whom I could tell many things if I chose. Madame was very young, beautiful, agreeable, and full of grace, and surrounded by the greatest coquettes in the world, the mistresses of Madame's enemies, who sought only to get her into trouble and make Monsieur quarrel with her. They say here that she was not handsome; but she had so much grace that everything became her. She was not capable of forgiving, and was determined to drive away the Chevalier de Lorraine. In that she succeeded, but it cost her her life. He sent the poison from Italy by a Provençal gentleman named Morel, and to reward the latter he was made chief *maître-d'hôtel*. He robbed and pillaged me and was made to sell his office, for which he got a high price. This Morel had the cleverness of a devil, but knew neither law nor gospel. He owned to me himself that he believed in nothing. When he was dying he would not hear of God, and said of himself, "Let this carcass alone; it is good for nothing more."

It is very true that Madame was poisoned, but without Monsieur's knowledge. When those scoundrels held counsel with one another to determine how they should poison poor Madame, they discussed whether or not they should warn Monsieur. The Chevalier de Lorraine said, "No, do not let us tell him, for he cannot hold his tongue. If he does not speak of it the first year, he will get us hanged ten years later." And it is known that one of the wretches added, "Be careful not to let Monsieur know of it; he would tell it to the king, and that would hang us." They made Monsieur believe that the Dutch had given Madame a slow poison in chocolate: but here is the truth:—

D'Effiat did not poison the chicory water, but he poisoned Madame's cup; and that was well imagined, because no one drinks from our cups but ourselves. The cup was not brought out as soon as asked for; they said it was mislaid. A *valet de chambre* whom I had, and who had been in the service of the late Madame (he is dead now), related to me that in the morning, while Monsieur and Madame were at mass, d'Effiat went to the buffet, found the cup, and rubbed it with some paper. The *valet de chambre* said to him: "Monsieur, what are you doing in our closet, and why are you touching Madame's cup?" He answered: "I am dying of thirst, and as the cup was dirty I cleaned it with paper." That evening Madame asked for her chicory water, and as soon as she drank it she cried out that she was poisoned. Those who were there had drunk of the same water, but not from her cup, and they were not taken ill. They put her to bed, and she grew worse and worse, and died two hours after midnight in frightful suffering.

Monsieur never troubled his wife about her gallantries with the king his brother; he himself related to me the whole of Madame's life, and he never would have passed that matter over in silence had he believed it. I think that as to this circumstance the world has been unjust to Madame.

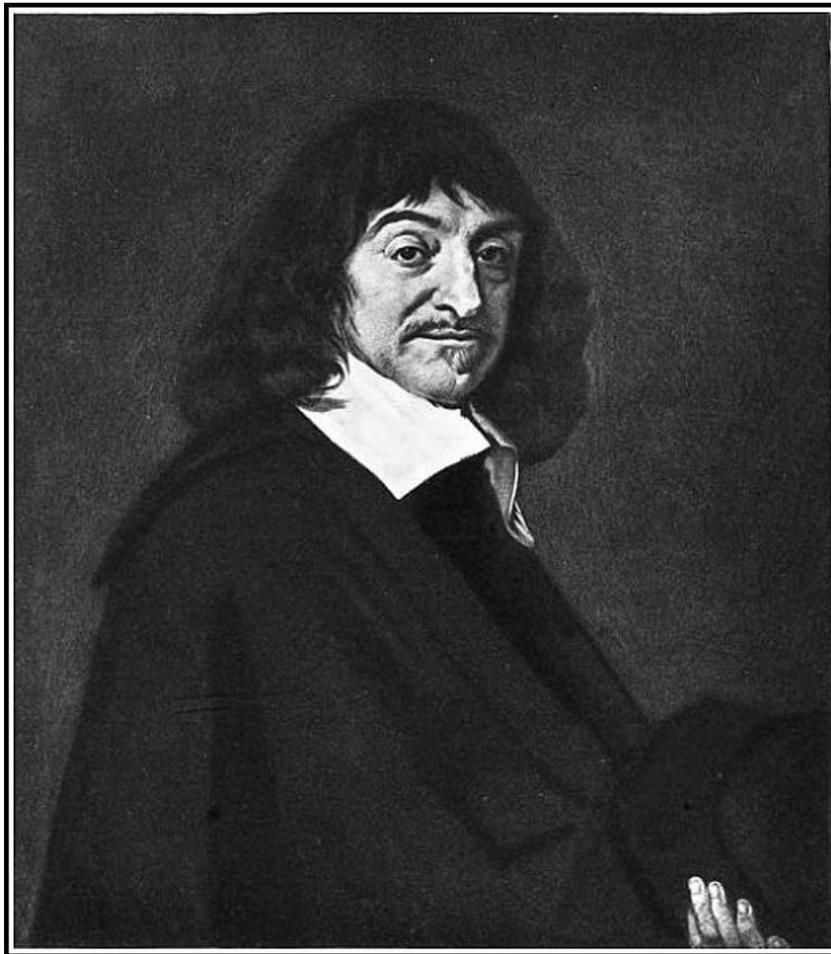
For many years a rumour has spread about Saint-Cloud that the ghost of the late Madame appeared about a fountain where she used to sit in very warm weather, because the place was cool. One evening a lacquey of the Maréchale de Clérembault, going to draw water at the well, saw something white without a face; the phantom, which was sitting down, rose to double its height. The poor lacquey, seized with fright, ran away; on reaching the house he insisted that he had seen Madame, fell ill and died. The officer who was then captain of the château, imagining that there must be something under it all, went to the fountain himself, saw the ghost, and threatened to give it a hundred blows with his stick if it did not own who it was. Whereupon the ghost said: "Oh! Monsieur de Lastéra, don't hurt me, I am only poor Philippinette." She was an old woman in the village, about seventy-seven years old, with only one tooth in her mouth, weak eyes

rimmed with red, a huge mouth, a thick nose,—in short, hideous. They wanted to put her in prison, but I interceded for her. When she came to thank me for that I said to her: “What mania possessed you to play the ghost instead of staying in your bed?” She answered, laughing: “I don’t regret what I have done; at my age one sleeps little, and one must have something or other to keep one’s spirits up. All I ever did in my youth did not give me as much enjoyment as playing the ghost. Those who were not afraid of my white sheet were afraid of my face. The cowards made such faces I nearly died of laughing. That pleasure at night paid me for the pain of carrying faggots by day.”

SAINT-CLOUD, 1720.

I feel a bitter grief whenever I think of all M. Louvois burned in the Palatinate, and I believe he is burning terribly in the other world, for he died so suddenly he had no time to repent. He was poisoned by his doctor, who was afterwards poisoned himself, but confessed his crime before he died, with all details and circumstances, so that there could be no doubt about it. As he was a friend of the old woman, it was given out that he died in a spasm of hot fever. Thus we see, if we examine things well, the justice of God; people are usually punished in this world by their own sins.

The longer I live the more reason I have to regret my aunt, the Electress, and to respect her memory. You are very right in saying that in many centuries we shall not see her like again. Unhappily, I lack a great deal of having her judgment and her energy. What may be praised in me is frankness and good-will; and, thank God, I am not licentious, as is now the fashion among the princely people of the royal house of France.



René Descartes

Rhine wine was *never* put into the great tun at Heidelberg; only Neckar wine. The present Elector is said not to hate it. As for me, Rhine wine is what I prefer. I cannot endure Burgundy; the taste seems to me disagreeable, and besides, it gives me a stomach-ache. I am delighted that Heidelberg is being rebuilt, and that they are working on the château; but what vexes me is that they are putting up a Jesuit convent instead of the commissariat. Jesuits are out of place at Heidelberg, and so are the Franciscans. I am told they live now near to the upper gate; my God! how often I have eaten cherries on that mountain, with a good bit of bread, at five in the morning! I was gayer then than I am now.

You know how the pope had Lord Peterborough arrested at Bologna, nobody knows why. He went about disguised as a woman; with great talents he behaves like a madman. He says he will not come out of prison till he obtains reparation for the affront put upon him. For my part, if I were in prison and they gave me leave to get out, I should depart as fast as possible and say what I had to say later,—first of all, I should recover my liberty. This lord is the queerest eccentric. I think he would rather die than deprive himself of saying what comes into his head and of doing malicious things to the persons he dislikes.

SAINT-CLOUD, 1720.

For forty years no October has ever passed without my son being ill, one way or another, about the 22nd of the month. Though he is regent he never appears before me or leaves me without kissing my hand before I embrace him. He never takes a chair in my presence; but in other respects he stands on no ceremony and gabbles as he likes; we laugh and joke together like cronies. Between him and his mistresses everything goes on to beat of drum without the least gallantry; it reminds me of those old patriarchs who had so many women. The Duc de Saint-Simon was impatient one day with some of my son's easy-going ways and said to him, angrily: "Oh! you are so *debonnaire*! since the days of Louis le Debonnaire there has never been any one so easy-going as you." My son nearly died of laughter.

My son believes in predestination as much as if he had belonged, like me, for nineteen years to the Reformed religion. What seems to me strange is that he does not hate his brother-in-law, the lamester, who would like to see him dead. I think there never was his like; there is no gall in him; I never knew him to hate any one.

Mme. la Duchesse is very amusing and says the most diverting things. She is fond of good eating; and that was just what suited the dauphin [Monseigneur]; he went to her every morning for a good breakfast, and at night for a collation. Her daughters had the same tastes, so that Monseigneur spent the whole day in a society that amused him. At first he was attached to his daughter-in-law [the Duchesse de Bourgogne], but after she quarrelled with Mme. la Duchesse he completely changed; and what irritated him still more was that the Duchesse de Bourgogne brought about the marriage of his son, the Duc de Berry, a marriage he did not like. He was not wrong in that, and they did not treat him well in the matter, I must allow, though the marriage was greatly to our advantage.

The Queen of Spain [Marie-Louise de Savoie] remained much longer with her mother than our dauphine, her sister; consequently, she was very much better educated. The Maintenon knew nothing about education; to win the young dauphine's affection and keep it for herself alone, she let her do just what she liked. The young girl had been brought up by her virtuous mother, and was very winning and droll; merriness became her; she was not ugly when she had a fine colour. I could not tell you what foolish heads were allowed to surround the young princess; for example, the Maréchale d'Estrées. The Maintenon was well paid for giving her such senseless animals, for the result was that she ceased to care for her society. But the Maintenon, determined to know the cause, tormented the princess to admit it. Finally the dauphine told her that the Maréchale d'Estrées was daily saying to her, "Why do you stay with the old woman, and not with those who can amuse you much better than that old carcass?"—saying also other evil things of her. The Maintenon told me this herself after the dauphine's death, to prove it was solely the fault of that hussy that the dauphine did not live on good terms with me. That might be half true, but it is none the less certain that the old *vilaine* had set her against me. Nearly all the giddy young women who surrounded the dauphine were relations or allies of the old woman; it was by her orders that they tried to amuse and divert the princess,—in order that she might have no other society than what she gave her, and be bored elsewhere.

But when the dauphine reached years of discretion she corrected herself in a wonderful manner, and repented heartily of her childish follies; which showed she had judgment. What corrected her was the marriage of Mme. de Berry. She saw that that young woman made others dislike her, and that all went wrong; she then desired to adopt another behaviour than that of her cousin, and to make herself respected. Accordingly she changed her conduct completely; retired within herself, and became as sensible as she had previously been too little so. She had much judgment; she knew her faults perfectly well, and she knew also how to correct them in a wonderful way. She changed her way of life, and in one month she brought back to her side all those whom she had caused to dislike her. Thus she continued until her death. She said frankly how much she regretted to have been so giddy; but excused herself on the ground of her extreme youth, and she blamed the young women who had set her such a bad example and given her such bad advice. She gave them public marks of her displeasure; and managed matters so that the king did not take them any longer to Marly. In this way she brought every one back to her.

She was delicate in health and even sickly. But Doctor Chirac assured us until the last that she would recover. And it is

true that if they had not let her get up whilst she had the measles, and had not bled her in the foot, she would now be living. Immediately after the bleeding, from being red as fire she became pale as death and felt extremely ill. When they took her out of her bed I cried out that they ought to let the sweating subside before they bled her. Chirac and Fagon were obstinate and only scoffed at me. The old *guenipe* came up to me and said: "Do you think yourself cleverer than all the doctors who are here?" I replied, "No, madame, but it does not take much cleverness to know that we ought to follow nature, and if nature inclines to sweating it would be better to follow that indication than to take a sick person up in a perspiration to bleed her." She shrugged her shoulders and smiled ironically. I went to the other side of the room and never said another word.

The Maintenon always retained the fire of her eyes; but she pinched her lips and contracted her nostrils, which gave her the very disagreeable air she put on when she saw any one who displeased her, my Excellency for instance; at such times she would raise the corners of her mouth and drop her under lip. I have often heard her say in a jesting way, "I have been too far from, and too near grandeur to know what it is."

PARIS, February 1, 1721.

I grow weaker and can hardly hold my pen, but there is nothing to be done. I place myself in the hands of God and refer all things to His will. I think I shall end by drying up, like that tortoise I kept at Heidelberg in my bedroom. But as long as I live be sure, dear Louise, that my heart will cherish you.

There is not in all the world a better air than that of Heidelberg, especially that about the château near my bedroom; nothing finer can be found. No one understands better than I, dear Louise, what you must have felt at Heidelberg; I cannot think of it without deep emotion; but I must not speak of it to-night; it makes me too sad and hinders me from sleeping.

My son lives very well with me; he shows me great affection and will be miserable at losing me. His visits do me more good than quinine—they rejoice my heart and do not give me pains in my stomach. He always has something droll to tell me which makes me laugh; he has wit and expresses himself charmingly. I should be a most unnatural mother if I did not love him from the bottom of my heart; if you knew him you would see that he has no ambition and no malignity. Ah! my God, he is only too kind; he pardons all that is done against him and laughs about it. If he would only show his teeth to his wicked relations they would learn to fear him and cease their horrible machinations. You cannot imagine the wickedness and the ambition of the third prince of the blood. As long as M. le Duc hoped to get money out of my son he overwhelmed him with protestations of attachment and devotion; now that there is nothing more to get from him he has turned completely against him and has joined my son's inhuman enemy, the Prince de Conti.

PARIS, 1720.

I am coming to the close of my seventieth year, and I feel that if I have another shock like that which struck me so severely last year I shall soon know how things go on in the other world. My constitution continues sound, as may be seen by the fact that I have resisted all attacks, but, as the French proverb says, "the pitcher may go once too often to the well;" and that is what will happen to me in the end. But these thoughts do not trouble me, for we know that we come into this world only to die. I do not think that extreme old age is a pleasant thing; there is too much to suffer; and with regard to physical suffering I am a great coward.

Saint François de Sales, who founded the Order of the Filles de Sainte-Marie, was in his youth a friend of the Maréchal de Villeroy, father of the present marshal. The marshal never could bring himself to give him his name as a saint, and when they spoke to him of his friend he used to say: "I was delighted when I heard that M. de Sales was a saint; he liked smutty stories and cheated at cards; the best man in the world in other respects, but a fool."

I follow the fashions at a distance, and some of them I put aside entirely, such as paniers, which I do not wear, and loose gowns, which I cannot abide and will not permit in my presence. I think them indecent; women look as if they had just got out of their beds. There is no rule here now about the fashions. Tailors, dressmakers, and hairdressers invent what they please. I have never followed to excess the fashion of tall head-dresses.

I do not know what you mean about your neighbours the storks never failing to come back every year. We have none in France, and I wish you would tell me if you see them in England; for it is said they never stay in any kingdom.

PARIS, 1721.

All that we read in the Bible about the excesses which were punished by the Deluge, and about the lewdness of Sodom and Gomorrah does not approach the life now led in Paris. Out of nine young men of rank who dined the other day with my grandson, the Duc de Chartres, seven had the French disease. Is it not horrible? The majority of the people here are occupied solely with their pleasures and debauchery; outside of that they know nothing and care for nothing; they do not believe in a future life; they imagine that they will end in death.

The Abbé Dubois sends me word he has nothing now to do with the post, which concerns exclusively M. de Torcy; they are rotten eggs and rancid butter, the pair of them; one is no better than the other, and both would be more in their place on a gibbet than at Court, for they are not worth the devil and are more treacherous than gallows-wood, as Lenore would say. If they have the curiosity to read this letter they will see the eulogy I make upon them, and they will recognize the truth of our German proverb, "Listeners never hear any good of themselves."

I know very well that we pay the postage on letters we receive, but as to paying for those we put in the post, that is something new; I never heard of it before in all my life.

PARIS, 1721.

The Archbishop of Cambrai [Dubois] is coming here to-day to tell me of his elevation to the cardinalate; so Alberoni has got a comrade. He is one I cannot love; he poisoned my whole life; at the same time I would not do him any harm. May God forgive him, but he may suffer for it in this world.

We are all in full dress for the ceremony of his reception at three o'clock; I shall be obliged to bow to him, and make him sit down, and talk to him a few moments. It will not be without pain; but pain and vexation are one's daily bread—but here comes the cardinal, and I must pause.

The cardinal has begged me to forget the past; he has made me the finest harangue that was ever listened to. He has great capacities,—that is undeniable; and if he were only as honest as he is capable, he would leave nothing to be desired.

SAINT-CLOUD, October, 1721.

I can only write you a few words and in all haste this morning, my dear Louise, for I am going to Paris to compliment my son and his wife on the good news they have just received and transmitted to me instantly. The King of Spain has asked their daughter in marriage for his son the Prince of the Asturias. Mlle. de Montpensier has no name as yet, but before she goes to Spain the ceremony will be performed; the king and I are to name her; she will then make her first communion and be confirmed; that is what may be called receiving the three sacraments together.

PARIS, 1721.

They leave me no peace; visitors at every moment; I am obliged to get up and make conversation. First came the Comte de Clermont, third brother of M. le Duc; after him the Duchesse de Ventadour and her sister the Duchesse de La Ferté; then the Duc de Chartres, his three sisters and their governess, my two ladies, and Mme. de Ségur, my son's daughter by the left side and not legitimized. That made twelve at table. Then came the Maréchale de Clérembault and Cardinal de Gèsvres; I had to rise to receive him and talk to him. But all that is not comparable to what awaited me after dinner from two o'clock to half-past six. I found in my salon Mme. la Princesse, with our Duchess of Hanover, the tall Princesse de Conti, and Mlle. de Clermont, with all their ladies; and when they went away the little Princesse de Conti came with her daughter; then the Duchesse du Maine, Mme. la Duchesse and her daughter, and all their ladies. Also a great many other ladies not of the royal family, such as the Princesse d'Espinoy, the Duchesse de Valentinois, the Princesse de Montauban, and I don't know who else, innumerable duchesses, the Maréchales de Noailles and de Boufflers, the Duchesses de Lesdiguières, de Nevers, d'Humières, de Grammont, de Roquelaire, de Villars; the Duchesse d'Orléans came too; as for the ladies who did not sit, they were innumerable, and I am quite sure I have forgotten some of the *tabouret* ones. It was so hot in my room that I should have fainted if I had not gone, now and then, into my dressing-room to get a breath of air. But what made me suffer most was my knees; by dint of rising and bowing I really thought I should faint away.

I have an abbé (whom I often call a scamp) sitting by me now; he is dinning his chatter into my ears so that I really do not

know what I write; from that, you will know very well that I mean my Abbé de Saint Albin, who will soon be Bishop of Laon, duke and peer of France. That will give me great pleasure, because I have felt more attachment for that poor boy from his earliest childhood than for all his brothers and sisters; I feel that of all my son's children, legitimate and illegitimate, he is the one that I love best.

My son cannot and will not believe that the Duc du Maine is the king's son. That man has always been treacherous; he did ill-turns to everybody; he was always hated as an arch-spy and informer. His wife, the little frog, is much more violent than he; for he is cowardly, and fear restrains him; but the wife mingles the heroic with her capers. I think myself that the Comte de Toulouse is really the king's son; but I have always believed that the Duc du Maine was the son of Terme, who was a treacherous scoundrel and the worst spy at Court. The old *guenipe* had persuaded the king that the Duc du Maine was all virtue and piety; and when he reported harm of any one, she said it was for that person's good, so that the king might correct him. Thus the king considered everything that came from du Maine admirable; he regarded him as a saint. To this that confessor, Père Tellier, contributed much in order to please the old woman. The late chancellor Voysin also talked about the duke to the king by order of the Maintenon.

PARIS, 1721.

It cannot be said that Mlle. de Montpensier is ugly; she has pretty eyes, a delicate white skin, a well-formed nose, though rather too slim, and a very small mouth; and yet with all that she is the most disagreeable person I ever saw in my life; in all her actions, speaking, eating, drinking, she is intolerable; she did not shed a tear in leaving us; in fact, she scarcely said farewell.^[14] I have seen successively two of my relatives and now my grand-daughter become Queens of Spain. The one I loved best was my step-daughter [wife of Charles II.]; for her I had a most sincere affection as if she were my sister; she could not have been my daughter because I was only nine years older than she. I was still very childish when I came to France, and we used to play together with Charles-Louis and the little Prince d'Eisenach, and make such a racket you could not have heard a thunderbolt fall.

PARIS, March, 1722.

I do not believe that in the whole world you could find a more amiable and sweeter child than our pretty infant.^[15] She makes reflections that are worthy of a woman of thirty; for instance: "They say that those who die at my age are saved and go straight to paradise; I should therefore be very glad if the good God would take me." I fear she has too much mind, and will not live. She has the prettiest ways in the world; she has taken a great liking to me, and runs to me in her antechamber with her arms wide open, and kisses me with affection. I am not on bad terms with the little king.

May, 1722.

I thank you heartily for praying for me; I have nothing now to ask for my own happiness in this world; provided God protects my children, I am content; but I have great need of intercession for my happiness in the other life, and also for that of my son. May God convert him; that is the only blessing that I ask of Him. I think there is not in all Paris, whether among the priests or the world's people, one hundred persons who have the true Christian faith and believe in our Saviour; and the thought makes me shudder.

September 29, 1722.

I do what my doctor orders, so as not to be tormented, and I await from the hand of God Almighty whatsoever he decides on my account; I am entirely resigned to his will.

October 3, 1722.

Since I last wrote to you no change has occurred in respect to me; matters will go as God wills. I am preparing for my journey to Reims [to the coronation of Louis XV.]; time will show the result.

PARIS, November 5, 1722.

I returned here the day before yesterday; but in a sad state.

During my journey I received five of your good letters, dear Louise, and I thank you most sincerely, for they gave me great pleasure. I could not answer them, as much on account of my weakness as from the perpetual bustle in which I was. My time was all taken up by the ceremonies, by my children whom I had constantly about me, and by a crowd of distinguished persons, princes, dukes, cardinals, archbishops, and bishops who came to see me. I think that in the whole world nothing more magnificent could be imagined than the coronation of the king; if God allows me a little health I will write you a description of it. My daughter was much moved at seeing me. She scarcely believed in my illness, and fancied it was only a little over-fatigue. But when she saw me at Reims she was so shocked that the tears came into her eyes, and that pained me very much.

I wish I could talk with you longer, but I feel too weak.

November 12, 1722.

I hope to send you to-morrow a grand account of the coronation. I know nothing new, except that I have been told one thing which causes me the greatest joy. My son has broken from his mistresses, thinking that he ought not to continue a style of life which would be a bad example to the king and draw down upon him just condemnation. May God maintain him in these good intentions and order all things for his happiness; that is the only thing about which I am solicitous; I have no anxiety as to what God may do with me.

November 21, 1722.

I grow worse hour by hour, and I suffer day and night; nothing that they do for me relieves me. I have great need that God should inspire me with patience; He would do me a great mercy if He delivered me from my sufferings; therefore do not be distressed if you lose me; it will be a great blessing for me.

In addition to my own illness I have another thing that goes to my heart; my poor old Maréchale de Clérembault is very ill.

November 29, 1722.

You will receive to-day but a very short letter; I am worse than I have ever been, and have not closed my eyes all night. Yesterday morning we lost our poor maréchale; she had no attack, but life appeared to abandon her. It gives me sincere pain; she was a lady of great capacity and much merit; she was highly educated, though she did not make it apparent. They tell me she has chosen as her heir the son of her eldest brother. It is not surprising that a person eighty-eight years of age should go; but, even so, it is painful to lose a friend with whom one has passed fifty-one years of one's life. But I must stop, my dear Louise; I suffer too much to say more to-day. If you could see the state in which I am you would understand how much I wish that it might end.

[Madame died nine days after this letter was written.]

VI.

LETTERS OF THE DUCHESSE DE BOURGOGNE.

PRECEDED BY REMARKS OF

C.-A. SAINTE-BEUVE.

Marie-Adélaïde de Savoie, Duchesse de Bourgogne, who was married to the grandson of Louis XIV. and was the mother of Louis XV., has left a very gracious memory behind her. She flitted through the world like one of those bright, rapid apparitions which the imagination of contemporaries delights to embellish. Born in 1685, daughter of the Duc de Savoie, who transmitted to her his ability and possibly his craft, grand-daughter by her mother of that amiable Henrietta of England (first wife of Monsieur, Louis XIV.'s brother), whose death Bossuet immortalized, and whose charm she resuscitated, Marie-Adélaïde came to France when eleven years old to marry the Duc de Bourgogne, who was then thirteen. The marriage took place the following year, but in form only; and for several years the education of the young princess was the occupation of her life. Mme. de Maintenon applied herself to that purpose with all the care and consistency of which she was so capable. It was not her fault if the Duchesse de Bourgogne did not become the most exemplary of the pupils of Saint-Cyr. The vivacity and lively spirits of the princess disconcerted at times the well-laid schemes of prudence, and she constantly broke from the frame in which it was designed to hold her. Nevertheless, she profited through it all; serious thoughts slipped in among her pleasures. It was for her that sacred plays, some by Duché, but especially Racine's "Athalie," were acted in Mme. de Maintenon's apartment. In "Athalie," the Duchesse de Bourgogne played a part.



The Duchesse de Bourgogne

The princess had already received in Savoie a certain education, especially in that so necessary to princes and which nature itself gives to women, namely, the desire and the effort to please. She arrived at Montargis on Sunday, November

4, 1696. Louis XIV. had left Fontainebleau after dinner and gone to Montargis with his son [Monseigneur], his brother [Monsieur, the little Adélaïde's grandfather], and all the principal seigneurs of his Court, in order to receive her. Before going to bed that night the king concludes an important letter to Mme. de Maintenon in which he gives her an account in the fullest detail of the person and slightest action of the little princess; it was the affair of State of the moment. The original of this letter of Louis XIV. exists in the library of the Louvre, and it is here given textually. Let us now read Louis XIV. undisguised, or rather, let us listen to the great monarch conversing and relating; language excellent, phrases neat, exact, and perfect, terms appropriate, good taste supreme in all that concerns externals and visible appearance; whatever, in short, contributes to regal presentation. As for the moral basis, that is slim and mediocre enough, we must allow, or rather, it is absent. But let us read the letter:—

“I arrived here [Montargis] before five o'clock,” writes the king; “the princess did not come till nearly six. I went to receive her at the carriage; she let me speak first, and afterwards she replied extremely well, but with a little embarrassment that would have pleased you. I led her to her room through the crowd, letting her be seen from time to time by making the torches come nearer to her face. She bore that march and the lights with grace and modesty. At last we reached her room, where there was a crowd, and heat enough to kill us. I showed her now and then to those who approached us, and I considered her in every way in order to write you what I think of her. She has the best grace and the prettiest figure I have ever seen; dressed to paint, and hair the same; eyes very bright and very beautiful, the lashes black and admirable; complexion very even, white and red, all that one could wish; the finest blond hair that was ever seen, and in great quantity. She is thin, but that belongs to her years; her mouth is rosy, the lips full, the teeth white, long, and ill-placed; the hands well shaped, but the colour of her age. She speaks little, so far as I have seen; is not embarrassed when looked at, like a person who has seen the world. She curtsies badly, with a rather Italian air. She has also something of an Italian in her face; but she pleases; I saw that in the eyes of those present. As for me, I am wholly satisfied. She resembles her first portrait, not the second. To speak to you as I always do, I must tell you that I find her all that could be wished; I should be sorry if she were handsomer.

“I say it again: everything is pleasing except the curtsy. I will tell you more after supper, for there I shall observe many things which I have not been able to see as yet. I forgot to tell you that she is short rather than tall for her age. Up to this time I have done marvels; I hope I can sustain a certain easy air I have taken until we reach Fontainebleau, where I greatly desire to find myself.”

At ten o'clock that night, before going to bed, the king added the following postscript:—

“The more I see of the princess, the more satisfied I am. We had a public conversation, in which she said nothing, and that is saying all. Her waist is very beautiful, one might say perfect, and her modesty would please you. We supped and she did not fail in anything, and has a charming politeness to every one; but to me and my son she fails in nothing, and behaves as you might have done. She was much looked at and observed; and all present seemed in good faith to be satisfied. Her air is noble, her manners polished and agreeable; I have pleasure in telling you such good of her, for I find that, without prepossession or flattery, I can do so and that everything obliges me to do so.”

Now, shall I venture to express my thought? There is certainly a mention of modesty in one or two places in the letter; but it is of the modest *air*, the good effect produced, the grace that depended on it. For all the rest it is impossible to find on these pages anything other than a charming physical, external, and mundane description, without the slightest concern as to inward and moral qualities. Evidently the king is as little concerned about those as he is deeply anxious about externals. Let the princess succeed and please, let her charm and amuse, let her adorn the Court and enliven it, give her a good confessor, a sound Jesuit, and for all the rest let her be and do what pleases her; the king asks nothing else: that is the impression left upon me by that letter.

If there had entered into this letter written from Montargis even a flash of moral solicitude in the midst of the record of those external graces and perfect proprieties, Louis XIV. would not have been, after twelve years' hourly intimacy, the odious and hard grandfather of the scene at Marly near the carp basin, to the mother of his expected heir. I send the reader for the details and the accessories of that singular scene to Saint-Simon, who in this instance is our Tacitus, the Tacitus of a king not naturally cruel, but who was so that day by force of egotism and selfishness. That first letter from Montargis, so elegant, so smiling on the outward surface, covered in its depths the vanity and egotism of a master, solicitude solely for decorum and curtsying—the scene at the basin of carp concludes it.

I shall not reproduce here the divers portraits of the Duchesse de Bourgogne; I should have to take them from many

sources, but above all from Saint-Simon. She was neither handsome nor pretty, she was better than either. Each feature of her face taken separately might seem defective, even ugly, but from all these uglinesses, these defects, these irregularities arranged by the hand of the Graces, came a nameless harmony of her person, a delightful *ensemble*, the movement and airy whirl of which enchanted both eyes and soul. In moral qualities it was the same.

She played a part in “*Athalie*;” why should I not tell what she thought of that play, capricious child that she was? Apropos of its representation at Saint-Cyr, Mme. de Maintenon writes: “Here is ‘*Athalie*’ again breaking down. Ill-luck pursues all that I protect and care for. Mme. la Duchesse de Bourgogne tells me it can never succeed, that the piece is cold, that Racine regretted it, that I am the only person who likes it, and a number of other things which enable me to perceive, through the knowledge I have of this Court, that her part displeases her. She wants to play Josabeth, which she cannot play as well as the Comtesse d’Ayen.”^[16] As soon as they gave her the rôle she liked, the point of view was changed in a moment; such were the coulisses of Saint-Cyr! “She is delighted,” continues Mme. de Maintenon, “and now thinks ‘*Athalie*’ marvellous. Let us play it, then, inasmuch as we have agreed to do so; but, in truth, it is not agreeable to mix in the pleasures of the great.” The Duchesse de Bourgogne came of that race of *the great* which will soon be a race departed. She deserves to remain in the vista as a true representative in her transitory life of its lightest and most seductive charm.

The letters of the duchess which have been published up to this time are mere notes, adding nothing to the idea that we form of her mind. La Fare, in his memoirs written about the year 1699, has very well remarked that after the death of Madame, Henrietta of England (grandmother of Marie-Adélaïde) in 1670, the taste for things of intellect was greatly lowered in that brilliant Court of Louis XIV. “It is certain,” he says, “that in losing that princess the Court lost the only person of her rank who was capable of liking and distinguishing real merit; since her death, nothing is seen but gambling, confusion, and impoliteness.” Towards the close of the reign of Louis XIV. a taste for matters of mind and even for the refinements of wit reappeared no doubt and found favour in the little circles of Saint-Maur and Sceaux, but the body of the Court during that period was a victim to *bassette*, *lansquenet*, and other excesses, in which wine bore its fair share. The Duchesse de Berry, daughter of the future regent, was not the only young woman to whom it happened to be drunk. The Duchesse de Bourgogne herself, entering such society, found it difficult sometimes not to fall into the vices of the day, into those nets of which *lansquenet* was the best known and the most ruinous. More than once the king or Mme. de Maintenon paid her debts. But she asked for pardon with such good grace and submission by letter, and by word of mouth with such pretty and coaxing ways that she was sure to obtain it.

Those who judged her with the most severity are all agreed that she corrected herself with age, and that her will, her rare spirit, her sense of the rank she was about to hold, triumphed in the end over her first impetuosity and petulance. “Three years before her death,” writes Madame, mother of the regent, honest and terrible woman who says all things bluntly, “the dauphine had entirely changed, to her great advantage; she no longer made escapades or drank too much. Instead of behaving like an intractable being, she became sensible and polite, behaved according to her rank, and no longer allowed her young ladies to be familiar with her, and put their fingers in her dish.” Uncomfortable praises, perhaps, with which we could dispense. But at this distance of time we can hear all without scruple, and, while doing homage to a person who had the gift of charm, we may dare to look on manners and customs as they were.^[17] We must resolve, whatever it costs us, to leave the chamber of Mme. de Maintenon and the twilight of its sanctuary. The Duchesse de Bourgogne has been pictured to us in the garb of Saint-Cyr; it is not in that habit that she is, to my thinking, most natural or truest.

A delicate question presents itself,—more delicate than that of *lansquenet*: did the Duchesse de Bourgogne have weaknesses of the heart? Adored by her young husband, and knowing how to take in hand his interests under all attacks, it does not seem that she had for his person a very warm or tender liking. Hence one does not see what there was to guarantee her from some other penchant. Saint-Simon, who is in no way malevolent to the Duchesse de Bourgogne, relates with great detail and as if receiving the confidences of well-informed persons, the slight weaknesses of the princess for M. de Nangis, M. de Maulévrier, and the Abbé de Polignac. “At Marly,” he says, “the dauphine would run about the gardens with other young people till three and four o’clock in the morning. The king never knew of these nocturnal expeditions.” Nevertheless, I do not desire to do otherwise than agree with Mme. de Caylus, who, while admitting the liking of the princess for M. de Nangis, makes haste to add: “The only thing I doubt is whether the affair ever went so far as people thought; I am convinced that the whole intrigue took place in looks, and, at most, in a few letters.”

In the midst of all her levity and childish frivolity the Duchesse de Bourgogne had serious good qualities, which increased as the years went on. She said very sweetly one day to Mme. de Maintenon: “Aunt, I am under infinite

obligations to you; you have had the patience to wait for my reason.” She would no doubt have proved capable of State business and politics. The manner in which she knew how to defend the prince, her husband, against the cabal of the Duc de Vendôme, the striking revenge she took upon the latter at Marly, and the back-handed stroke by which she ousted him, show us plainly what she could do that was able and persistent when a matter came close to her heart. The few letters which she wrote to the Duc de Noailles, in which she says she knows nothing of politics, go to prove, on the contrary, that, if she could have talked about them instead of writing, she would have liked very well to take part in them. There is a more serious matter, which I see no reason for disguising. According to Duclos [author of “The Secret Memoirs of the reign of Louis XIV.,” etc.], this fascinating child, so dear to the king, did, nevertheless, betray France by informing her father, the Duc de Savoie, then become our enemy, of military plans which she was able to discover when, with playful familiarity and the liberty of entering the king’s cabinet at all hours, she had the opportunity to read and learn those plans at their source. The king, adds the historian, found the proofs of this treachery, after the death of the princess, in her desk. “The little rogue,” he is reported to have said to Mme. de Maintenon, “deceived us after all.”

In spite of all, we find ourselves regretting that this princess, taken from us at the age of twenty-six, whose natural fairy-like presence bewitched all hearts, did not live to reign beside the virtuous pupil of Fénelon. The reign of their son, that Louis XV. who was only a pretty child at their deaths and became the most contemptible of kings, would at least have been postponed. But what good is there in re-making history and in setting up a mere idea of what *might have been*?

[Sainte-Beuve does not show his usual justice and careful discrimination in his foregoing semi-acceptance of Duclos’ tale of “perfidy.” The whole story of Marie-Adélaïde’s position at the French Court should have been more clearly sifted. The two daughters of Vittorio Amadeo, Duke of Savoie, were, in a sense, hostages given by him to Louis XIV. in 1696 and 1701 as an earnest of faithful alliance. Circumstances, however, forced the duke in 1703 (during the war of the Spanish Succession) into the coalition against France.

From the tenth century the princes of the ancient house of Savoie had been, for various reasons geographical and political, the upholders of Italian unity, or, as one might better say, of Italian existence. France had felt this under all her attempts to master Italy, until finally her wisest statesmen, Henri IV., Richelieu, and Mazarin, saw that their true policy was to use Piedmont against the extension of the two branches of the House of Austria. The whole history of the Princes of Savoie is a romance, hitherto neglected, which ought to be traced out and written by a sympathetic hand.

The alliance of France and Piedmont, so useful to the former by enabling her to maintain her conquests on the northern frontier, was converted by Louis XIV. into a species of vassalage, to which the indolent nature of Carlo Emmanuele submitted. The latter died in 1675, leaving one son, Vittorio Amadeo, aged nine, under the regency of his mother, Jeanne de Nemours, an ambitious and powerful woman. It is impossible to give here even a brief sketch of the House of Savoie, an heroic history, which should be rescued from the archives of Turin and elsewhere—in it will be found, we may add parenthetically, the story of the Waldenses and the secret of the Iron Mask.

Vittorio Amadeo married Anne, daughter of Monsieur, Louis XIV.’s brother, by his first wife, Henrietta, daughter of Charles I., King of England. The grandmother to whom the following letters are chiefly addressed was the father’s mother, Jeanne de Nemours.

These letters, which seem to us very short, were laborious undertakings to the princess, who was never able to write easily. The first, in a childish round text hand, filling a sheet of paper twenty-three centimetres long by sixteen centimetres wide, is better written than those of her after life. The grammar and the spelling improved somewhat in later years, though never keeping pace with the improvement in the diction. They are signed with a sort of hieroglyphic, seldom with her name, and tied by a silken thread, the seal being a lozenge with the arms of Savoie, or sometimes the impression of a little dog.

Returning to the charge of Duclos (an historian of gossip rather than of history), it seems enough to say: (1) that his story has never been supported in any way; (2) that the tone of the princess’s letters refutes it; (3) that what we know from Madame about the opening of letters makes it certain that the little duchess, surrounded as she was, could not have sent documents and plans undetected; (4) that Madame, that lynx for evil tales, and who did not like the dauphine, though she did her justice, makes no allusion to this story; and (5) that Saint-Simon, in a position to know everything, states the contrary.

The little princess arrived in France, and was met by the king at Montargis, November 4, 1696. The following is her first letter to her grandmother, Jeanne de Nemours, dowager Duchess of Savoie. This letter and one written two years later are here given in the French as amusing specimens of her spelling and punctuation.]

DE VERSAIE ce 13 Novembre [1696]

Vous me pardonere Madame si ie ne uous est pas escrit la peur de uous anuier me la fait fair ie fini Madame uous embrasan.

Tres humble tres obeisantes petite fille

M. ADÉLAÏDE DE SAUOIE.

VERSAILLES, November 13 [1696].

You will pardon me, Madame, if I have not written you, the fear of ennuying you made me do it. I end, Madame, embracing you.

Very humble, very obedient grand-daughter,

M. ADÉLAÏDE DE SAVOIE.

[1696].

The trip to Marly prevented me from writing to you by the last courier as I had planned, my dear grandmamma. It is not to be believed how little time I have. I do what you ordered me about Madame de Maintenon. I have much affection for her, and confidence in her advice. Believe, my dear grandmamma, all that she writes you about me, though I do not deserve it; but I would like you to have the pleasure of it, for I count on your love [*amitié*], and I never forget all the marks you have given me of it.

VERSAILLES, August, 1697.

I have had great joy in the taking of Barcelona, my dear grandmamma, for I am a good Frenchwoman, and I feel for all that pleases the king, to whom I am attached as much as you can wish. Though I do not enter much into affairs of State, I understand that we shall soon have peace, and that will be another joy to me, for I have many in this country, my dear grandmamma, and I am very certain you share my happiness because of all your goodness to me.

December 3 [three days before the marriage ceremony].

I am well assured, my dear grandmamma, that you take part in the accomplishment of my happiness; do me the same justice on the feelings that I have for you, which will always be full of tenderness and respect. I assure you in my change of state I shall be always the same through life.

VERSAILLES, February 28, 1698.

I hope to repair, when I know how to write, the faults that I make now, and to let you see, my dear grandmamma, that I write to you rarely because I write so badly; but I love you tenderly, none the less. I am going to a ball.

VERSAILLES, March 25, 1698.

I hope I write pretty well, my dear grandmamma; I have a master who takes such pains I should do very wrong not to profit by the care they take of everything concerning me.

The Duchesse du Lude has come to me; which delights me, and it is true that Mme. de Maintenon sees me as often as she can. I think I can assure you that those two ladies love me. Never doubt, my dear grandmamma, that I love you as much as I should.

VERSAILE ce 25 Mars. 1698

J'espere que j'escrire assez bien, ma chere grandmaman j'ai un maitre qui se donne beaucoup de paine i'aurois grans tort de ne pas profiter des soins qu'on prend de tout ce que me regarde la D du Lude estre venue auprais de moy dont je suis ravie et il est vrai que Mme. de Mentenon me voit le plus souvent qui lui est possible ie croye pouvoir vous assurer sans saut [trop?] me flatter que ces deux dames m'aimen. Ne douttes iamais ma chere gran maman que ie ne vous aime tous jours autan que ie le dois.

May 26, 1698.

It is time, my dear grandmamma, that I knew how to write; they often reproach me here for the shame of a married woman [æt. 13] who has a master for such a common thing.

July 2, 1698.

They are working on my menagerie. The king has ordered Mansart to spare nothing. Imagine, my dear grandmamma, what it will be. But I shall only see it on my return from Fontainebleau. It is true that the king's kindnesses to me are wonderful; but also, I love him well.

COMPIÈGNE, September 13, 1698. ^[18]

I never thought, my dear grandmamma, that I should find myself in a besieged town, and be waked by the sound of cannon as I was this morning. I hope we shall soon get out of this state. It is true that I have great pleasures here. I shall be delighted to go back to Versailles and to the menagerie at Saint-Cyr. Certainly one has no leisure to be bored. I am convinced that you share my happiness, because of the love you have for me.

FONTAINEBLEAU, October 31, 1698.

The stay at Fontainebleau is very agreeable to me, especially as it is the second place where I had the honour of seeing the king; and I hope, my dear grandmamma, that I shall be happy not only at Fontainebleau but everywhere, being resolved to do all that depends on me to be so.

Those who love me have every reason to be glad with me in the king's kindness, for he gives me every day fresh marks of it. I have reason to think it will increase; at any rate I shall forget nothing on my part to deserve it. I am going to try a new pleasure,—that of travelling. But I shall love you everywhere, my dear grandmamma.

VERSAILLES, December, 1698.

I could not write you by the last courier, my dear grandmamma, because I am out continually, and every evening I go to the king. I am sure that excuse will not displease you, and that you will think my time well spent if near the king. His kindness to me can never be expressed; and as I know the interest you take in my happiness I am very glad to assure you it is perfect, and that I shall never forget the tenderness I ought to have and do have for you.

January 10, 1699.

I am not yet free enough, my dear grandmamma, with M. le Duc de Bourgogne to do the honours of him. I am only very glad that you are content with his letter. I wish that mine could express what I desire for your happiness during this year and many other years, and how much I hope that you will love me always.

MARLY, July 3, 1699.

I am very glad, my dear grandmamma, that you are not tired of telling me of your friendship, for I always receive the

assurance of it with fresh joy. I wish I could tell you of the beauty of this place and of the pleasures we have here. I am delighted to be on the footing of coming here on all the trips, for I like these as well as I do those of the Marly-Bourgogne. I embrace you, my dear grandmamma, and I am going to bathe.

December 27, 1699.

It is true, my dear grandmother, that I have a good friend in Mme. de Maintenon, and it will not be her fault if I am not perfect and happy. M. le Cardinal d'Estrées wishes to carry a letter to you from me, and I give it to him willingly. I shall trust to his informing you of all that concerns me; but he cannot tell you how I love you, nor to what point I am touched by your kindness. I go about in mask the last few days, and so, sleeping very late, I have little time for the rest.

To Vittorio Amadeo, Duc de Savoie.

January 3, 1700.

Be pleased to approve, my dear father, that, according to custom, I should renew at the beginning of this year the assurances of my respect, my gratitude, and my tenderness for you, and I beg you to love me always. M. de Brienne tells me things as to that which give me great pleasure, as proving to me that my removal has not diminished your affection for me.

If I do not write oftener, my dear father, believe, I entreat you, that the fear of importuning you prevents it, also the confidence I have that you will never doubt the feelings of tenderness, respect, and gratitude which I owe to the best father in the world. I should be grieved indeed if I did not do you justice in that respect; you could not think otherwise without having a bad opinion of me, who indeed deserve the tenderness I ask of you.

March 20, 1700.

There is never a time that I do not receive your letters with pleasure, my dear grandmamma; but it is true that the carnival keeps me occupied, and the balls lead to other occupations that take all my time. That is what has hindered me from writing. I am delighted that the reports made to you of me have been agreeable; for I desire to please you in everything and preserve the affection you have always had for me.

November 16, 1700.

I am delighted, my dear grandmamma, that you approve of what I am doing; I have no stronger passion than that of doing nothing wrong and thus deserving the esteem of honourable people. Yours, my dear grandmamma, is precious to me.

Perhaps you will think this discourse very serious; but I warn you I am no longer a child; even my gaiety is a little diminished. The more reasonable I become, the more I know, my dear grandmamma, how much I ought to love you.

December 27, 1701.

I am ashamed, my dear grandmamma, to have been so long without writing to you. It may be partly my fault, and for that I beg your pardon; but I assure you we lead a life of great irregularity, changing continually from place to place.

I am delighted to tell you that my sister is very happy and that the King of Spain is extremely content with her. [Marie-Louise de Savoie, married to Philippe V.] What she did about her women was only a piece of childishness, and had no consequences. I hope that she and I, my dear grandmamma, will give you nothing but joy, and that my irregularities will never make you doubt the affection that I have for you.

January 9, 1702.

I am very irregular, my dear grandmother, in not having wished you a happy year, but I have been unwell with inflammations and headaches. Forgive me, dear grandmother, and do not think that I love you less tenderly. The Marquis

de Coudray is returning to Turin. You can hear more about me in detail from him. He seems charmed with this country. I have spared no pains to make him satisfied with me, and I think I have succeeded. He will tell you that your granddaughter has grown tall. It seems to me that I am no longer young; my childhood has lasted but a short time!

[The correspondence with her mother, Anne, daughter of Monsieur and Henrietta of England, was doubtless voluminous, but it has disappeared. Four letters remain for the month of January of this year, showing their rapid intercourse, but only three for the rest of Marie-Adélaïde's short lifetime.]

January 2, 1702.

I think with you, my dear mother, that news from Spain comes slowly. I would like to know all that She does from morning till night, to satisfy the interest that I feel. I am, however, more easy now that I feel the true affection that exists between the King of Spain and Her. I hope, my dear mother, that we shall have in that direction sources of joy only.

I pique myself now on being a great personage, and I think that "Mamma" is not suitable. But I shall love still more my dear mother than my dear mamma, because I now understand better what your value is, and what I owe to you.

VERSAILLES, January 9, 1702.

I have no news from you this week, my dear mother, for which I am sorry: but I think the ice and snow are the reason. The wretched weather prevents our going to Marly, for it is not fit weather for the country. I fear this winter will give us no amusement that I can write about; on account of the mourning there may be no balls, theatres, or any pleasures. I do not regret it much, for the carnival is very short this year, and consequently more easy to do without.

January 23, 1702.

I send you the plan which M. Mansart has returned to me. It seems to me very pretty, if the works are well executed. He begs me to ask if you would like him to send you a man to execute them. You have only to tell me what you wish. I will gladly take charge of it, my dear mother, desiring nothing so much as to please you in all things.

The King of Spain's journey to Italy is decided on. This gives me great pleasure, and I see at the same time that they are still greatly satisfied with my sister. I will tell you more by the next courier.

I am now going to see the Queen of England, and thence to Marly, where we shall dance. On this trip we played a comedy [this was the time when they played "Athalie"]; the king was much pleased with it, and so was Monseigneur. Forgive me, my dear mother, if I write badly; it is because I am so hurried. You know well that I love best to write to you and amuse you for a moment.

Adieu, my very dear mother; I embrace you with all my heart, my dear mother, with all my heart.

MARLY, January 30, 1702.

Thank God, I am rid of inflammation, my dear mother, after having my cheek swelled for a week, with fever at night. The great cold prevented them from giving me remedies, of which I was very glad; they wanted at all risks to bleed me, assuring me that the inflammation would continue if it were not done. However, I am rid of the swelling without it, and, provided it does not return, I am content.

I am very sorry, my dear mother, that you do not receive my letters regularly; yours do not play me the same trick. The prospect of peace continues wonderfully good, and it makes me hope that we shall soon have it. I own to you, my dear mother, that I await it with great impatience, for I think we shall all have reason then to be satisfied. It will be a great consolation to me to see no more of this vile war which has lasted for so long a time.

Adieu, my dear mother; love me always, and be assured of the tender feelings that I have for you.

VERSAILLES, July 4, 1702.

We have been much afflicted, my dear grandmother [by the death of Monsieur, her maternal grandfather] and I have felt

for my own sake much more than I expected. I loved Monsieur very much and I think he loved me. His death was unexpected, at least by us, and all the circumstances were painful. I am convinced, my dear grandmother, that you have felt it also, and I count on your affection under all events. Never doubt that which I have for you.

April 2, 1703.

I am delighted, my dear grandmother, that you have given me a commission. I send you a sample of tea, which they assure me is excellent. If you find it so I will send you more. The king does not take it; M. Fagon orders him sage tea, which agrees with him. I hope the use of this tea will do the same with you; no one in the world feels more interest in you than I, my dear grandmother.

[Only two letters of the year 1704 have been preserved. The health of the princess caused such anxiety that she was made (according to Dangeau's Journal) to keep her bed from February 8th until after the birth of her first child, the Duc de Bretagne, born June 25, 1704. She was then eighteen years old.]

September 1, 1704.

I am ashamed, my dear grandmother, to have been so long without writing to you; but I have had many ailments that prevented it. You will surely believe that I would not otherwise have been all this time without assuring you of my tenderness and begging you for that you have always shown me.

I cannot help telling you about my son, who is very well; he would be rather pretty if he did not have an eruption, but I am in hopes when we get to Fontainebleau he will have no more of it.

April 25, 1705.

I cannot, my dear grandmother, be longer without comforting myself with you in the sorrow that has befallen me [death of her son]. I am convinced that you have felt it, for I know the affection you have for me. If we did not take all the sorrows of this life from God, I do not know what would become of us. I think He wants to draw me to Him, by overwhelming me with every sort of grief. My health suffers greatly, but that is the least of my troubles.

I have received one of your letters, my dear grandmother, which gave me great pleasure; the assurances of your affection bring me consolation. I have great need of it in my present state. Adieu; I write so slowly that the shortest letters take me a great deal of time.

[At the close of the year 1703 her father, Vittorio Amadeo, had entered the alliance against France; the battle of Ramillies was fought May 23, 1706, and the French were defeated at Turin September 7 of the same year.]

MARLY, June 21, 1706.

I can be no longer, my dear grandmother, without sharing all our troubles with you. Imagine my anxiety as to what is happening with you, loving you as I do very tenderly and having all possible affection for my father, my mother, and my brothers. I cannot think of them in so unhappy a position without tears in my eyes, for assuredly, my dear grandmother, I feel for all that concerns you, and I see by all that is in me to what point my love for my family goes.

My health is not so much injured as it might be; I am pretty well, but in a state of sadness which no amusement can lessen, and which will never leave me, my dear grandmother, for it serves to comfort me in my present state.

Do not deprive me, I conjure you, of your letters. They give me much pleasure; I need them in the state I am in. Send me news of all that is dearest to me in the world.

MARLY, July 25, 1706.

I have not written, my dear grandmother, not knowing if you are still with my mother, being unable to obtain the slightest information. You know my heart; imagine therefore the state I am in. I feel for yours; I cannot be reconciled to your trials; I see them increasing with extreme sorrow; there is not a day when I do not feel them keenly, and weep in thinking of

what my dear family—whom I would give my life to comfort—is suffering.

I am glad, my dear grandmother, that the fatigues of so sad and painful a journey [the removal of the royal family from Turin before the siege] has not injured your health. I pity my mother, who, for additional sorrow, is anxious about the illness of her children and yet is obliged to travel with them in such excessive heat and over such dreadful roads.

I have no other comfort, my dear grandmother, than in receiving your letters and the assurance of your affection. We all need great courage to sustain such violent griefs as those we have had of late. God is trying me by ways in which I feel it most; I must resign myself to His will, and pray that He will soon withdraw us from the state in which we are. As for me, I feel I cannot bear it longer if He does not give me strength.

VERSAILLES, March, 1707.

I am delighted, my dear grandmother, that you exhort me to give you frequent news of my son [the second Duc de Bretagne, born January 7, 1707]; I assure you I do not need to be urged to do so. He is very well, thank God. I found him much grown and changed for the better on my return to Marly. He is not handsome, up to this time, but very lively, and much healthier than he was when he came into the world. He is only two months old, and I should not be surprised if, a few months hence, he became pretty. I don't know whether it is that I am beginning to blind myself about him and therefore hope it. But I believe that I shall never be blind about my children, and that the love I have for them will make me see their defects and so try in good season to correct them.

I go very seldom to see my son, in order not to grow too attached to him; also to note the changes in him. He is not old enough to play with as yet, and as long as I know he is in good health, I am satisfied; that is all I need wish for as yet.

To Mme. de Maintenon.

VERSAILLES, July, 1707.

I am in despair, my dear aunt, to be always doing foolish things and giving you reason to complain of me. I am thoroughly resolved to correct myself, and not play any longer at that miserable game, which only injures my reputation, and diminishes your affection, which is more precious to me than all. I beg you, my dear aunt, not to speak of this in case I keep the resolution I have made. If I break it only once, I should be glad that the king would forbid me to play, and I would bear whatever impression it might make against me in his mind. I shall never console myself for being the cause of your troubles, and I will not forget that cursèd *lansquenet*. All that I desire in the world is to be a princess esteemed for my conduct; and that I will endeavour to deserve in the future. I flatter myself that my age is not too advanced, or my reputation too much tarnished, to enable me with time to succeed.

VERSAILLES, January 2, 1708.

Here we are, my dear grandmother, at the beginning of another year, which I hope may be as prosperous as you can desire it. It will be so for me if you continue to love me; I ask it with all the respect and tenderness I have for you.

We are much occupied here with a grand ball which will take place the night before the Epiphany. I am prepared to amuse myself much. Every day I practise getting my breath to dance well, which I think will be very difficult, for I have absolutely forgotten how to do so, and I have grown very heavy, which is not good for dancing.

VERSAILLES, April 2, 1708.

I have a great desire to know what you think of the portrait of my son. His health is better and better, and he thrives on his new milk. He begins to give me a good deal of pleasure, for he knows much and has very amiable manners, which I hope will go on increasing.

MARLY, May 7, 1708.

I believe you have heard of the accident which happened to me, and which has prevented me from writing sooner, my

dear grandmother; but I am now quite recovered and beginning to pick up my strength.^[19]

FONTAINEBLEAU, July 5, 1708.

I am afraid, my dear grandmother, that if you have the same weather that we do you will suffer from inflammation. There is not a day that it does not rain and that causes great humidity. The milk I am taking does me good, but if I come in late I have toothache during the night. But my health is coming back to its usual state. You are very kind in wishing to be informed of it; I feel all your kindnesses.

FONTAINEBLEAU, July 31, 1708.

The milk I have taken did not do me as much good as I hoped during the time I took it; but since I left it off I think I am the better for it. [It was probably asses' milk, a great remedy in those days.] I have taken it with all possible regularity; for when I do take remedies I do it thoroughly. My face is coming to itself, and I am beginning to fatten, but I have to take great care to avoid the twilight dampness.

[It was during this summer that the cabal of Vendôme, or as Saint-Simon calls it, the cabal of Meudon, made its great attempt to ruin the Duc de Bourgogne during the campaign in Flanders, and that his wife proved her brave spirit in defending him. The princess's own letters say nothing of all this; but a letter exists from the Duc de Bourgogne to Mme. de Maintenon, who seems to have written to him to counteract some attack upon his wife, which is as follows:—]

CAMP OF LOWENDEGHEM, August 27, 1708.

It is not very difficult to justify Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne to me as to matters on which I do not place entire faith, and I am only too much inclined to be favourable to her in everything. But the affection of which she has now given me such signal marks made me apprehend that she might have gone a little too far in certain speeches. I have already told her several times that I am satisfied with what she has replied to me as to this, and my present fear is that I may have pained her a little by what I wrote to her. I beg you to tell her so once more, madame, and to make her see how charmed I am with her affection and confidence. I flatter myself that I deserve them, and I shall endeavour more and more to merit her esteem.

To-day is not the first time that I have known of persons at Court who do not like her, and who see with annoyance the affection that the king shows for her. I believe I am not ignorant of their names. It will be for you, madame, when I see you, to enlighten me more particularly, that proper precautions may be taken to save Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne from falling into certain very dangerous traps, which I have often seen you dread. As for mischief-making, it would be most unjust to accuse her of that; she sovereignly despises it, and her spirit is far indeed from being what is called the woman's spirit. She has assuredly a solid mind, much good sense, an excellent and very noble heart—but you know her better than I, and this portrait is useless. Perhaps the pleasure that I have in speaking of her prevents me from perceiving that I do it too often and at too great length.

LOUIS.

To Vittorio Amadeo, Duc de Savoie.

VERSAILLES, Dec. 31, 1708.

The assurances, my dear father, that my mother gives me of your continued affection for me have caused me too much pleasure not to make me tell you myself of my gratitude, and how sensible I am of your remembrance. Nothing can ever diminish my respect and tenderness for you. Blood, my dear father, makes itself warmly felt under all circumstances, and in spite of my destiny—unfortunate because it puts me in a party opposed to yours—your interests are so strongly imprinted in my heart that nothing can make me wish the contrary. But this very tenderness only increases my grief when I think that we are among the number of your enemies. I own that affection may feel somewhat wounded by seeing you arrayed against both your daughters. But as for me, I will never be against you, and I can only regard you as the father whom I love as my own life. But that is not saying enough; I would willingly sacrifice my life for you; your interests are the sole object of my present desires.

Permit me, therefore, my dear father, to forestall by a day the coming year and to wish that it may lead us to the end of my sorrow and reunite us in a manner that shall crown us with joy. I venture to tell you that it depends on you alone to make me the happiest person in the world.

I fear to importune you by the length of this letter; but you will pardon me the liberty I take. I cannot prevent myself from assuring you at least once a year of my tenderness and respect, asking you at the same time for the continuation of your affection. I think I deserve it, and shall never make myself unworthy of it.

[With the year 1709 the letters begin to show distress at the sorrowful results of the war, at the terrible winter, her failing health, and, above all, the reserve she was forced to maintain towards her family.]

VERSAILLES, February 4, 1709.

Would to God, my dear grandmother, that your prayers could be granted. We should then, each of us, have reason to be content, for though we live now in different lands we could then think alike on many subjects.

It appears that the excessive cold prevails everywhere. They say it is two hundred years since such a severe winter has been known here. It is thought impossible to keep Lent because all vegetables are frozen, and the archbishop will be obliged to allow three meat days a week. As for me, I am not interested, for my health does not allow me to fast; fish makes me ill.

I have a strong desire to drive out on a sledge; for I never did so; a very pleasant idea of it is in my mind from having seen my mother do it. But I own I have not enough courage on account of the bitter cold. I shall not have much trouble in giving you an account of the amusements of this carnival. It has been very dull up to this time, and I think it will end in the same way. There can be no balls, for there is no one to dance. Several ladies are pregnant, and those who are lately married come from convents and do not know how to dance. There are but nine ladies who can do so, and half of those are little girls. I should be the old woman of a ball [æt. 23], which takes away all my desire for one. I do not know what folly possesses the women now, but at thirty years of age they think they are past dancing; if the fashion lasts, I ought to make the most of the time that is left to me.

September 23, 1709.

I have been for three days very ill, having vomited at intervals, which fatigues me greatly, not being accustomed to it. Otherwise, my health is good. I hope very much to give you another grandson, and I do not doubt it, for I am as I was with the two others.

I have been in the greatest anxiety the last week; but never was a lost battle so advantageous and glorious [Malplaquet]. That is to me a great consolation. You will hear, my dear grandmother, from my sister the anxiety she, too, has been in about the King of Spain, who started hurriedly to put himself at the head of his army because he was not satisfied with the manœuvring of the man who commanded it.

I do not know, my dear grandmother, who has written you such marvels of my son. It is true that he is pretty in manners and mind, but not in looks.

December 9, 1709.

When, my dear grandmother, when will come the long desired day when we can speak frankly on so many things about which we are forced to keep silence now? This war has lasted so long! I believe that all of those who are making it desire its end; and yet in spite of that it continues. The more you could look into the bottom of my heart, the better you would know, my dear grandmother, that it is what it should be, and full of feeling—which does not contribute to my tranquillity. But I have no regret for what I suffer, for I know that blood and duty ordain it for me.

I have spent my day in the church, which is no small matter in my present condition. Now that I have passed the eighth month I am very languishing. The changes of month always affect me in my pregnancies, so that I hope in a few days I shall be over it.

March 24, 1710.

I was most agreeably mistaken, my dear grandmother, in giving you another grandson [Louis XV., then called Duc d'Anjou]. He is the prettiest child in the world, and I believe he will become a great beauty. Though it is of no consequence after they grow up, one likes better to have a pretty child than an ugly one.

VERSAILLES, June 23, 1710.

There is no talk of anything here, my dear grandmother, but the marriage of the Duc de Berry. Though it will take place without any ceremony (for the times do not allow amusements or great expenses), all the ladies are none the less busy with their finery. This does not render conversation very lively, nor does it give much matter for a letter, for really nothing is talked of but head-dresses, costumes, petticoats, and milliners, and though I am a woman, I never take much pleasure in such discussions. I have a great desire for the wedding to take place and end all discussions about it. They are waiting for the dispensation from Rome. I hope in ten or twelve days to send you a brief account of the event.

Every one tells me that my father will begin the campaign on the first of next month. Judge, therefore, my dear grandmother, of my uneasiness; it is the last stroke. But in whatever state I am, be sure that you have a grand-daughter who loves you tenderly.

July 7, 1710.

M. le Duc de Berry was married yesterday. It was all as magnificent as the season and the times would allow. There was no fête; and that is all I can tell you to-day, being completely wearied out.

November 17, 1710.

I am always afraid, my dear grandmother, to bore you by talking of my children, but since you order me to give you news of them, I obey you with pleasure. I shall begin by telling you that the elder is getting sense enough to know he has a grandmother, and that he loves you. He grows immensely and, consequently, is very thin; he is well-made, but rather ugly. The little one is not the same; he is a fat dumpling and very handsome; he will soon have four teeth, and is in fine health. As soon as he is one year old I will send you his portrait; I dare not have it painted any earlier, for they say it brings ill-luck. I do not believe that; but the case of my eldest makes me prefer to risk nothing.

To her father.

MARLY, February 16, 1711.

I am so charmed, my dear father, with the letter you have written me that I cannot prevent myself from telling you how sensitive I am to the assurances you give me of your affection. I assure you that I deserve it through the tenderness that I shall feel for you throughout my life. Would to God, my dear father, that this year might be to me as happy as you have been kind enough to wish it.

There is but one thing lacking to my happiness, but it is a thing that is very near my heart. I shall never accustom myself to be in other interests than yours, and I own to you that my duty in vain compels me to be so; nature *will* have the upper hand, and I cannot keep myself from continually praying for you. But, indeed, my dear father, is it not high time to end our sorrows? The advantages we have won in Spain made me hope that peace would follow. But the only peace that I can have can come through you alone.

I would not end my letter so soon, for I have many things to say to you, if I did not fear to say too much on a topic which is not suitable for me in any way. Forgive it, my dear father, in favour of a daughter whose tenderness alone inclines her to speak, and who longs to see you both content and glorious.

[No letters exist concerning the most important event in the Duchesse de Bourgogne's life, the death of Monseigneur, which made her dauphine, April 10, 1711. From that moment she felt more deeply the importance of fitting herself for the great post she expected soon to fill.]

To her mother.

VERSAILLES, May 3, 1711.

I have had no letters from you by this courier, my very dear mother; I hope, however, they may reach me within a few days.

We have had very good news from Barcelona, and from all sides pleasant things are reaching us. All that is taking place in Italy causes me to make many reflections and gives me many hopes. I confess the truth, my very dear mother, it would be the greatest happiness I could have in this life if I could see my father brought back to reason. I cannot comprehend how it is that he does not make terms, above all in the unfortunate position in which he now finds himself, and without any hope whatever of succour. Will he let them take Turin again? The rumour is afloat here that it will not be long before that siege is laid. Judge, therefore, my dear mother, of the state I must be in,—I, so sensitive to all that concerns you. I am in despair at the position to which my father is reduced by his own fault. Is it possible that he really thinks we will not give him good terms? I assure you that all the king wants is to see his kingdom tranquil, and that of his grandson, the King of Spain, secure. It seems to me that my father ought to desire the same thing for himself, and when I consider that he is master of making it so, I am astonished that he does not do it.

I fear, my very dear mother, that you will think me too daring in what I say, but I cannot restrain myself under the view I take of my father's position. I feel that he is my father, and a father whom I deeply love. Therefore, my very dear mother, forgive me if I write too freely. It is the desire I have that we should all escape these difficult moments that makes me write as I do. I send you a letter from my sister, who is just as vexed as I am at what is now going on.

VERSAILLES, December 13, 1711.

It is sad, my dear mother, that my brother and I have the same sympathy in toothache. I hope he has not had anything like that which I had last night; it made me suffer horribly, not being rid of it one moment. For more than two months it has seized me from time to time. I have ceased taking care of it, for keeping my room does me no good, and during the time I am not in it I am thinking and always hoping the pain may not return. I merely avoid the wind in my ears, and eating anything which may hurt me. I think the dreadful weather contributes to these face-aches.

As for me, my dear mother, I cannot be as reserved as you in speaking about the peace; I absolutely must tell you what I think of it. We have to-day another courier from England which confirms the hopes I feel. The conferences will be held at Utrecht, and will begin on the twelfth of next month. [The peace she longed for was not signed at Utrecht until a year after her death.] They would not make such advances if they were not veritably resolved to conclude a peace so desired by all and so necessary to Europe. It is only the emperor who still will not listen to it; but when he finds himself alone he will surely come into it. They say it is his usual way to make difficulties, and that the last time he made as many as he makes now. I hope that soon you will not be so reserved with me, and that we shall all have every reason to rejoice together.

I look forward to the great pleasure of once more seeing the Piedmontese in this country, and of being able to talk to them of you, of all my dear family, and of the country, the mere recollection of which is so pleasant to me.

Poor Mme. du Lude is again attacked with gout in the breast and feet; she suffers much. I am very much afraid that in the end it will play her some bad trick. Madame is taking remedies; she was bled two days ago and has taken medicine to-day. It was not before she wanted it, for she drops asleep everywhere, which gives much anxiety to all those who take an interest in her. She must have felt the need of remedies to have brought herself to take them. Adieu, my dear mother, I embrace you with all my heart.

VERSAILLES, December 18, 1711.

It is in order not to miss a week in assuring you myself of my tenderness that I write to-day. For the last seven days I have been, my dear mother, in a state of great exhaustion which has prevented me from dressing; for the inflammation that I had in my teeth has spread now over my whole body. I can scarcely move; and my head feels a horrible weight.

I wanted to forestall the first day of the year by offering to all my family the wishes I desire for them; not being able to do so, I content myself, my dear mother, by embracing you with all my heart.

[The above is the last letter of the dauphine which has been preserved in the State Archives of Turin. She died two

months later, February 12, 1712, aged twenty-six years and two months; her husband, the dauphin, died on the 18th, and her eldest son, the Duc de Bretagne, the little dauphin, died a week later. See "Memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon," Vol. III., translated edition.]

VII.

MME. DE MAINTENON AND SAINT-CYR.

PRECEDED BY REMARKS OF

C.-A. SAINTE-BEUVE.

I have just read a pleasing, sweet, simple, and even touching narrative, which rests and elevates the mind,—a narrative which all should read as I have done. It concerns, once more, Mme. de Maintenon; but Mme. de Maintenon taken this time on her practical side, which is least open to discussion, namely, her work and foundation of Saint-Cyr. M. le duc de Noailles had already given a brief but interesting account of it in his prelude to the “History of Madame de Maintenon,” but M. Théophile Lavallée has now published a complete and connected “History of Saint-Cyr,” which may be called definitive.



Mme. de Maintenon

In studying the history of Mme. de Maintenon there has happened to M. Lavallée what will happen to all sound but prejudiced minds (and I sometimes meet with such) who will approach this distinguished personage and take pains to know her in her habit of life. I will not say that he is converted to her; that would be an ill-rendering of a simply equitable impression received by an upright mind; but he has brought justice to bear on that mass of fantastic and odiously vague imputations which have long been in circulation as to the assumed historical rôle of this celebrated woman. He sees her as she was, wholly concerned for the salvation of the king, for his reform, his decent amusement, for the interior life of the royal family, for the relief of the people, and doing all this, it is true, with more rectitude than enthusiasm, more precision than grandeur.

On the threshold of Saint-Cyr M. Lavallée has placed a portrait of its illustrious founder in which lives again that grace of hers, so real, so sober, so indefinable, which, liable as it is to disappear in the distance, should not be overlooked

when at times her image seems to us too hard and cold. He borrows this portrait from a Dame de Saint-Cyr whose pen, in its vivacity and colour, is worthy of a Sévigné: "She had, at fifty years of age, a most agreeable tone of voice, an affectionate air, an open, smiling forehead, natural gesture with her beautiful hands, eyes of fire, and motions of an easy figure so cordial, so harmonious, that she put into the shade the greatest beauties of the Court.... At a first glance she seemed imposing, as if veiled in severity; the smile and the voice dispersed the cloud."

Saint-Cyr, in its completed idea, was not only a girls' school, then a convent for young ladies of rank, a good work and recreation for Mme. de Maintenon; it was something more loftily conceived, a foundation worthy in all respects of Louis XIV. and his epoch. Under Louis XIV., and especially during the second half of his reign, France, even in times of peace, was compelled to maintain its imposing military attitude and a powerful army of 150,000 men under arms. Louvois introduced a system of modern organization into that great body; though the essentially modern base, the regular and equal contribution of all to military service, was still lacking. The nobility, which was, and continued to be, the soul of war, found itself for the first time subjected to strict rules and obligations which offended its spirit and greatly aggravated its burdens. Consequently, royalty contracted towards it fresh duties. Louis XIV. saw this, and had the heart to meet his obligation,—first, by founding the Hôtel des Invalides, a part of which was reserved for old or wounded officers; secondly, by forming companies of Cadets, exercised at the frontier forts, in which four thousand sons of nobles were brought up; and thirdly (as soon as Mme. de Maintenon suggested to him the idea), by the foundation of the royal house of Saint-Cyr, intended for the education of two hundred and fifty noble but impoverished young ladies. The establishment in the succeeding century of the École Militaire, was the necessary complement of these monarchical foundations; it added all that was insufficient in the companies of Cadets.

The first thought of Saint-Cyr in Mme. de Maintenon's mind did not rise to this height. Mme. de Maintenon was sincerely religious. She was no sooner drawn from indigence by the bounty of the king than she said in her own mind that she ought to shed something of that bounty on others as poor as she herself had once been. This idea of succouring poor young ladies and preserving them from dangers through which she herself had passed was a very old and very natural thing in her; she regarded it as a debt and an indemnity before God for her great fortune. Her first step was to gather a number of young ladies, for whose education she paid, at Montmorency, then at Rueil; at which latter place she gave more development to her good intention. She had always had a great taste for bringing up children, for teaching them, reproving and reprimanding them; it was one of her particular and prominent talents. From Rueil the Institution was transferred to Noisy, where it continued to increase, Mme. de Maintenon devoting to it every instant she could steal from the Court. She soon began to congratulate herself on its success. "Fancy my pleasure," she writes to her brother, "when I return along the avenue, followed by the hundred and eighty-four young ladies who are here at the present time."

Mme. de Maintenon was made for this sort of internal domestic government. She had the gift and the art of it; she enjoyed the full pleasure of it. That is no reason why we should estimate her merit to be less. Because she sought repose in action, delights in authority and familiarity, and because her self-love (from which we never part) found its satisfaction there, we should not the less admire her. An ancient poet, Simonides of Amorgos, in a satire against women, compares them for their dominant defects, when they are bad, to various species of animals (those Ancients were not gallant), but when he comes to a wise, useful, frugal, industrious, diligent, and fruitful woman he compares her to the bee. Mme. de Maintenon, in the bosom of this establishment of which she was the soul and the mother, ruling the hive in every sense, may be likened to the indefatigable bee. Such she had been all her life in the houses where she lived on a footing of friendship; putting them into order, cleanliness, decency, spreading a spirit of work about her, and at the same time doing honour also to the spirit of society and courtesy. What must it therefore have been in her own domain, her own foundation, in the hive of her predilection, with all her joy and all her pride as queen-bee and mother, having at last succeeded in producing the perfect ideal that was in her?

That ideal was patriotic and Christian both. One day, in an interview, the record of which was written down by her pious pupils, after telling them how little premeditated and foreseen was her great fortune at Court, she said with a transport and fire we should scarcely expect of her, but which was in her whenever she dwelt on a cherished topic:

"That is how it was with Saint-Cyr, which became insensibly what you see it to-day. I have often told you that I do not like new establishments; it is far better to support old ones. And yet, almost without thinking of it, I have made a new one. Every one believes that I, my head on my pillow, have planned this fine institution; but it is not so. God has brought about Saint-Cyr by degrees. If I had made a plan, I should have thought of the worries of execution, the difficulties, the details. I should have feared them; I should have said: 'All this is far beyond me;' courage would have failed me. Much compassion for indigent nobility, because I have been orphaned and poor myself, and knowledge of such a life, made me desire to assist it in my lifetime. But, while planning to do the good I could, I never dreamed of doing it after my death.

That was a second thought, born of the first. May this establishment last as long as France itself, and France as long as the world! Nothing is dearer to me than my children of Saint-Cyr; I love their very dust. I offer myself, and all my attendants to serve them; I have no reluctance to be their servant if my service will teach them to do without that of others. It is to this I tend; this is my passion, this is my heart.”

It was in the year of her marriage (1684) that she applied herself, as an inward thank-offering towards Heaven, to perfect the attempt at Noisy, and to give it that first royal character which it assumed wholly after its removal to Saint-Cyr. She represented to the king, after a visit he had made to Noisy which had pleased him much, that “the greater part of the noble families of the kingdom were reduced to a pitiable state, owing to the costs their heads had been forced to incur in his service; that their children required support to prevent them from falling into utter degradation; that it would be a work worthy of his piety and greatness to make a settled establishment as a refuge for poor young girls of rank throughout the kingdom, where they could be brought-up piously to the duties of their condition.” Père de La Chaise approved the project; Louvois cried out at the expense; Louis XIV. himself seemed to hesitate. “Never did Queen of France,” he said, “do anything like this.” It was thus, and thus only, that Mme. de Maintenon allowed herself to manifest her secret but efficacious royalty.

The idea of the foundation of Saint-Cyr was accepted, and the king spoke of it to the council of August 15, 1684. Two years went by, during which the house was built [by Mansart at a cost of 1,200,000 francs], the endowments and revenues were settled, and the Constitution was prepared. Letters-patent were delivered in June, 1686, and the Community was transferred from Noisy to the new domicile between the 26th of July and the 1st of August. During the succeeding six years it felt its way and made tentative essays; these were most brilliant, and even glorious; never did Saint-Cyr make more noise in the world than during this period before it was firmly seated on its permanent and sure foundation.

Mme. de Maintenon had dreamed of an establishment like no other; where all should go by rule without being bound by vows; where absolutely nothing of the minutiae and pettiness of convents should exist; maintaining, nevertheless, at the same time purity and ignorance of evil, while sharing, with prudence and Christian reserve, in the charms of society and polished intercourse. Louis XIV., who saw all things with a practical eye and in the interests of the State, approved of Saint-Cyr having nothing monastic about it, and would fain have kept it so. But precautions were needed in this first attempt of Mme. de Maintenon to mingle substantial qualities, reason, and charm, which she found it impossible to maintain; to do so all the mistresses and all the pupils needed a wisdom and strength equal to her own. To bring up young ladies in a “Christian, reasonable, and noble manner” was her object; but a danger soon appeared that *nobleness* would lead to contempt of humility, and reasonableness to a spirit of reasoning.

It was during these tentative years, while Saint-Cyr was trying its wings and working out its apprenticeship, that Mme. de Maintenon requested Racine to compose the sacred comedies that were there performed. If “Esther,” with the worldly consequences and the introduction of the élite of profane society that then ensued, proved a distraction and perhaps an imprudence and fault in Mme. de Maintenon’s management of the first Saint-Cyr, we feel that we ought not to cavil, and no one in the world can really blame her. “Esther” has remained, in the eyes of all, the crown of that establishment. The details of the composition of that adorable play and its representation are too well known to need repetition; they form one of the most graceful and assuredly the most original episodes of our dramatic literature. Nevertheless, Mme. de La Fayette, like a sensible woman, and one a little jealous, perhaps, of Mme. de Maintenon, found it a pretext to say:—

“Mme. de Maintenon, who is the foundress of Saint-Cyr, always busy with the purpose of amusing the king, is constantly introducing some novelty among the little girls brought up in that establishment, of which it may be said that it is worthy of the grandeur of the king and of the mind of her who invented and who conducts it. But sometimes the best-invented things degenerate considerably; and that establishment which, now that we have become devout, is the abode of virtue and piety, may some day, without any profound prophesying, be that of debauchery and impiety. For to believe that three hundred young girls can live there until they are twenty years old with a Court full of eager young men at their very doors, especially when the authority of the king will no longer restrain them,—to believe, I say, that young women and young men can be so near to each other without jumping the walls is scarcely reasonable.”

It became necessary, after the success of “Esther,” and the instigation given to the Court, to make a step backward and return to the spirit of the foundation, fortifying it by more severe regulations. The danger of the neighbourhood of Saint-Cyr to Versailles was indeed great; it was of the utmost consequence that Mme. de La Fayette’s prophecy should not be fulfilled, and that the young ladies of Saint-Cyr should in no wise resemble those of M. Alexandre Dumas. The lesson

that Mme. de Maintenon drew from the representations of “Esther,” and the invasion of the profane was henceforth to say and resay ceaselessly to her teachers: “Hide your pupils; do not let them be seen.”

From the passage of Racine through Saint-Cyr, and that of Fénelon, there resulted (from the point of view of the foundation and its object) a number of unsuitable things in the midst of their graces. Fénelon developed a taste for refined and subtle piety suited only for choice souls; Racine, without intending it, created a taste for reading, poesy, and all such things, the perfume of which is sweet, but the fruit not always salutary. Mme. de Maintenon, however influenced she might herself be by these tastes, recognized with her natural good sense the necessity of finding a remedy, and of not allowing those young and tender spirits, some of whom were already taken with the new ideas, to go farther in that direction. Among the first pupils and mistresses of Saint-Cyr was a certain Mme. de La Maisonfort, a distinguished woman, with an inquiring spirit, fond of investigating, and made for quite another career than that which she had chosen. She could not bring herself to renounce the gratifications of her mind and taste or the sensitiveness of her feelings. Mme. de Maintenon made war upon them in a number of very fine letters, which did not convince her. “How will you bear,” she writes to her, “the crosses that God will send you in the course of your life if a Norman or a Picard accent hinders you, or a man disgusts you because he is not as sublime as Racine? The latter, poor man, would have edified you could you have seen his humility during his illness, and his repentance for his search after intellect. He did not ask at such a time for a fashionable confessor; he saw none but a worthy priest of his own parish.” That example of the dying Racine did not work successfully. Mme. de La Maisonfort was one of those rare persons whom we see from time to time soaring to the summit of all the investigations of their epoch, supreme and refined judges of works of intellect, oracles and proselytes of the opinions in vogue. She could play charmingly at Jansenism with Racine and M. de Troisville, and distil Quietism with Fénelon, as in the eighteenth century she might have fallen in love with David Hume in company with the Comtesse de Boufflers, or in the nineteenth she would surely have shone in a *doctrinaire* salon discussing psychology and æstheticism, perhaps even going so far as the Fathers of the Church, not without adverting, as she passed, to socialism. Mme. de La Maisonfort, much as she was liked by Mme. de Maintenon, was, necessarily, dismissed from the Institute of Saint-Cyr.

Another mind, much better and much safer, that of Mme. de Glapion, was slightly affected by the new doctrines. “I have perceived,” Mme. de Maintenon writes to her, “the disgust you feel for your confessors; you think them vulgar; you want more brilliancy and delicacy; you wish to go to heaven by none but flowery paths.” Mme. de Glapion thought the Catechism rather grovelling and a little wanting in certain ways; it seemed to her ridiculous “that the master should put questions worthy of a scholar, and that the scholar should make the answers of a master.” She wished the question to be put by the child, who, after receiving the answer, should reason upon it and so be led from one investigation to another. Mme. de Glapion wished, as we see, to introduce the method of Descartes into theology. Mme. de Maintenon did not discuss the point; but she held up custom, experience, the impossibility of not stammering in such matters. “All those ideas,” she wrote to Mme. de Glapion, “are the remains of vanity. You do not like things common to all the world; your own mind is lofty, and you wish everything to be as lofty. Vain desire! The most learned theology cannot tell you more about the Trinity than you find in the Catechism. What you think and feel beyond that is a matter to be sacrificed; your spirit must become as simple as your heart. Employ your mind, not in multiplying your disgusts, but in conquering them, in concealing them until they are conquered, and in making yourself like the pleasures of your condition.” Mme. de Glapion succeeded in doing so. She was the consolation of Mme. de Maintenon and her truest inheritor; together with Madame du Pérou, she maintained at Saint-Cyr that spirit of precision and regularity combined with suavity and noble manners which distinguished the foundress, until long after the latter’s death. It may be said, definitively, that the persons of the generation at Saint-Cyr who had known and enjoyed Racine and Fénelon, and who remembered all of which they were cured, could alone realize the perfection of the education, the grace, and the language of Saint-Cyr; after them the essential virtues and the rules were kept, but the charm had flown, perhaps we may even say the life.

During these years of labour and tentative effort Mme. de Maintenon never ceased to visit, inspire, and correct Saint-Cyr; she went there once in every two days at least, remaining whole days whenever she could. She took part in the classes, in the exercises, in the smallest details of the establishment, thinking nothing beneath her. “I have often seen her,” says one of the modest historians quoted by M. Lavallée, “arrive before six in the morning in order to be present at the rising of the young ladies, and follow them throughout their whole day in the capacity of first instructress, in order to judge properly of what should be done and regulated. She helped to comb and dress the little ones. Often she gave two or three consecutive months to one class, observing the order of the day, talking to the class in general and to each member in private; reproving one, encouraging another, giving to all the means of correcting themselves. She had much grace in speaking, as in all else that she did. Her talks were lively, simple, natural, intelligent, insinuating, persuasive. I should never finish if I tried to relate all the good she did to the classes in those happy days.” Those “happy days,” that

golden age, was the period of the start, the beginning, when all was not yet reduced to a code, when a certain liberty of inexperience was mingled with the early freshness of virtue.

Nevertheless, under the wise direction of the Bishop of Chartres, Mme. de Maintenon felt the necessity of giving to her enterprise less peculiarity than she had at first intended. It was decided that the “Dames institutrices,” while remaining true to the special object of their trust, should be regular nuns under solemn vows. Warned by the first irregularities and the fancies that she saw were dawning, she busied herself in making a rampart for her girls of their Constitution and rules. She understood, like all great founders, that we can draw from human nature a particular and extraordinary strength in one direction only by suppressing, or at least repressing, in all others. This final reform, this transformation of Saint-Cyr from a secular house into a regular nunnery, was completed between the years 1692 and 1694. The grave nature of Mme. de Maintenon is imprinted on every line of the little book addressed to the “Dames” and entitled “The Spirit of the Institute of the Daughters of Saint-Louis.” The first suggestion made to them is in terms as absolute as can well be imagined; nothing is ever to be changed or modified in their rule under any pretext whatsoever; solidity, stability, immovability is the vow and the command of Mme. de Maintenon—and the Institute remained faithful thereto to its last hour. The Institution was not founded, says the book, for prayer, but for action, for the *education of young ladies*; that is its true austerity; that is, as it were, the perpetual prayer, which needs only to be fed by other rapid and short prayers repeated often in the depths of the heart. “A mixture of prayer and action,” such was the spirit of the Institute. Mme. de Maintenon endeavours to forearm her girls against the perils they have already encountered. “Have neither fancy nor curiosity to seek for extraordinary reading and *ragouts d’oraison*.” “There is a great difference between knowing God through learning, by the *point of the mind*, by the subtlety of reason, by the multiplicity of studies, and knowing Him through the simple instructions of Christianity.” Between those lines I seem to read, “Above all, not much Racine and no more Fénelon.”

Truly, it was a high idea that the Dames de Saint-Louis were destined to bring up young ladies to be mothers of families and to take part in the good education of their children, thus placing in their hands a portion of the future of France and of religion. “There is,” says Mme. de Maintenon, “in this work of Saint-Louis, if properly done in a spirit of true faith and a real love of God, the wherewithal to renew throughout this kingdom the perfection of Christianity.”

The foundress reminds them in so many words that, being at the gates of Versailles as they are, there is no medium for them between a very strict or a very scandalous establishment. “Make your parlours inaccessible to all superfluous visits. Do not fear to seem a little stern, but do not be haughty.” She counsels a more absolute humility than she is able to obtain. “Reject the name of Dames [ladies] and take pleasure in calling yourselves the Daughters of Saint-Louis.” She particularly insists on this virtue of humility, which is always the weak side of the Institution. “You will preserve yourselves only by humility. You must expiate what there is of human grandeur in your foundation.” Recognizing these conditions of society, Mme. de Maintenon gives this advice to a young girl leaving Saint-Cyr for the world: “Never appear without the body of your gown (meaning in dishabille), and flee from all the other excesses common even to girls in the present day, such as too much eating, tobacco, hot liquors, too much wine, etc.; we have enough real needs without inventing others so useless and dangerous.”

In presence of a world that she knew so well, we must not think that Mme. de Maintenon tried to make tender plants, fragile women, ingenuously ignorant, with the morality of novices; she had, beyond all other persons, a profound sense of reality. She desired her “Dames” to speak boldly to their pupils on the marriage state; to show them the world and its divers conditions such as they are. “Most nuns,” she said, “dare not utter the word ‘marriage.’ Saint Paul had no such false delicacy, for he speaks of it very openly.” She was the first to speak of it as an honourable, necessary, and hazardous state. “When your young ladies have entered marriage they will find it is not a thing to laugh about. You should accustom them to speak of it seriously, even sadly, in a Christian manner; for it is the state in which we have most tribulations, even in the best marriage; they should be shown that three-fourths of all marriages are unhappy.” As for celibacy, to which too many young girls might be condemned on leaving the Institution, for lack of a dowry (“my greatest need,” she says jestingly, “is of sons-in-law”), she thinks it an equally sad state. In general, no one has ever had fewer illusions than Mme. de Maintenon. Speaking of men, she thinks them rough and hard, “little tender in their love when passion ceases to have sway.” As for women, she has very fixed views of them, which are but moderately flattering. “Women,” she says, “only half know things, but the little they do know makes them usually conceited, disdainful, loquacious, and scornful of solid information.” The education of Saint-Cyr, after its reform, had it always been carried out in Mme. de Maintenon’s true spirit, would not have sinned through too much timidity, weakness, and tender grace; its austerity was only veiled.

The reform once established at Saint-Cyr and the first sad impression effaced, all became orderly, and joy returned as

before to a life so uniform and busy. Mme. de Maintenon had, as I have said, the gift of education, and she would have no sadness about it; there never can be sadness in what is done thoroughly with a full heart in the right way; at one moment or at another, joy, which is but the expansion of the soul, returns and cannot cease to flow through actions. Mme. de Maintenon relied greatly on recreations to form her pupils pleasantly, to show them their defects and win their confidence without seeming to be in search of it. In the good she felt she had done at Saint-Cyr she dwelt much on the pains she had bestowed on “recreation.” “That,” she said, “is what leads to union and removes partialities; that is what binds the mistresses with the pupils; a superior makes herself liked and warms the hearts of her girls by giving them pleasures; that is the time when edifying things can be said without repelling, because we can mingle them with gayety; *many good maxims can be thrown out in jest.*” She requires from the mistresses she has trained a talent for recreation as well as for teaching. “Make your recreations gay and free, and your girls will come to them.”

Louis XIV. at Saint-Cyr appears full of charm, of nobleness always, and sometimes with a certain *bonhomie* which he showed nowhere else. Under great events he intervened as king; when it was judged proper to reform the Constitution, he re-read it and approved it with his signature; when it becomes necessary to dismiss the recalcitrant mistresses, such as Mme. de La Maisonfort and some others, and to use for the purpose *lettres de cachet*, he, knowing that the heart of the other mistresses is wrung by this exile of their sisters, writes from the Camp at Compiègne to explain his rigour, and goes himself with a full cortège to the hall of the Community, where he holds a sort of *lit de justice* both regal and paternal. On his return from hunting he frequently came to find Mme. de Maintenon in this place of retreat, but never without taking time to put on, as he said, “out of respect to these ladies, a decent coat.” During the wars he remembers that he has at Saint-Cyr, in those young daughters of Saint-Louis and of the race of heroes, “warrior spirits, religious souls, good Frenchwomen;” and he asks for their prayers on days of disaster as on those of victory. He knows that they mourn with him, and that his glory is their joy. All this new and private side of Louis XIV. is very delicately and generously touched by M. Lavallée; at certain passages we are surprised to find ourselves as much touched as the great monarch himself.

Louis XIV. and Mme. de Maintenon believed in the efficacy of prayer, especially that of Saint-Cyr. “Make yourselves saints,” says the foundress to her daughters repeatedly throughout the long series of calamitous wars,—“make yourselves saints in order to gain us peace.” And towards the end, when a ray of victory returned, she mingles a sort of gayety with the solemnity of her hope. “It would be shameful in our Superior,” she writes, “if she could not raise the siege of Landrecies by force of prayers: it is for great souls to do great things.”

During the last years of Louis XIV. Mme. de Maintenon was happy only when she could go to Saint-Cyr, “to hide and comfort herself.” She said it again and again, under all forms and in all tones: “My great consoler is Saint-Cyr.”—“Vive Saint-Cyr! in spite of its defects one is better here than elsewhere in all the world.” She had tasted of all and was surfeited of all. In spite of her dazzling position, and at the very summit, apparently, she was one of those delicate natures that are more sensitive to the secret animosities of the world than to its grosser offerings. Surrounded at Versailles by men who did not like her and by women she despised, reading their hearts through their self-interested homage and cringing baseness, worn-out with fatigue and constraint in presence of the king and the royal family, who used and abused her, she went to Saint-Cyr to relax, to moan, to let fall the mask that she wore perpetually. There she was respected, cherished, and obeyed; when absent, her letters read at recreation were the pride of the one who had received them and the joy of all; when present, the mistresses and pupils concerted together to awaken her souvenirs and induce her to tell of her beginnings and the singular incidents of her fortune,—in short, to make her talk of herself; that topic to all of us so restful and so sweet. “We love to talk of ourselves,” she remarked, “were it even to say harm.” But she never said harm.

If it is painful, as she said in after years, to last too long, to live in a society of persons who do not know us or the life that we have led in former days, who are, in short, of another epoch, it is nevertheless very pleasant to retreat to a garden bench and find ourselves surrounded by fresh young souls, docile in letting themselves be trained, and eager for all that we will say to them. Do not let us analyze too closely the various sentiments of Mme. de Maintenon at Saint-Cyr; suffice it to say that the effect on all who surrounded her was fruitful and good.

The language of Saint-Cyr has a tone apart amid that period of Louis XIV.; Mme. de Caylus was the mundane flower of it. We feel that “Esther” has passed that way, and Fénelon equally. The diction is that of Racine in prose, of Massillon, shorter and more sober,—a school, in fact, all pure, precise, and perfect (to which belonged the Duc du Maine); a charming source, more sparkling on the side of the women, though rather less fertile. At first it promised greater things; and to one of the Dames de Saint-Louis (Mme. de Chapigny) Mme. de Maintenon was able to write: “I have never read anything so good, so charming, so clear, so well arranged, so eloquent, so regulated, in a word, so wonderful as your

letter.”

At the death of Louis XIV. and under the harsh contrast with times so changed, Saint-Cyr passed, almost in an instant, to a state of antiquity and royal relic. After Mme. de Maintenon's death worthy inheritors of her rule continued to maintain for a long time the culture of suavity and intelligence; but the Dames de Saint-Louis were faithful, above all, to the intention of their foundress in never making themselves talked of. Respected by all, little liked by Louis XV., who thought them, as was natural, too lofty and too worthy of honour, they vanish from sight in the continuance of duty and the uniformity of their quiet existence. A letter of Horace Walpole, who visits them as an antiquary, another from the Chevalier de Boufflers, are the only noticeable testimony that we have about them in the course of many years. When the revolution of '89 broke out, the astonishment in that valley so close to Versailles was great, much greater than elsewhere. Saint-Cyr had made itself so completely *immobile* in its past that it fell abruptly from Mme. de Maintenon to Mirabeau.

From that time, after the abolition of the titles of nobility, there seemed no uncertainty except as to the precise day on which the Institution should perish. Nevertheless, the Dames de Saint-Louis made a long and placid resistance, which maintained them in their House till 1793; they accomplished and verified to the letter Mme. de Maintenon's unconscious prediction when she said: “Your institution can never fail so long as there is a king in France.” It perished on the morrow of the day when there was no king.

But see and wonder at the linking of fates: Among the young ladies who were being educated at Saint-Cyr at that date was Marie-Anne de Buonaparte, born at Ajaccio, January 3, 1771, and received at the Institution in June, 1784. Her brother Napoléon de Buonaparte, an officer of artillery, observing that after August 10 the decrees of the Legislative Assembly seemed to announce, or rather to confirm, the ruin of the house, went to that house on the morning of September 1, 1792, and took such active steps towards the mayor of the village and the administrators of Versailles that he was enabled on the same day to take away his sister (of whom he was the guardian) and carry her to his family in Corsica. He was destined not to return to Saint-Cyr, converted by him into a French Prytaneum, until June 28, 1805, when as Emperor and master of all France he gazed—an equal to an equal—on Louis XIV.

In 1793 the devastated Saint-Cyr lost for a time its very name, and the ruined village was called Val-Libre. In 1794, while persons were converting the church into a hospital, the tomb of Mme. de Maintenon was discovered in the choir, broken open, the coffin violated, and her remains insulted. On that day, at least, she was treated as a queen.

[Mme. de Maintenon was a voluminous letter-writer; many hundreds of her letters are published, the most interesting of which are those to the Princesse des Ursins. Her style is simple, easy, and dignified; not graphic nor lifelike; she seems too rounded into her own mind and views to be a good general observer; nor is she guided in her judgment of others by a perception of their feelings, unless they are reflected by her own. This remark does not apply to the Saint-Cyr letters; in those she is genuine, she is writing on a topic that fills her heart and opens it to others. Saint-Cyr was an episode in Mme. de Maintenon's life, and as such it can be placed here with some completeness. The last chapter of this volume contains a few miscellaneous letters bearing more especially upon the character and career of the Duchesse de Bourgogne, which Sainte-Beuve asserts can only be truly known through the letters of Mme. de Maintenon to the Princesse des Ursins.

The pupils of Saint-Cyr were divided into four classes named and distinguished by the colour of their ribbons. Class Red (the youngest) were from seven to ten years of age; class Green from ten to fourteen; class Yellow from fourteen to seventeen; class Blue from seventeen to twenty. Certain young ladies of class Blue were detailed as head monitors and wore black ribbons; other monitors selected from classes Blue and Yellow wore flame-coloured ribbons. The classes were divided into bands or “families” of ten. Each class had a head mistress and three sub-mistresses; there were also two mistresses for the postulants or novices, two for the infirmary, others for the various departments of the house, and a mistress-general for the whole school. These mistresses were called “Dames de Saint-Louis” and were under vows; they were recruited by postulants selected from class Blue; the Superior was chosen by election among themselves from their own body. Mme. de Brinon, the first Superior, who came with the school from Rueil and Noisy, was an Ursuline nun.

After Mme. de Brinon, the Dames de Saint-Louis who were most relied upon by Mme. de Maintenon were: Mme. du Pérou, mistress of the novices at twenty years of age, afterwards elected many times as Superior; Mme. de Fontaines,

mistress-general, also frequently elected Superior; and Mme. de Glapion, called the “Pearl of Saint-Cyr,” who seems to have been Mme. de Maintenon’s most trusted friend, to whom she made personal confidences. Many letters and “talks” addressed to these ladies and others at Saint-Cyr have been published, from which those that here follow are selected.]

VIII.

LETTERS TO THE DAMES DE SAINT-CYR AND OTHERS.

To M. l'Abbé Gobelin [her confessor].

CHAMBORD, October 10, 1685.

I am very glad that you are satisfied with what you have seen at Noisy, and you will give me very great pleasure by going there again before the cold weather; but I would like you to confess, or at any rate converse in private with, all those who desire to enter our community. I have sent word to Mme. de Brinon to examine them all, and to begin nothing for the novitiate until my return. [This refers to the selection of mistresses, not pupils, for the establishment on its removal to Saint-Cyr.]

When you go again, I beg you to make a few familiar exhortations to the whole community. I approve, with you, that these ladies should make a year's trial, but it seems to me that it would be more useful if, instead of shutting them up to learn the rule and only know their obligations by speculation, they were to spend that year in performing the duties they will afterwards have to fulfil; above all, those of governing and instructing children, which is the foundation of the Institution.

I know well that this must not be done so exclusively that they will have no time for prayer, orisons, silence, acts, and conferences; but a mingling might be made which would make known to others, and also to themselves, of what they are capable. Concern yourself about this affair, I beg of you, inasmuch as you hope it may be useful; since God and the king have laid it upon me, you ought to help me to acquit myself well.

Humility cannot be preached too strongly, both in public and in private, to our postulants; for I fear that Mme. de Brinon may inspire them with a certain grandeur which she has herself, and that the neighbourhood of the Court, this royal foundation, the visits of the king and mine, may give them the idea of being chanoinesses, or important persons; which would not fail to swell their hearts, and counteract strongly the good we are seeking to do. All the rest is going on, it seems to me, very well; there is a very solid piety in the house; but we must take a medium course between the true splendour of our devotion and the puerilities and pettiness of convents, which we have tried to avoid. I do not yet know by what name the community will be called. If you have read the Constitution you will have seen that Mme. de Brinon calls them "Dames de Saint-Louis." But this could hardly be, for the king would not canonize himself, and it is he who will name them when founding them. [They were so named, however.] They wish to be called Dames to distinguish them from the young ladies; send me your opinion on this. As for their costume, it must be black, of a shape now worn, but without hair, or any adornment; such, I think, as Saint Paul demands for Christian widows. Adieu; write to me, I entreat you, whenever you can do so without inconvenience.

To Mlle. de Butéry [pupil-mistress at Noisy].

January, 1686.

I am very glad to be in communication with you, Mademoiselle, and I judge by the office Mme. de Brinon has given you that she thinks you have much benevolence and exactitude. You can address yourself to me for all your wants, asking, however, only for those it is impossible to avoid having; for as you will have everything new at Saint-Cyr you must be patient at Noisy. When you write to me again, leave rather more interval between your lines, that I may correct your orthography on days when I have leisure; the best way of learning to spell is to copy books. Your handwriting is very handsome, and I see with pleasure that several of the novices write very well. I am now going to correct your letter, but I shall not finish mine without assuring you of my esteem and friendship.

Take care to notice the difference between my corrections and what you have written; for that is how you will learn better.

To Mme. de Brinon.

June, 1686.

They are working hard about Saint-Cyr. Your Constitution and rules have been examined; they have been admired, cut down, and added to. Pray God that he will inspire all those who touch them. I must inform you of a visit I have received from the king this morning; he is none the better for it; still we were delighted to see him out of his room. [Louis XIV. had lately undergone a surgical operation.] He has corrected the choir of Saint-Cyr, and several other parts; the young ladies are to be placed on four benches as at Noisy; therefore we must again change the colours. He talked yesterday with the controller-general about the foundation, and all will be settled soon. One never has all good things at once; proximity to Versailles will give you many advantages and as many restraints; praise God for all things. I shall go, please God, to Noisy next Sunday and give you an account of all that has then happened.

Rejoice, my very dear; you are spending your life for God and a great work.

To the Dames de Saint-Louis.

August 1, 1686.

God having willed to use me to assist in this establishment which the king undertakes for the education of poor young ladies in his kingdom, I think I ought to communicate to the persons destined to bring them up what my experience has taught me about the means of giving a good education; to do that is assuredly one of the greatest austerities that can be practised, because there is no other without some relaxation; whereas in the education of children the whole life must be employed upon it.

When the object is merely to adorn their memories, it suffices to instruct them for a few hours a day,—it would even be a great imprudence to burden them longer; but when we seek to form their reason, waken their hearts, elevate their minds, destroy their evil inclinations, in a word, make them know and love virtue, we must always be at work, for at all moments opportunities present themselves. We are just as important to pupils in their amusements as in their lessons, and we cannot leave them for a moment except to their injury.

As it is not possible that a single person can conduct a large number of children, it will be necessary to have several mistresses for each class; but they must act together in great union and with the very greatest uniformity of sentiments; their maxims must be alike, and they must endeavour to instil them with the same manners.

In this employment, more than in any other, there is need to forget one's self entirely; or, at least, if any credit is hoped for it must only be after success, using the simplest means to obtain it. When I say that we must forget ourselves I mean that we must aim only to make ourselves understood and thus convince; eloquence must be abandoned, for that may attract the admiration of listeners; it is even well to play with children on certain occasions and make them love us in order to acquire a power over them by which they will profit. But we must make no mistake as to the means we may use to make ourselves loved; none but upright intentions will draw down the blessing of God.

We should think less of adorning their minds than of forming their reason; this system, it is true, makes the knowledge and ability of the mistresses less apparent; a young girl who knows a thousand things by heart will shine in company and gratify her relatives more than one whose judgment has been formed, who knows how to be silent, who is modest and reserved, and is in no haste to show her cleverness.

It is right to let them sometimes follow their own will in order to know their inclinations, to teach them the difference between what is good, what is bad, and what is indifferent. I think that all persons who give themselves the trouble to read this will know as well as I what is meant by indifferent things. Give them, for instance, one companion in place of another; a walk in one direction rather than in another, a game or other trifles, to let them see we are only mistresses when we must be, and that they might be so themselves in all things if they were reasonable. A companion may be dangerous, a walk may have some impropriety, a game may be out of place; but I wish that in refusing them they be told the reason, as far as prudence will allow, trying always to grant them frequently what they want, in order to refuse what is bad with a firmness that never yields. It is wonderful how much such methods make governing easy and absolute.

It is good to accustom them to have nothing granted to importunity.

You must be implacable on vices, and punish them either by shame or by chastisements, which must be very rigorous, but as rare as possible.

Guard yourselves from the dangerous principle of some persons who, out of a scrupulous fear that God will be offended, avoid all occasions when children's inclinations can appear; we cannot know too much about them in order to inspire a

horror of vice and a love of virtue, in which we should confirm the young by giving them principles which will prevent their going wrong through ignorance. We should study their inclinations, observe their tempers, and follow their little contests in order to train them in every way. For experience shows us only too well how often faults are committed without knowing it, and how many persons fall into crime without being more wicked than others who live innocently.

They should be taught all the delicacies of honour, integrity, discretion, generosity, and humanity; and virtue should be described to them as being both beautiful and agreeable, as it is. A few little stories suited to this purpose will be very proper and useful,—amusing, yet all the while instructing them; but they must be convinced that if virtue does not have religion for its basis it is not solid, and God will not sustain it, but will rebuke such pagan and heroic virtues, which are only the result of susceptible pride insatiable for praise.

It is not necessary to make long disquisitions on such matters; it is better to place them as occasions occur.

You must make yourselves esteemed by the children; and the only means of doing so is not to show them defects; for it is hard to believe how intelligent they are in perceiving them. The study to appear perfect in their eyes is of great utility to ourselves.

Never scold them from ill-humour, and never give them reason to think there are times more favourable than others to obtain what they want. Treat fine natures with affection, be stern with bad ones, but harsh with none. Make them like the presence of their mistresses through amiable kindness, and let them do before you exactly what they would do if left alone.

We should enter into the amusements of children, but never adapt ourselves to them by childish language or puerile ways; and as they cannot be too reasonable, or too soon be made so, we should accustom children to reason from the moment they can talk and understand,—all the more because they will never reject the healthy amusements we give them.

The external accomplishments of foreign languages and the thousand other things with which young ladies of quality are expected to be adorned have their inconveniences; for such studies are apt to take time which might be more usefully employed. The young ladies of the house of Saint-Louis ought not to be brought up, more than can be helped, in that way; because, being without property, it is not well to uplift their hearts and minds in a manner so little suitable to their fortunes and state of life.

But Christianity and reason, which are all that we wish to inspire, are equally good for princesses and paupers; and if our young ladies profit by what I believe they will be taught, they will be capable of sustaining all the good and all the evil that God may be pleased to send them.

To Mme. du Pérou.

October 25, 1686.

I am convinced of your zeal and your capacity; and both must be employed for our dear house. It is true that I am very keen for all its interests; I think I sometimes go as far as impatience; but it seems to me that there are reasons why we should hasten, and use well the favourable moment in which we now are. God knows that I never thought to make so grand an establishment as yours, and that I had no other view than to do a few good works during my lifetime; not feeling myself obliged to do more, and thinking that there were already too many nunneries. The less part I had in this plan, the more I see in it the will of God; which makes me love it much more than if it were my own work. God has led the king to found this school, as you know, although he does not like new institutions.

It is true that just as much as I should have trembled in governing Saint-Cyr had it been my own work, so much on the other hand do I find myself emboldened by the sense that it is done by the will of God, and that that same will has laid this duty upon me. Therefore I can say to you with truth that I regard it as the means God has granted me for my salvation, and that I would sacrifice my life with joy to make it glorious. What is now urging me on, sometimes perhaps too eagerly, is the desire I have that all should be firmly established before the death of Mme. de Brinon, my own, and that of the Abbé de Gobelin, so that the spirit of the house may always last, in spite of oppositions it may meet with in the future. You will never have an abler or more commanding Superior than Mme. de Brinon, a friend more zealous for the house than I, a director more saintly than the one you have now.

We have, moreover, all authority, temporal and spiritual, in our hands. The king and the bishop [Godet of Chartres] are ready to do all that we desire; it is for us to put things in that state of perfection in which we desire them to remain

forever.

In examining your girls [for the novitiate] seek for true piety, an upright mind, the liking they may have for the Institute, the desire they have to be useful, their attachment to the rules, their spirit of community, their detachment from the world; these are the principal things for a Dame de Saint-Louis. As for tempers a little too quick, remember that we all have the vices and virtues of our temperament; that which makes us hasty makes us active, vigilant, eager for the success of what we undertake; that which makes us gentle makes us nonchalant, lazy, indifferent, slow, insensible; piety rectifies both in the long run, and surely that is the essential thing. Who can be hastier than Mme. de Brinon and I? but do you love us less? You will tell me, perhaps, and with reason, that subordinates suffer from such tempers; to that I reply that everybody has to suffer; and, after all, you will only have such Superiors as you elect yourselves. But while I excuse hasty people (from self-love perhaps), I exhort you to correct that disposition as much as you possibly can in your novices.

You can show what I write to you to whom you please; would to God it were good enough that all might draw some profit from it.

To a young lady in class Blue.

December, 1690.

I have heard of your disobedience to Mme. de Labarre, and I have stopped the punishment they intended to give you. How can you suppose that we should allow such rebellion? What exception could there be to our rules? Do you think yourself necessary because you have a fine voice? Can you know me and yet think that the representation of “Athalie” goes before the regulations established at Saint-Cyr? No, certainly not; and you will leave the establishment if I hear anything more about you. Submit, if you wish to remain; but, if you wish to leave, it will be more honourable to you to do so by agreement with me than to get yourself dismissed. You are lax and cold towards God; it is that which makes you fall into all these faults. Reflect, I beg of you, on what you might hope of yourself on the occasions which you will find to fail. You are becoming grown-up; this is the time to make serious reflections. It is for God, my dear child, to touch your heart, but it is for us to rule your conduct. You will be very unhappy if it is good only externally. I wished to give you this advice before punishing you, and I hope that you will give me the joy of seeing you profit by it; I ask this of you with all my heart; for I am as sorry to have to treat you with rigour as I am resolved to establish in your class an absolute obedience to the regulations.

To Mme. de Fontaines.

September 20, 1691.

The pain I feel about the daughters of Saint-Cyr can only be relieved by time and by a total change in the education we have given them up to this time. It is very just that I should suffer because I have contributed to the harm more than any one; I shall be happy if God does not punish me more severely. My pride has been in everything concerning the establishment; and its depth is so great it carries the day against my own good intentions. God knows that I wanted to establish virtue at Saint-Cyr, but I have built on sand,—not having that which alone can make a firm foundation. I wanted that the girls should have intelligence, that their hearts should be uplifted, their reason formed. I have succeeded in my purpose: they have intelligence, and they use it against us; their hearts are uplifted, and they are prouder and more haughty than is becoming in the greatest princesses—speaking as the world thinks; we have formed their reason, and we have made them disputatious, presumptuous, inquisitive, bold, etc. Thus it is that we succeed when the desire of excelling [shining] makes us act. A simple, Christian education would have made good girls, out of whom we could have made good wives and good nuns; we have made *beaux-esprits*, whom we ourselves who made them cannot endure: there is our blame, in which I have a greater share than any one.

Let us come to the remedy; for we must not be discouraged. I have already proposed some to Balbien [Mme. de Maintenon’s waiting-maid mentioned in “Saint-Simon” as Nanon]. They may seem to you rather petty, but I hope, by the grace of God, they will not be without effect. As many little things have fomented pride, so many little things will subdue it. Our girls have been too much considered, too petted, too often deferred to. They must now be ignored in their classes; they must be made to keep the rules of the day; and little else must be talked of. They should not be forced to feel that I am angry with them; it is not their grief that I want; I am more to blame than they; I desire only to repair by another line of

conduct the harm that has been done. The best girls have done more to show me the excess of pride which we must now correct than the bad ones; I have been more alarmed at seeing their self-conceit and the arrogance of Mlle. de ———, de ———, and de ——— than at all that I have heard of the insubordinate members of the class. These are girls of good intentions who wish to be nuns, but with that desire they have a language and manners too proud and haughty to be tolerated at Versailles among young ladies of the highest rank. You see by this that the evil has sunk into their natures, so that they are not themselves aware of it. Pray God, and make others pray that He will change their hearts, and give us all humility. But, madame, do not discourse to them too much. All Saint-Cyr is turning to discourses; much is said there just now of simplicity; they seek to define it, to comprehend it, to discern what is simple and what is not; and then in practice they say: "Out of simplicity, I take the best thing; out of simplicity I praise myself; out of simplicity I want something at table that is far away from me." Truly, this is turning into ridicule all that is most serious. We must now correct in our girls that turn for witty satire which I myself have given them, and which I now see to be opposed to simplicity; it is a refinement of pride that says in jest what it dares not say openly. But, once more, do not talk to them of pride or satire; we must destroy all that without fighting it, by stopping the use of it; their confessors will talk to them of humility better than we. Do not preach to them,—try that silence that I have so long urged upon you; it will have more effect than all our words.

I am very glad that Mlle. de ——— has at last humbled herself; let us praise God for it, but do not praise her; it is another of our faults that we have praised too much. Do not irritate their pride by too frequent corrections; but when you are obliged to make one, do not admire the girl who is corrected for taking it properly.

As for you, my dear daughter, I know your intentions; you have, it seems to me, no personal blame in all this; it is only too true that the great harm has come from me; but take care, with the others, to have no part in that pride which has been so firmly established everywhere that we are scarcely conscious of it. We wanted to avoid the pettiness of certain convents, and God has punished our assumption. There is no house in the world more in need of external and internal humility than ours: its situation so near the Court, its grandeur, its wealth, its nobleness, the air of favour that pervades it, the attentions of a great king, the care of a person of influence, the example of vanity and manners of the world which she gives you in spite of herself by force of habit,—all these dangerous traps ought to make us take measures quite the contrary of those we have hitherto taken. Let us bless God for having opened our eyes. It is he who inspires your piety; it will daily increase; but establish it solidly. Let us not be ashamed to retract; to change our fashions of acting and speaking; and let us ask our Lord fervently to change our hearts within us, to take from our house the spirit of loftiness, of satire, of subtlety, of curiosity, and of freedom in judging and giving our opinion about everything, and of meddling in the duties of others at the risk of wounding charity. Let us pray also that He will take from us that prevailing over-delicacy, that impatience of small inconveniences; silence and humility are the best means. Show my letter to our Mother Superior; all must be in common among us.

To Mme. de Radouay (mistress-general of the classes).

MARLY, 1692.

Do not be disturbed by the complaints made to you [by the mistresses] of your children; think only of training their hearts to piety, integrity, simplicity, candour, sincerity, honesty, and courage, and you will one day see, if it pleases God, that they are far removed from the children you now write of.

Do not notice all the faults of the Yellows and Blues; have patience; all will come right in time, and the sisters will be better convinced by their own experience than by anything we can say to them. As for what you have done about silence, nothing could be better. I only beg you, as I have already said, to preach it without expecting to fully obtain it. You will never succeed in keeping sixty girls together without a word from one of them. You must see things as they are, and not attack a small infringement like a vice. Regularity and silence are necessary for the quiet, the order, and the propriety of the house; but the essential part of the education of your girls is that they shall bear with them and always practise the virtues I have named to you. Those virtues do not show to persons who merely see a march in the choir or a silent recreation in the class-room; but it is this sincerity of purpose that I ask of you; God will reward it magnificently.

I should be afraid to write all this to certain of the Dames, who, with very good intentions, pass from one extreme to the other at the least word said to them, and who on the strength of this letter would cease to attend to regularity or silence; but I hope that you at least will understand me better.

I have been without news from Saint-Cyr for several days. The king is well, I am very well, but the Prince of Orange is

ill.

To one of the mistresses.

MARLY, 1692.

When you wish to know anything, madame, it is better that I should write it to you than say it, because it is then impossible that either of us should forget it. I am at your service for whatever you want; and I will now repeat what I think I have already said to you.

You must punish as seldom as you possibly can, and for this reason you must not see all faults. But when you cannot ignore those you have seen, you must not pardon them if they are considerable, or if they have already been pardoned. It is now a question of bringing the young ladies to a footing of perfect obedience. To this you must apply yourself seriously, without, however, searching out those faults that you could ignore....

Get it into your mind, once for all, that there are few circumstances in life without their drawbacks, and that you must choose the side that has the least. You must also distinguish clearly those that disturb order and the public good; that is what we must especially avoid in communities.

Yes, madame, you will have the necessary courage if you ask it of God, if you act in His presence and for Him solely; or I should better say, if you forget yourself entirely, without thinking whether you will be loved or hated. If you punish without prejudice, without listening to your repugnances or your inclinations, if you can think that you please God, whatever you do, and are conscious that you seek good only without respect to persons,—if you govern with those dispositions, as I do not doubt you will, our Lord will govern with you. Pray to Him, I implore you, for those who are guiding you.

To Mlle. d'Aubigné [her niece, a pupil at Saint-Cyr].

CHANTILLY, May 11, 1693.

I love you too well, my dear niece, not to tell you all that I think will be useful to you, and I should be very lacking to my obligations if, being wholly occupied with the young ladies of Saint-Cyr, I neglected you whom I regard as my own daughter. [The child was only nine years old at the time this letter was written.] I do not know if it is you who inspire the pride your companions have, or whether it is they who have given theirs to you; however that may be, rely upon it that you will be intolerable to God and men if you do not become more humble and more modest than you are. You take a tone of authority which will never be becoming in you, happen what may. You think yourself a person of importance because you are fed and lodged in a house where the king comes daily; but the day after my death neither the king nor all those who caress you now will look at you. If that should happen before you are married, you will have a very poor country gentleman for a husband because you are not rich; and if during my life you should marry a greater seigneur, he would only consider you, after my death, as long as your humour was agreeable to him; you would be valued only for your gentleness, and of that you have none. Your *mignonne* [term used in those days for an attendant on girls] loves you too much, and does not see you as other people see you. I am not prejudiced against you, for I love you much, but I cannot see without pain the pride that appears in all you do. You are assuredly very disagreeable to God; consider His example. You know the Gospel by heart; and what good will such learning do you if you are lost like Lucifer? Remember that it is solely the fortune of your aunt that has made that of your father and yourself. You allow persons to pay you a respect that is not due to you; you will not suffer being told that it is only paid on my account; you would like to raise yourself above me, so proud and lofty are you. How do you reconcile that puffed-up heart with the pious devotion in which you are being brought up? Begin by asking of God humility, contempt for yourself,—who are, in truth, nothing at all,—and the esteem of your neighbours. I speak to you as if you were a great girl because you have a very advanced mind; but I would consent with all my heart to your having less, and therefore less presumption.

If there is anything in my letter that you do not understand your *mignonne* will explain it to you. I pray Our Lord to change you so that I may on my return find you modest, humble, timid, and putting into practice what you know to be right. I shall love you much more. I conjure you by the affection you have for me to work upon yourself and to pray daily for the graces of which you are in need.

September, 1694.

The mother of the Demoiselles de —— has been beheaded; I shall always reproach myself for not following up that case with a care which might have saved the life of the poor creature. God has disposed otherwise. I am awaiting you before announcing this sad news to the two daughters. I am requested to consult the king on sending them away from Saint-Cyr. He does not understand any more than I do why this crime should be visited on the children, and I conjure you to reflect still further upon it with the Bishop of Chartres and the Abbé Tiberge. They say that the Jesuits would not admit to their Society in a like case, nor the nuns of the Visitation either. If that spirit comes from Saint Ignatius or Saint François de Sales, I submit to it without repugnance, but if it is only the effect of human wisdom or the harshness of communities, I desire with all my heart to escape it in this case. The father of M. de Luxembourg was beheaded; but they confided to the latter the person of the king and his armies. We saw M. de Rohan die upon the scaffold some twenty years ago, and all his family were in offices round the king and queen, and receiving condolences on the event without its entering the head of a single courtier to speak against them. What! shall worldly decency go farther than charity? Shall we fail to give our pupils the true ideas they ought to have on all things? I am told that in the classes these girls will meet with less respect and be exposed to reproaches: I should put that act among the most punishable of faults; girls with proper hearts would be incapable of it; the others must be corrected....

I say all this for justice, and from the desire I have that our girls should have their minds and their hearts right, for it may very well be that the girls in question are not suitable for us. I do not need, monsieur, to commend them to your charity; I pray God to console and bless them.

To Mme. du Pérou.

1696.

Madame, I have always forgotten to ask you why they continue to serve the young ladies with rye bread in days when wheat is no longer dear. It was very proper that they should learn by their own experience the inequality of the riches of the world, and take some share in the public sufferings; but they ought to be put back into the usual system when there is no reason to keep them out of it. The tendency of communities is to retrench on food, rather than on commodities or embellishments which they ought to go without. As our nourishment is simple and frugal, nothing should touch it. The girls are murmuring in their hearts much more bitterly than they dare say. I try in everything to help you with my experience.

Do not think, either for yourself or for your girls, that those who do not feel dull have no need of relaxation. Serious occupations wear upon us, little by little, without our perceiving it until too late; that is why, my dear daughter, you ought to prevent such a result by diversions of the mind that are innocent. Take care only that nothing passes contrary to religious modesty, nothing worldly, nothing excited or excessive; but that gentleness, holy liberty, simplicity, charity, modesty reign in everything. I wish no dancing.

To Mme. de Radouay.

October 15, 1696.

Profit, I conjure you, for yourself and for others by the experience you have just had of quinine. Nothing is more unreasonable than notions; our age assumes them about everything; they decide all things; there is no one who does not seek to be a doctor, or meddle in the direction of affairs; all have decided opinions; women pretend to judge of books, sermons, governments, of the spiritual and the bodily; modesty is no longer in usage. No one ever replies now, "I do not know," or "It is not for me to judge;" no one is baffled; the place of knowledge and judgment is filled by intolerable presumption, for never were persons more ignorant. Do not have, or allow that quality in your midst. Say out, simply, that you do not know. Let yourselves be guided by confessors, doctors, superiors, magistrates, the king; inspire that modesty in your novices, to whom this letter is as necessary as to you.

I am delighted that the Reds desire to please me; what pleasure if at my next visit you can tell me they have all been good. They will obtain that happiness if they ask it of God and serve Him with their whole heart.

To Mme. de Fontaines [now the Superior].

December, 1696.

Complaint is made, my dear daughter, that you do not give enough little comforts to the classes. You want me to speak to you freely and I shall do so. I think it true that you are too stern about expenses and all sorts of economy. Consider, I beg of you, that the most important thing in your case is not to save a thousand francs more or less (and the favours asked of you would not cost more than that), but to firmly establish and cause to be liked your rule as Superior; and you can do it in no better way than by entering, not only into the just needs of your community, but even into some wants that are not altogether necessary.

When certain of the mistresses ask me for ribbon for use in representing the tragedies, and I give it, do you not think that I do better than if I replied dryly that my money would be better employed in giving alms? Am I not doing a much greater good by this compliance to the mistresses of the different classes? They are pleased; and it is just to soften their labour; we make their young ladies like them, and so dispose them to receive instruction; the latter will open their hearts themselves to those who grant them these attentions. Nevertheless, you refuse them twenty pairs of gloves, or you deduct those gloves from the next distribution; do you not see, my dear daughter, that to save ten francs you have vexed sixteen of your mistresses? Saint-François de Sales sent Mme. de Chantal word as to a lawsuit she had gained which he did not wish her to undertake. "This time," he said, "you have been more just than kind; I would rather have you more kind than just." Apply those words to yourself, and be more kind than saving, more careful than thrifty; make yourself beloved, and in that way you will do a solid good to the establishment. Keep your negatives for all that is against the regulations; never relax there, but even there you can make answers that will not be harsh by saying: "The Constitution forbids that; the rules point to this," and so on. But for details within those lines, I beg you to give ear to what the mistresses request, leaning to compliance rather than severity. I pray God to give you the courage of which you have need to fulfil your duties, and an extension of charity and perception which will make you prefer great duties to little ones.

To Mme. de Pérou.

1699.

We should have an equitable not a superficial charity. For instance, we should rid ourselves of a girl who would be capable of corrupting others, without listening to the sentiments of a weak compassion which would lead us to say: "But she is so poor; what will her family do? she will be ruined in the world." Better that she should be lost alone than ruin your whole establishment. For certain defects which cannot injure others and only make you suffer yourself, I exhort you to have infinite patience; how many we have known who were bad and are now among our best girls! I was listening to one the other day with great pleasure as she told me with humility and simplicity the evil inclinations that might have led her to bad ways, and yet she has done marvels. Such cases ought to encourage you and make you see that if there are some pains in educating there are also many grounds for consolation.

I entreat you to tell my sister de Riancourt that she must give good nourishment to the sick, take great care that they rest well, warm them in their chills, and dry them if they perspire. But easy chairs in which they lounge all day, loose dressing-gowns without belts like fashionable women, soups without bread crumbs, such things, I say, are delicacies out of all proportion with the illnesses I have known you have, so far. Read her this part of my letter, I beg of you, and bind her conscience to establish the infirmary on the footing of religious charity but with none of that laxness which ought not to be allowed among your young ladies.

To Mme. de la Rozières [the sub-mistress of a class].

October 3, 1699.

I must, my dear daughter, repair by a letter the wrong I did in not seeing you in private when I saw the others. My want of leisure makes me fail in many things I ought to do, and want to do. It is a great pity to have for mother a person who is always moving about, off hunting, or at cards, when she ought to be talking with her daughters. You are too good to put up with me and my many defects, but I assure you that I am well punished, and there is nothing in the pleasures I speak of to console me for not going oftener to Saint-Cyr.

To Mme. de Pérou.

February 23, 1701.

It has seemed to me as if you desired that I should write to you on all things that might be of consequence to your establishment. I place in that rank the representations of the beautiful tragedies I caused to be written for you,^[20] and which may in the future be imitated. My object was to avoid the miserable compositions of nuns, such as I saw at Noisy. I thought it was judicious and necessary to amuse children; I have always seen it done in places where they are collected; but I wished while amusing those of Saint-Cyr to fill their minds with fine things of which they would not be ashamed when they entered the world; I wished to teach them to pronounce properly; to occupy them in a way that would withdraw them from conversations with one another, and especially to amuse the elder ones, who from fifteen to twenty years of age get rather weary of the life at Saint-Cyr. These are my reasons for still continuing the representations, provided your superiors [meaning the Bishop of Chartres and the confessors] do not forbid them. But you must keep them entirely confined to your own house, and never let them be seen by outside persons under any pretext whatever. It is always dangerous to allow men to see well-made girls who add to the charms of their person by acting well what they represent. Therefore do not, I say, permit the presence of any man, whoever he may be, poor, rich, young or old, priest or secular,—I would even say a saint, if there were such on earth. All that can be allowed, if one of the superiors [priests] insists on judging the performance, is to let the youngest children act a play before him—as, in fact, we have already done.

To Mme. de Gruel [head mistress of the Reds].

March, 1701.

You admire too much what I do for your class, but nevertheless, such as it is you do not imitate it enough. You talk to your children with a stiffness, a gloominess, a brusqueness which will close their hearts. They should feel that you love them, that you are grieved by their faults for their own sake, and that you are full of hope that they will correct themselves; you should take them expertly, encourage them, praise them, in a word, employ all means except roughness—which will never lead any one to God. You are too rigidly of a piece, very proper to live with saints, but you ought to know how to adapt yourself, to be every sort of person, and especially a kind mother to a large family, all of whom are equally dear to her.

I have always forgotten to tell you that I noticed several days ago, in hearing you explain the Gospel, that you seem to me to embrace too many topics; children want but few. You also talk too much; I think you had better make the children talk more, so as to see if they have listened and understood. I likewise think that you are too eloquent. For example, you said to them that they must make an eternal divorce from sin; that is true, and well said, but I doubt if there are three girls in your class who know what a divorce is. Be simple, and think only of making yourself intelligible.

I think, my dear daughter, that you will consider it right that I should give you my opinion from time to time on what I see you do. Inspire your children, I conjure you, with the practices of piety, with a horror of sin, a sense of God's presence, and a docility in being led by you. I beg you also to guide them according to the spirit of the Church; as for this, I have written a little compendium which you must follow.

Adieu, my dear daughter.

To Mme. de Montalembert [head mistress of the Blues].

October 19, 1703.

Your arrangements are all that could be wished, my dear daughter; we cannot thank God enough for what He does for you by means of your saintly and able confessor. I tell you again, my joy would be perfect if I could see you walking as straight without that great support; but I will have confidence in God and believe that the provision of strength you are making now will nourish you for the future.

The affection you feel for your girls will never harm you if you love them all equally; preferences would be ruinous to the class and to yourself; you must have none, except for the very best girls, and such preferences ought not to offend the others.

Why do you not ask of your class all that you know I should ask of them? My greatest honour at Saint-Cyr is that Saint-Cyr can do without me; what I should now do would be nothing; what there was of good in me has passed to you, my dear children, and will ever remain in the Institution. I desire with all my heart that it may be a school of virtue, and that you may live there as angels while corruption increases daily in the world. What would I not give to have you all see as I do how long and wearisome our days are here at Court; I do not mean only for those persons who have outlived the follies of youth, but for youth itself, which is dying of ennui because it wants to amuse itself continually and finds nothing to content that insatiable desire for pleasure. I toil at the oar to amuse Mme. la Duchesse de Bourgogne. It would not be thus if they sought only to please God, to work and sing His praises, as with you; the peace which that kind of life puts into the heart is a solid and lasting joy. Adieu; this subject would lead me far. I write to none but you to-day; assure the dear sisters that the healths about which they inquire are very good.

To Mme. de Bouju [head mistress of the Yellows].

January 4, 1704.

Yes, my dear daughter, you must use simple language; a nun should rule that as she rules her eyes, her walk, and all her actions. We should feed on Holy Scripture, but not use its terms more than is necessary to make it understood. M. Fagon is often praised because he talks medically in so simple and intelligible a way that we think we see the things that he explains; a village doctor talks Greek. Explain to your girls what you find in the books you read to them; but tell them always they are never to use those words. In this our Mother and I are not aiming at any one in particular, only at the names you introduce; and from them we pass to learned words, in short, to that which may be called the pedantic spirit. We cannot endure this in learned people; how much more displeasing is it in ignorant ones and particularly in those of our sex! We should do very wrong, my dear daughter, to tell you this in a roundabout way; because, by the favour God has done you, we can say to you all without reserve. Ask Him, I beg of you, to give to me the same grace.

To Mme. du Pérou.

FONTAINEBLEAU, October 1, 1707.

I think as you do about Saint-Cyr; and whatever reasons I may have to open the door to certain persons sometimes, I am always enchanted when they go out of it, and I never love Saint-Cyr so well as when it is its natural self. My sister de Radouay will tell you if that is flattery; she tells us many truths in a jesting way, and I should like, as she advises, to prepare you for the change you will some day feel; but I find difficulty in doing so, and I fall back on what wisdom has told us: "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

My intention was to answer all letters with my own hand, but I have so many things to do that I must husband myself from early morning in order to be able to go on till night; my sister de Fontaines would choke at the recital of my days; my restraints extend to everything. The letter of my sister de Jas has furnished me with many subjects of rejoicing in the account she gives me of her interior and her exterior; but those are subjects of confession,—they must not be answered. Our good mistress of the novices goes quietly to her ends; she asks me to send her a "Conversation;" if she saw me, she would not ask it. My poor mind is dragged apart by four horses; it is not yet eleven o'clock, but my head feels bound with iron, and yet I must sustain my rôle as personage till ten at night.

I see no difficulty in putting Mlle. de Grouchy into the novitiate; why not also Fontanges, who desires it so ardently? Their appearance is not charming, but we must accustom ourselves to value only that which God values. I am perfectly well so far as my general health is concerned; that is to say, I no longer have fever or weakness, but many rheumatic pains in my head as soon as I expose myself to cold.

Adieu, my children. I shall see you again on the 17th of October, and I defy you to be more glad than I.

To Mme. de Saint-Périer [mistress of the Blues].

VERSAILLES, 1708.

We were interrupted a few days ago just as I was telling you, my dear daughter, what I have already written elsewhere, namely: when you have girls of high rank you must redouble your care for their education, but in a manner imperceptible to the others—for the equality that you keep is admirable. What I ask does not go further than wishing you to speak to

them oftener in private, employing them in all that can open their minds, instilling into them a solid piety and whatever can form their hearts to virtue. Those girls, when they go into the world, or even into convents, can do greater good than others who are forced by poverty to return to their parents. Mlle. de Rochechouart is a case in point; it seems to me that you push her enough; I hope that her inclinations respond to her birth.

You say you have had difficulty in combining two things that I asked of you, and which you find opposed to each other: one, that you ought to train, as much as you can, the consciences of your girls to be simple, open and direct; and the other, that you must not make them talkative. There is no contrariety, as I think, between the two things; it is never the frank who have the most to say. Frankness does not consist in saying much, but in saying all; and that all is quickly said when it is sincere, because there are no preambles, and no great number of words are needed to open the heart. A simple person says naïvely what is in her mind; if she should chance to be a little too diffuse, obedience calms her and four words are enough. Those who are not simple cannot resolve either to speak or hold their tongues; their confidences must be dragged from them; we lose ourselves in their twists and turns; that is what makes such long conversations and frequent confessions; they have said something, but not all; they were not willing to tell perhaps one circumstance, and then they are frightened at not having told it, and so they return to tell it and perhaps much else. Now an honest heart tells at once all it knows. Have you not observed that the frankest girls are the soonest confessed? They hide nothing, and the confessor, who knows their disposition, has little to say to them...

To Mme. du Pérou [now Superior of Saint-Cyr].

VERSAILLES, 1711.

The [mistresses of the] classes are your principal affair; the establishment is your Institute, that is the king's intention; that is the object of your office. Never weary of preaching to your sisters the vigilance required in guarding and educating the young ladies. Do not add rules to rules; you have rules enough, but the mistresses do not read them enough. Make ceaseless attack upon the furtive quibbling that the Dames de Saint-Louis keep up about their time. They go against the will of God, the intention of their instituters and founders, and against the charity they owe to the young ladies if they leave them at times when their regulations do not oblige them to be in church. That hunger for prayer is only self-love wanting to be pleased with itself for its works, and counting as nought that which is done under rules. How can they teach young ladies that duty should be done according to the place of each person if they themselves neglect the duty of theirs, which is the care of those young ladies? A true Dame de Saint-Louis ought to contrive to be with her class at all possible moments, even at the hours when she is not obliged to be there. And yet they think they are pleasing God by making a half-hour's orison which was not required of them, and deserting the employment of the time which He does demand in accordance with their vows! I should never end on this chapter, my dear daughter. Never give up on this point, I conjure you. It is for you to see that the rules are obeyed, and when your functions cease and you become again a simple mistress, set an example of fidelity to the others.

To Mme. de Fontaines.

April 20, 1713.

Do not let us complain, my dear sister, and fear the future; let us rather try to establish the present as best we can. You can contribute better than any one to this purpose, for you are sufficiently prudent not to vex the sisters; at the same time you will never allow the young ladies to speak in a low tone to one another. The sisters must excuse a great deal of poor talk that they will hear, and not reprove it when there is no real harm in it.

Mme. d'Auxy [this was Jeannette de Pincre, an adopted daughter of Mme. de Maintenon] is quite beside herself when she has a new gown. She consults me about the trimming; I enter into it and give her my advice, telling her that her joy and liking for adornment belongs to her age, but that youth must pass, and that I hope she will come sooner or later to better inclinations. I think that such compliance does more good than severity, which serves only to rebuff the young and make them dissimulating.

I am told that one of the little girls was scandalized in the parlour because her father talked of his *breeches*. That is a word in common usage. What refinement do they mean by this? Does the arrangement of the letters form an immodest word? Do they feel distress at the words "breed" or "breeze" or "breviary"? It is pitiable. Others only whisper under their breath that a woman is pregnant; do they wish to be more modest than our Lord who talked of pregnancy and

childbirth, etc.? One of the young ladies stopped short when I asked her how many sacraments there were, not being willing to name marriage. She began to laugh and told me they were not allowed to name it in the convent from which she came.

What! a sacrament instituted by Jesus Christ, which he honoured with his presence, the obligations of which his Apostles explained, and which we ought to teach to our daughters, must not be named to them! These are the things that turn a convent education into ridicule. There is much more immodesty in such proceedings than there is in speaking openly of what is innocent and with which all pious books are filled. When our young ladies have passed through marriage they will know that it is not a thing to be laughed at. They ought to be accustomed to speak of it very seriously and even sadly, for I think it is the state of life in which we suffer most tribulation, even in the best marriages. They should be taught, when occasion offers, the difference between immodest words, which must never be uttered, and coarse words,—the first being sinful, the second simply against good-breeding.

Adieu, my daughter, I never can finish when it is a question of our girls and the good of the establishment.

To Mme. de la Rouzière [a class mistress].

Monday, May 6, 1714.

I think, my dear daughter, that being too much attached to one's body means fearing too much inconveniences and want of ease, being too particular about one's person, being easily disgusted with that of others, dressing with too much care, apprehending cold, heat, smoke, dust—in a word, all the little flesh mortifications—too much; it is desiring to satisfy our senses, seeking pleasure, being too much attached to our health, taking too much care of it, troubling ourselves about remedies, occupying ourselves with our own relief, being too nice about what we like and too fidgety about what we fear; it is examining ourselves on such points with too much care. Being too much attached to one's mind means to think we have one, to plume one's self upon it, to wish to increase it, to show it, to turn the conversation according to our own tastes, to seek out persons who have mind and despise others whom we think have none, to speak affectedly, and write the same.—But I am obliged to finish, my dear daughter.

To Mme. de Vandam [then head mistress of the Blues].

January 12, 1715.

In the year 1700 or 1701 I busied myself much with the classes, and we began to establish what is now practised with such great success. We should, however, renew our vigilance unceasingly, my dear daughter, and forbid the young ladies absolutely to say a single word in a low voice to their companions. This fault, which seems very slight to persons without experience, is really very considerable; and there is none as to which you must be less indulgent. Punish it very severely, and let people say what they like. If the young ladies would reason about it for a moment themselves they would admit that they are whispering in order to say things that they know are not right; it is therefore very proper to forbid it.

We cannot feel sure of youth without this precaution; but after taking it, do not reprove them too severely for what you hear them say; strive to teach them to distinguish the good, the bad, the indiscreet, the imprudent, the immodest, the coarse; but always little by little, letting pass a number of things.

I see our mistresses shocked and alarmed when our girls desire finery and think themselves happy when they get a pink gown; a crime ought not to be made of that weakness of their age and sex; they should be told gently that such tastes will pass away, but not that they are sins. By such little concessions you will win their confidence the more. But I repeat: they must not whisper, and the mistresses, the blacks, and the flame-coloured ribbons must keep their eyes always upon them.

I pray God to make you know the value and sincerity of this vigilance, so that you may give yourself wholly to it; keep at a distance whatever can embarrass you, and watch continually, but quietly.

[On the 30th of August, 1715, two days before the king's death, Mme. de Maintenon went to Saint-Cyr, which was bound by its Constitution to provide for her and her establishment; she never left its precincts again.]

IX.

CONVERSATIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS OF MME. DE MAINTENON AT SAINT-CYR.

[The following reports were written down by the mistresses, occasionally by the pupils, and corrected by Mme. de Maintenon herself, in order to make them more worthy of being read and re-read by the mistresses in after days.]

Advice to the Young Ladies on the letters they write. Brevity and simplicity recommended.

January, 1695.

As you order us to write down what was said yesterday at recreation we shall do so as exactly and simply as we can. Mme. de Maintenon was good enough to come here expressly to correct our letters, as our mistresses had begged her to do. She first made all the young ladies surround her, and those whose letters were to be corrected stood nearest to her. She showed them, one after another, the faults in those presented to her, making us particularly notice how a simple, natural style, without turns of phrase, was the best, and the one that all persons of intellect used; telling us that the principal thing in order to write well is to express simply and clearly what one thinks. She gave us as an example M. le Duc du Maine, whom she taught to write, when she had the care of him, by the time he was five years old. She related to us that having told him one day to write to the king, he answered, quite embarrassed, that he did not know how to write letters. Mme. de Maintenon said, "But have you nothing in your heart that you want to tell him?"

"I am very sorry he has gone," he replied.

"Well," she said, "write that, it is very good." Next she said, "Is that all you are thinking? have you nothing else to say to him?"

"I shall be very glad when he comes back," replied the Duc du Maine.

"There is your letter made," said Mme. de Maintenon; "you have only to write it down simply, as you think it; if you think badly, it will be corrected." She then said to us, "That is how I taught him, and you have seen the charming letters that he writes." Mme. de Loubert, our head mistress, said it would be giving us great pleasure if she would take the trouble to write a model for us. She consented, and took for her subject the letters she had just corrected; she wrote a note and a letter in order to show us the difference.

We dared not show her the desire we had that she should write one for us as if to a person to whom we owed respect; one of our mistresses was so good as to say this for us. Mme. de Maintenon asked us, with her accustomed kindness, "To whom, my children, do you wish me to address it?" We answered her in a manner to let her know it should be to herself, as our benefactress. "Well," she said, "since you wish it, I will write you a letter of ceremony and respect to aged persons, although they are not of better families than your own." Then, addressing one of us, she said: "For instance, you owe respect to old M. T——, your uncle, whom I know, though he is of the same family as your own; you also owe me respect on account of my age,"—as if wishing to tell us there was no other reason to make us respect her, so great is her humility; but it does not become us, Mother, to speak to you of that, which you know better than we.

After having written the letter we had asked of her, she had the kindness to read it to us, and then said: "You see I have made it respectful and tender, but it is meant for those who regard me as a mother, just as I regard them as my daughters."

We have not as yet, Mother, received the letters she took the pains to write for us, but we shall try to obtain them soon, and will then give them to you, without changing anything.

We must also tell you what she made us notice as to the last words of her letter which express the tenderness she allows us to show her, having the charity to consider us her daughters. She said to us: "If a person whom I did not know wrote to me thus it would not be proper, though I should not mind it; but as for those at Saint-Cyr, I like them to show me affection and write to me without ceremony...."

Before going away she said to us, "My dear children, do you think that all this will profit you?" We answered that we hoped the pains she had taken would not be wasted, and she went away saying that she wished the same with all her heart.

It is with much pleasure, Mother, that we have acquitted ourselves of what you ordered us; we beg you to excuse all the

defects you may perceive in it; but we think there is no need to tell you how filled we are with gratitude to Mme. de Maintenon, who gives us daily fresh marks of her kindness. It is this which makes us hope for as fortunate a fate as that which has come to several of our companions who have been brought closer to her. We cannot hope that fate will do as much for us, but at least we are going to apply ourselves with all our strength to profit by the kindnesses which she now does us; and we shall endeavour all our lives to do honour to the education which she procured for us, and in which she so often employs herself. We are, Mother, with profound respect, your very humble and very obedient servants,

D'OSMONT AND DU BOUCHOT.

On good and bad characteristics of mind.

April, 1700.

On April 12 of the year 1700, Madame said to us during recreation: "I fear you judge too much by what the young ladies who present themselves for the novitiate have done in the classes. You see a girl commit some considerable fault, perhaps many faults, and that is enough to prejudice you against her; this is not just. You ought to judge, both in good and evil, only by perseverance in them; because a girl who has kept to either throughout the classes proves that such is her character. I should, therefore, not oblige a girl who has done well throughout to make a long novitiate. And, without excluding a girl who did badly in the lower classes and seemed to change on entering class Blue, I should nevertheless prolong her novitiate so as to give her time to strengthen herself in good, if her change is sincere, and to test it if assumed; so that you may see if she has one of those fickle, inconstant natures which, it may be feared, will fall back after a time into its early defects.

"One of the things to which you ought to apply yourselves the most," continued Madame, "is to know the character of your novices; it is very important to choose only sound ones; piety may cut off vices, but it seldom changes the defects that come from the character of the mind. As for me, I would rather have what you call here a naughty girl, who is often only frolicsome, than a captious mind or an ill-humoured one, however pious. I rather like what are called naughty children, that is to say jovial, vainglorious, passionate, even a little headstrong, girls who chatter and are lively and self-willed, because all those defects are easily corrected by reason and piety, or even by age itself. But an ill-formed mind, a captious mind remains to the end."

"What do you mean," they asked her, "by an ill-formed, captious mind?"

"A mind," replied Madame, "that does not yield to reason; that does not see results; believes always that one is trying to vex it, gives an evil turn to everything, and without being malignant takes things quite otherwise than as they are meant. But nothing is worse than a false spirit, a disguised and dissembling one, or an obstinate and opinionated one. Beware of those defects and of a bad temper; they are most troublesome in a community; for nothing makes the burden of government heavier than the management of difficult natures which require diverse treatment. God allows all these defects because such ill-formed natures can always be saved. He is," she added pleasantly, "more indulgent than we; He receives many persons into His paradise whom I should be sorry to admit into our community."

Mme. de Riancourt asked if being rather sulky was the same as being bad-tempered. "No," replied Madame, laughing. "I would readily permit a little sulkiness; there are few children not subject to it; but their natures are not bad for all that. What I call a bad temper is that of a person easily affronted, suspicious, cavilling about an air, a look, a word,—in short, a person with whom one can never be a moment at one's ease; whereas a girl of a good spirit takes everything in good part, lets many things go by without taking them up; and, far from imagining that persons mean to attack her, when they are not dreaming of it, does not even perceive a real intention to annoy; a girl who accommodates herself to everything, who finds facilities for doing whatever is wanted; a girl whom a superior can put without caution into any office and with all sorts of persons. That is what I call a good mind; it is a treasure to a community."

Mistresses ought to suit their conduct to the diverse natures.

1701.

On one of our working-days Madame said to us: "You ask me to instruct you about your classes; experience will teach you more than I can tell you; it is less my own mind that has taught me what I know than the experiments I made myself in the days when I educated the princes. You should regulate your conduct to the various characters; be firm, but never find

too much fault; you must often shut your eyes and see nothing, and above all take care not to irritate your girls and drive them indiscreetly to extremities. There come unlucky days, when they are upset, emotional, and ready to murmur; whatever you might then do in the way of remonstrance and reprimand would not bring them back to order. You must let things slide as gently as you can, so as not to commit your authority; and it will often happen that the next day the class will do marvels. Some children are so passionate and their tempers are so quick that were you to whip them ten times running you could not lead them as you wish. At such times they are incapable of reason, and punishment is useless; you must give them time to calm, and calm yourself; but in order that they may not think you give up to them and that by their obstinacy they have become the stronger, you must use dexterity, employ an intermediary, or say that you put off the affair to another time, which renders it more terrible; but do not think that they will be angry and passionate all their lives because in childhood their tempers are quick.

“I have seen this in M. le Duc du Maine; he is now the gentlest man in the world, but in his childhood, made irritable by illness and violent remedies, he was sometimes in a fury of impatience which every one reproached me for permitting. They used to put him into a boiling bath [*bain bouillant*], and because he screamed and was out of temper they wanted me to scold him; but I assure you I had not the courage; I would go away to write, or have myself called away, so that he might not think I tolerated his ill-temper (which, as I think, was very pardonable on such occasions); besides which, the remedies so heated his blood that all I could have said or done would not have calmed him. One must study the moments at which to take the means most suitable to children. Sometimes a look, a word, will bring them back to their duty; or a private conversation in which you can bring them to reason by speaking kindly with them. There are some that you must publicly rebuke, and sometimes often; there are others that you must punish instantly and not appear to spare. In short, discretion and experience can alone teach you the means you ought to take on all occasions; but you will never succeed unless you act with a great dependence on the spirit of God. You must pray to Him much for all those with whom you are intrusted; address Him in a special manner when you are puzzled, never doubt that He will help you as long as you distrust yourselves and are careful to keep yourselves united to Him.”

Questions on ideas of pleasure. Principle of conduct to follow in friendships.

December, 1701.

Mme. de Maintenon asked Mlle. de la Jonchapt on what was the lesson of the day when she entered the class [of the Blues]. She replied, “It was, Madame, on the ideas we form of pleasure.”

“Well,” said Mme. de Maintenon, “what are yours; what would they be if you were no longer here?”

“I think,” said the young lady, “I would like to be with my family, all assembled and all united.”

“You are right to consider that a pleasure,” said Mme. de Maintenon, “it is in the order of God; nothing is so lovable as a united family. And you, Laudonie, what would you like, when you are no longer here?”

“I hope, Madame, that I should find my pleasure in rendering service to my father and mother.”

“That is also very right,” said Mme. de Maintenon, “every time that you think in that way, and do not look for greater pleasures, it may be said that you are very reasonable. But you do not sufficiently put into your plan that you will have to suffer. Expect that, my children, I implore you; nothing is so capable of softening ill-fortune, which may overtake you, as being prepared for it; always expect something worse than you have met with.”

“There is one among them,” said the mistress (it was Mme. de Saint-Périer), “who tells me she expects her pleasure in going to see her friends and receiving them in her own house.”

“Assuredly,” replied Mme. de Maintenon, “there is much pleasure in living with our friends and conversing with open hearts, as we say, and no constraint. But there is,” she added in a lower voice to the mistress, “a pagan maxim, which I think very stern; it is to act with our friends as if we were sure they would some day be our enemies. I could secure myself, it seems to me, by letting my friends see nothing that was bad in me; I should try never to be wrong in their presence, nor in that of persons whom I loved less, because so many circumstances occur in life to separate us that friends often become enemies, and then we are in despair at having trusted them too much, and having spoken to them freely without reserve.

“Mme. de Montespan and I, for example,” she added, continuing to speak in a low voice to the mistress,—“we have been the greatest friends in the world; she liked me much, and I, simple as I was, trusted her friendship. She was a

woman of much intelligence and full of charm; she spoke to me with great confidence, and told me all she thought. And yet we are now at variance, without either of us having intended it. It is assuredly without fault on my side; and yet if either has cause to complain it is she; for she may say with truth: 'I was the cause of her elevation; it was I who made her known and liked by the king, and she became the favourite while I was dismissed.' On the other hand, was I wrong to accept the affection of the king on the conditions upon which I accepted it? Did I do wrong to give him good advice and to try, as best I could, to break up his connections? But let us return to what I meant to say in the first instance. If in loving Mme. de Montespan as I loved her I had been led to enter in a bad way into her intrigues, if I had given her bad advice, either from the world's point of view or from God's, if—instead of urging her all I could to break her bonds—I had shown her the means of retaining the king's affection, would she not have in her hands at this moment the means of destroying me if she wished revenge? 'This (or that) person whom you esteem so much,' she used to say to me, 'said to me thus and so; she urged me to do this, she counselled me that,' etc. Have I not good reason to say that we should not let anything be seen even to our friends which they might use in the end against us? Sooner or later things are known, and it is very annoying to have to blush for things we have said and done in times past."

"I said, many years ago, to M. de Barillon [one of her oldest friends] that there was nothing so clever as to never be in the wrong, and to conduct one's self always and with all sorts of persons in an irreproachable manner; he thought I was right, and said that, in truth, there was nothing so able as to put one's self, through good conduct, under shelter from all blame.

"I remember that one day the king sent me to speak to Mlle. de Fontanges; she was in a fury against certain mortifications she had received; the king feared an explosion and sent me to calm her. I was there two hours and I employed the time in persuading her to quit the king and in trying to convince her it would be a fine and praiseworthy thing to do. I remember that she answered me excitedly, 'Madame, you talk to me of quitting a passion as I would a chemise.' But to return to myself, you must admit I had nothing to blush for, and no reason to fear it should be known what I had said to her.

"You cannot too strongly preach the same conduct to your young ladies; let them give nothing but good advice; teach them to act in the most secret and personal affairs as if a hundred thousand witnesses were about them, or would be later; for I say again, there is nothing that is not sooner or later known, and it is more Christian, more virtuous, safer, and more honourable to have been a noble personage only; and even if we remain forever ignorant of what has been the wisdom of our conduct, I think we ought to count for much the inward testimony of a good conscience." Then rising, she said to the class, "Adieu, my children, I am obliged to return to Versailles; but I have given my sister de Saint-Périer a fine field on which, to instruct you."

On contempt for insults and injuries.

1701.

On the last day of the year 1700, the community having said to Mme. de Maintenon that they hoped to bury with the past century all their old differences and be other than they had been in the coming one; and also that they begged her to pardon and forget the imperfections of the year 1700 and those which had preceded it, "The past year," she replied, "has been fortunate enough; many things have been corrected and I now see in this establishment more of good than of evil. God grant that you advance as much the coming year; I hope it greatly, for He has given you good willingness; that is what he requires of us: 'Peace on earth to men of good will,' said the angels. When this good will is real and sincere it does not remain useless, it produces infallibly its fruit; in some sooner, in others later. We must await the times and moments of God, not by remaining idle, but by working with good will, without discouragement and without uneasiness, leaving to God the care of blessing our labour. It is certain that He desires our perfection more than we do ourselves. He could make us perfect in a single day and all at once; but that is not His ordinary conduct; He defers, He touches the heart of one at this time, another may be touched at a future time. We must adore His designs and work in peace and confidence."

The Dames de Saint-Louis having complained in the same conversation that they were not persecuted as other institutions had been at their birth: "You will be," said Mme. de Maintenon, "and you have been already, though the harm that is said of you may not come to your ears. I pay no regard to it, nor to that which is said of me myself. I receive letters every day not only in the style of the person whom my sister de Butéry knows of, but letters which ask if I am not tired of growing fat by sucking the blood of the poor; and what I, being so aged, expect to do with the gold I am amassing. I receive other letters that go farther still and say to me the most insulting things; some of them warn me I shall be assassinated. But all this does not trouble me; I do not think it needs much virtue to feel no resentment for that sort of

opposition. I said rather an amusing thing on a first impulse the other day to a poor woman, who came to me while I was surrounded by a number of the Court, weeping and imploring that I would get justice for her. I asked what wrong had been done to her. ‘Insults,’ she said; ‘they insult me, and I want reparation.’ ‘Insults!’ I exclaimed, ‘why, that is what we live on here!’ That answer made the ladies who accompanied me laugh.” “I think, Madame,” said Mme. de Saint-Pars, “that, far from enriching yourself at the expense of the poor, you run into debt for the charities you do.” “As for debts,” she replied, “I have none; but it often happens that I have no money; and when I settle my accounts at the end of the year I do not see how my income has been able to furnish all I have spent and given away.”

On Civility.

1702.

Mme. de Maintenon having had the goodness to ask the young ladies on what topic they wished her to speak to them, Mlle. de Bouloc entreated her to instruct them on civility. She told them that civility consisted more in actions than in words and compliments; and there was but one rule to be given about it. “It is in the Gospel,” she said, “which adapts itself so well to the duties of civil life. You know that our Lord said that we must not do to others what we would not wish them to do to us. That is our great rule, which does not exclude the proprieties in usage in the different regions where we may be living. As for what regards society, I make civility to consist in forgetting one’s self and being occupied only with what concerns others; in paying attention to whatever may convenience or inconvenience them, so as to do the one and avoid the other; in never speaking of one’s self; in listening to others and not obliging them to listen to us; in not turning the conversation to one’s self or one’s own tastes, but letting it fall naturally on that of others; in moving away when two persons begin to speak to each other in a low voice; in returning thanks for the smallest service and therefore of course for great ones. You cannot do better, my children, than to practise all these good manners among yourselves, and so acquire such a habit of them that they will soon become natural to you. I assure you that these attentions, and continual regard paid to the claims of others are what make a person pleasing in society; and they cost nothing to those who are well brought up. You have, for the most part, that advantage; put it therefore to profit, and you will be compensated for the self-restraint you will have to exercise in the beginning by the esteem and friendship these deferential manners will procure you.”

On never neglecting to learn useful things.

1702.

Madame having come to class Green and asking news of a certain young lady, the mistress told her she had given up plain-chant. “Has she no voice?” said Madame, “well, we are alike in that. I never could sing an air, but I never hear one that I do not remember it, and after the second hearing I feel all the mistakes that are made in it. I do sing sometimes when I am alone, and it gives me great pleasure, but I do not think it would give as much to others if they heard me. What effect does plain-chant have on the classes?”

“They are delighted to learn it, and it will be very useful to them,” replied the mistress.

“Yes, undoubtedly,” said Madame; “even if they cannot sing, they will get a little knowledge of singing, which will always give them pleasure. We should never neglect to learn anything, no matter what. I never supposed that learning to comb hair would be useful to me. My mother, going to America, took several women with her, but they all married there, —even to one old woman, frightfully ugly, with club feet. My mother was left with none but little slaves, who were quite incapable of waiting upon her, and especially of doing her hair. She then taught me to do it, and as she had a very fine head of very long hair I was obliged to stand on a chair; but I combed it extremely well. From there I came to Court, and this little talent won me the favour of Mme. la Dauphine; she was quite astonished at the way I could handle a comb. I began by disentangling the ends of the hair and went on upwards. The dauphine said she was never so well combed as by me; I did it often, because her waiting-women never could do it as well; they, the women, would have been sorry—if for nothing else—not to have had me there every morning. I think you have to comb each other’s hair; and you ought not to make difficulties, or think it beneath you because you are young ladies. Many a day I have come here very early in the morning to comb the Reds and cut their hair and clean out the vermin. You are given the liberty to cut your hair; and cutting it makes it finer. I remember that my mother never saw me without putting her scissors to mine; and she succeeded in what she intended, for I have still a great deal of hair on my head.

“I repeat, my children, that you should never neglect to learn everything you can learn. Nothing so marks the intelligence of a person as liking to see and learn how a thing is done. I am charmed with Jeannette; it is surprising that a child of her age should apply herself as she does; the other day she spent half an hour watching to see how a lock was put on; she looked it over in every way and gave her whole attention to it. Mme. la Duchesse de Bourgogne knows how to do every kind of work; I am often astonished by it. I think she must have been brought up like our princes, and that some waiting-woman, to pay her court, taught her these things. She does not need to learn any of the handicrafts wherever she is, for she knows them all; you could teach her nothing. Also, would you believe it? she understands about fevers; she feels my pulse when she thinks I am ill, and what she says about me is sure to be the same that M. Fagon says afterwards. She knows how to spin wool, flax, silk, how to use a spinning-wheel, how to knit, and she has lately embroidered for herself a gown of yellow taffetas. I used to spin myself; to please my governess, I spun her a gown. M. de Louvois knew all sorts of trades; he had enormously thick fingers, almost as large as two of my thumbs, and yet he could take a watch to pieces with wonderful nicety, though there is nothing more delicate to handle. He could be shoemaker, mason, gardener, etc. One day when I was winding silk on two cards, or squares, of a pretty shape, while he worked with the king in my room, he was dying of curiosity to know how the pretty thing that I held was made. The king noticed this, and told me in a low voice. I showed it to him; he unwound the silk, examined the card, and put it together again most adroitly.

“There is nothing that we have not, sometime or other, a need to know. In the days when I brought up the princes [Louis XIV.’s children by Mme. de Montespan] it was necessary to keep them concealed; and for that purpose we were constantly changing our place of residence, and the tapestries had to be rehung each time. I used to mount the ladder myself, for I often had no one to help me and I dared not make the nurses do it; in that way I learned a trade I am sure I should never have learned otherwise.”

“It was because you had great energy,” said a mistress.

“It is true,” replied Madame, “that I did have energy in my youth.”

“That is just what is wanting to our young ladies,” said the mistress; “they are so tired with the least exertion that they can hardly walk round the garden without fatigue.”

“They ought not to sit still a moment,” said Madame; “it is good to run, jump, dance, and play at base, skittles, and other games; it makes them grow. Perhaps that is the reason they are so short. It is amazing that at their age they do not like to be active, and that they want to be always sitting down or leaning upon something. Mme. de Richelieu at seventy years of age had never leaned back in her coach, and I myself, old and ill as I am, I am always as erect as you see me. I am glad when I see you sweeping and rubbing the floors of the church, because it is good for your health; if I could, I would make you run about all the time; but you cannot be educated while running. I do not understand why you should object to sweeping; it makes you strong. You ought not to object to help a servant; I have never seen pride on that point among the nobility, except at Saint-Cyr. I can understand perfectly well that beggars reclined [*gueux revêtus*, the term in those days for *parvenus*] should not venture to touch the ground with the tips of their fingers; but nobles do not think such things beneath them.”

“I think,” said a mistress, “that you had the goodness to tell us once that you taught your nurse to read.”

“Yes,” replied Madame, “and sometimes she said she would not learn. I used to follow that woman about, and often I spent whole days sifting flour through a hopper; she would set me up upon a chair to do it more conveniently. It is very fatiguing work; I only did it to oblige my nurse. Since then God has raised me to great fortune and given me great wealth; but I have never loved money except to share it. I do not put my happiness into having fine petticoats, as you may see by the gowns I wear, but I put it into giving pleasure to others. You know that one of the maxims I have taught you is: The greatest of all pleasures is to be able to give pleasure.”

Then she asked Mlle. de Brunet which was easier, to exact things from one’s self, or from others. Mlle. de Brunet answered, “From ourselves.” Several other young ladies were questioned and thought the same. “You are right,” said Mme. de Maintenon. “I cannot understand how any one can think otherwise, because it seems to me more just and appropriate that we should inconvenience ourselves rather than inconvenience others; we ought always to be occupied in avoiding whatever may give pain to other people. Mme. la Duchesse de Bourgogne undertook a piece of work, to execute which she sent for a woman who embroiders, and this woman spent the whole of yesterday with her without her ever thinking of giving her anything to eat. I asked the woman in the evening if she had eaten; she said no, and I made her dine and sup both. The king, who is wonderfully attentive, reproved Mme. la Duchesse de Bourgogne severely; she tried to laugh it off, but he told her that he could not laugh at such a matter. I am convinced that that poor woman was not much pleased to find that while she worked hard, those she worked for let her go hungry. If such a mark of inattention, which

might be very pardonable in a young princess of sixteen, was rebuked by the king with such seriousness, how much more should girls like you who will have to spend all your lives in attentions to others need reproof if you neglect them.

“The king always astonishes me when he speaks of his own education. His governesses amused themselves, he says, all day, and left him in the hands of the maids without taking any care of him—you know that he began to reign when he was three and a half years old. He ate whatever he could lay hands on, without any attention being paid to the injury this was to his health; it was this that accustomed him to so much carelessness about himself. If they fricasseed an omelet he snatched bits of it, which Monsieur and he went off into a corner to eat. He relates sometimes that he spent his time mostly with a peasant girl, the child of a waiting-maid of the queen’s waiting-maid. He called her Queen Marie, because they played at the game, ‘à la madame,’ she taking the part of queen, and he serving her as page or footman, carrying her train, wheeling her in a chair, or marching with a torch in front of her. You can imagine whether little Queen Marie gave him good advice, and whether she was useful to him in any way.”

On never omitting either labour or pains.

July, 1703.

I am very much pleased, my dear children [of class Yellow], to find in you as much docility and the same simplicity that there is in the younger classes; and for this I give you great praise. I wish to talk with you now on the precautions which you take to avoid too much labour and trouble. It seems that some of you think you can exempt yourselves from the common lot and avoid suffering the slightest discomfort; but you will find that what you have to suffer now is nothing at all in comparison with what you will meet with in the world. There is no one who does not suffer. I have long had the honour of seeing the king very closely; if any one could shake off the yoke and have no cares or troubles it would surely be he; and yet he has them continually. Sometimes he spends the whole day in his cabinet going over his accounts; I often see him cracking his brains over them, beginning them over and over again, and not leaving them till he has finished them all; and this duty he never devolves upon a minister. He relies on no one but himself for the regulation of his armies; he possesses a knowledge of the number of his troops and regiments in detail, like that which I possess of the divisions in your classes. He holds several councils a day, where business that is often vexatious and always wearisome is transacted; such as that of war, pestilence, famine, and other afflictions. He has now the government of two great kingdoms; for nothing is done in Spain except by his order. The King of Spain has no money, because of the laziness of his subjects; their land is much more extensive than that of France, but it brings in nothing because it is not cultivated. All this is an additional care to our king; he can scarcely take any pleasure; business absorbs all his time. And yet if there is a condition which might be supposed exempt from toil and fatigue, it is that of royalty. The ministers, whose places are so coveted and envied (though without reason), well deserve the profits of their offices from the pains and fatigues they have to endure in them. M. de Chamillart is working perpetually; there is no longer even a question of relaxation for him, still less of pleasure; he cannot see his family, whom he loves passionately, because he has not a moment to give it, being from morning till night engaged in disagreeable affairs and trying, for example, to make out whether Peter or John is in the right. People fear he will fall ill, and he is very much changed; he sent for his daughter, to marry her, but he cannot even see her. Yet that is a man whom everybody thinks fortunate.

On marriage.

1705.

Mme. de Maintenon, having married Mlle. de Normanville (who had stayed with her some years after leaving Saint-Cyr) to M. le Président Brunet de Chailly, did her the honour to be present at the wedding. The next day she mentioned to the Dames de Saint Louis that M. l’Abbé Brunet had made an excellent exhortation in marrying them, in which he rebuked the over-delicate modesty of those who blamed priests for opening their lips in church about a sacrament there administered, which Jesus Christ has instituted, which Saint Paul declares to be great and honourable; while at the same time their ears are not too scrupulous to listen outside of the church to love-songs, and speeches of questionable meaning. “This false delicacy is one of the blunders,” she said, “that I do not wish to see you fall into, my dear daughters. Nearly all nuns dare not utter the word ‘marriage’; Saint Paul had no such scruple, and speaks of it very openly. I have noticed this weakness in you, and I should like to destroy it once for all.”

“It is true,” said Mme. de Jas, “that we usually pass over that article in the Catechism; we consulted the Superior to know if we should use it; we did not even mention it in the choir until you told us we ought to speak of it as of all other

matters in the Catechism, when occasion offered.”

“Do you not see, my dear daughters,” resumed Mme. de Maintenon, “that it is a notion quite unsustainable in a house like this that you cannot venture to speak of a state which many of your young ladies must enter, which is approved by the Church, which Jesus Christ himself honoured by his presence? How will you make them capable of properly fulfilling the duties of the several states to which God calls them if you never speak of them; and (what is worse) if you let them see the difficulty which you feel in speaking of such things? There is certainly less modesty and propriety in such feelings than in speaking seriously and in a Christian manner of a holy state which has great obligations to meet. Fear only that the omissions your pupils make through ignorance of the duties of that state may fall on you who have failed to instruct them in it.”

“Have the kindness, Madame,” said Mme. de Jas, “to tell us a little in detail what it is proper for us to say to them on that subject.”

“You cannot preach to them too much,” replied Mme. de Maintenon, “about the edification that each will owe to her husband; also the support, the attachment to his person and all his interests, the service and cares that depend upon her; above all, the sincere and discreet zeal for his salvation, of which so many virtuous women have set an example, as well as of that of patience; also the care of the education of children which extends so far into the future; and that of servants and household; all of which are much more indispensable duties for mothers of families than prayers of supererogation, which many of them have been taught to make, to the injury of the more important duties of their condition. When you speak of marriage to your young ladies in this way, they will see that there is nothing in it to laugh about. Nothing can be more serious than such an engagement. Establish it, therefore, as a system, to speak to them on this subject when it presents itself; and do not permit that, under a pretence of modesty and perfection, the name of marriage shall not be mentioned; that silly affectation, if I may venture to so express myself, will cast you down very low into the pettiness I have taken such pains to make you avoid.”

On the virtues called cardinal.

June, 1705.

Mme. de Maintenon, being in class Blue, talked to the young ladies of the cardinal virtues, but first she said that the word “cardinal” was taken from a Latin word signifying hinge, because, just as a door turns on its hinges, so the whole conduct of our lives should turn on the four virtues which include all others. She exhorted them to love them, and not think it was enough to know how to define them, but to practise them, in order all the sooner to gain merit.

Mlle. de Villeneuve asked her in what “merit” consisted. She answered: “In having an assemblage of virtues and good qualities, and, above all, religion and reason.” Then she explained Justice; saying that justice in action consists in rendering to every one that which is due to him, and consenting that others should render to us what we deserve. “What do we deserve when we do wrong? Mlle. de Laudonie, answer.”

“We deserve blame,” answered the young lady.

“Yes,” said Mme. de Maintenon, “and it is therefore justice to suffer ourselves to be blamed when we do wrong; that is one of the best ways of repairing our faults; there is no one who cannot act justly in that way. It is the mark of a good mind to recognize our faults and admit them. On the other hand, it is the mark of a very small mind not to be able to see and admit that we are wrong, and to seek for false excuses to cover it.”

She next said that besides that sort of justice, which ought to be found in our actions, there was one of judgment, called equity, which so works that, without being influenced by our inclinations or dislikes, it obliges us to form just ideas on all things, to distinguish good from evil (even to seeing the faults of friends without being blinded in their favour by affection), and to recognize in good faith the good qualities which may exist in persons whom we like least and who are even unpleasant to us. “Not,” she said, “that we are obliged to disclose the faults of our friends; because friendship demands that we should cover and excuse them unless it is necessary to stop an evil by disclosing them; but justice requires that we should judge to be bad that which is bad, and good that which is good, independently of our inclinations either way in respect to the persons concerned. The first and surest rule to avoid being mistaken in our judgments is to conform them as nearly as possible to those of God, which are shown to us in Holy Scripture and in the Gospel; and the second rule, which is also drawn from the Gospel, is to judge others as we wish that they should think and judge of us, and to treat them in all things as we should wish to be treated.

“But there is still another degree of justice more excellent than these and which demands a very different kind of virtue: it is *unselfishness*, which makes us capable of deciding against ourselves in favour of those who have right on their side. There are many persons sufficiently equitable to judge justly about the cases of others; but as soon as they themselves are interested we find them biased in their own favour. That is not justice, for justice insists that we shall declare for the right on whichever side it is found. The king did a praiseworthy action, which has been much admired as to this. Some time ago he had a lawsuit against certain private persons in Paris who had believed, the ramparts of the town being greatly neglected, that they were free to appropriate a piece of land and build upon it. Many years after they had done so the officers charged with the king’s revenue reflected that as that land belonged to him, the houses that were built upon it ought also to belong to him, or at least that he ought to be paid the value of the land on which they were built. The private persons contended that the long time they had been in possession was a sufficient title to make the property theirs. The affair was carried to the king and judged in his presence; half of the judges were for him, half declared for the other side, which was very praiseworthy, the king being present. Now it is a law of the kingdom, in suits thus judged before the king according to plurality of opinions, that in case of an equal division he shall give the casting vote; it depended therefore on the king himself to win his case; but instead of doing so he gave his vote to the opposite side, saying that, inasmuch as there were good reasons on both sides, he preferred to relinquish his rights rather than press them farther to the injury of his subjects.

“Let us now pass to Prudence. That is a virtue that rules all our words and actions according to reason and religion; it enables us to discern what we should do or omit doing, say or keep silence about, according to occasions and circumstances; it is opposed to the indiscretion of speaking out of season.” Thereupon she asked Mlle. de Saint-Maixant what she considered most contrary to charity, to ridicule a person for corporal defects, or for defects of mind or temper. The young lady answered, “To ridicule defects of mind or heart.” “It is never right to ridicule any defects,” said Mme. de Maintenon; “charity enjoins us to excuse all; but I think that it is base and cruel to blame a person for a natural defect which he has had no share in producing, and which he cannot correct. Good hearts and minds are incapable of laughing at such defects; they endure them and ignore them out of care and tenderness for those who have them. But I should think it more excusable to blame a defect of mind or temper; for, after all, the person who has it could correct it, or at least diminish it; therefore that person is blamable to give way to it. Nevertheless, charity forbids us to reproach him for that as well as for the other. One means of avoiding the indiscretion which is so disagreeable in society is to become prudent, to reflect on what we are about to say, in order to foresee whether it will have any evil result or give pain to others.

“Prudence also induces us to consult those who are wise and experienced; it makes us take judicious measures to carry out that which we undertake to do; and it teaches us to undertake nothing that is not judicious, and has not a fair appearance of success.

“Temperance is a virtue which moderates us in all things, and makes us keep the golden mean between too much and too little. It should be in continual use; it prevents all excitements of passion, whether of joy or sadness; if we laugh, it is with moderation and modesty; if we weep, it is not as delivering ourselves up entirely to grief, but as bearing it peaceably and patiently; if we eat, it is with moderation; in short, temperance prevents excess in all things. Temperance is to you, who are here, very necessary on all occasions, because the foible of youth is to be carried away by joy and pleasure; everything turns the head of youth and prevents it from possessing itself, unless it takes great care to control this tendency. Remember carefully what I am about to say to you: every person who is not mistress of herself will never have merit, whether before God or before the world. She must be mistress of her joy and not give way to fits of laughter, to excessive demonstrations; all joy shown by postures of the body is immoderate, and, consequently, opposed to temperance. We should never hear a modest and well brought-up young person laugh noisily; the Holy Spirit, as you know, says Himself that the laugh of a fool is known because he laughs loudly, but the wise man laughs beneath his breath because he is master of all his motions and knows how to moderate them. And yet everything puts you beside yourselves. If the ball rolls into *trou madame* [a game] that is enough to make you shout and scream with laughter; and still more if you win the game. I do not condemn a little joy on such occasions, but it should not go so far as immoderate shouts and losing your self-possession. We break the Reds of such uproars of joy, how much therefore should you, who ought to be more reasonable, break yourselves of this habit.

“Fortitude is a virtue which makes us pursue our enterprises with courage, and surmount the obstacles we find in ourselves and others to the good we have undertaken, without giving way before difficulties; sustaining all unfortunate events with firmness and without discouragement.

“To which of us is the virtue of fortitude most necessary, Beauvais?”

“To the one who has most defects and those most difficult to conquer,” replied the young lady.

“Yes, I think as you do,” said Mme. de Maintenon. Then she added: “Should those who have the most defects, or who feel they are not so well-born, be discouraged and imagine they can never succeed in conquering them?”

“No, Madame,” said the young lady, “because our merit depends on our efforts aided by the grace of God.”

“That is an admirable answer,” said Mme. de Maintenon; “never forget it, my children; our merit depends upon our effort. With that good word I leave you, but we will talk of it again.”

On making excuses and inappropriate answers.

1706.

“I wish, my dear children,” said Mme. de Maintenon to the young ladies, “that I could rid you of your tendency to make excuses. I know it is very natural, and it forms a religious penance not to make excuses, even when unjustly blamed. But that is not what I require of you; I ask you only, on such occasions, to listen respectfully and tranquilly to what your mistresses say to you, and when they have ended ask them, in a gentle and modest way, to allow you to give your reasons—provided they are good, for it is a thousand times better when you are wrong to acknowledge it than to make a single bad excuse.... I like a girl infinitely more who sometimes does wrongful things and owns it frankly and seems sorry for the trouble she occasions, than another who usually does right but refuses to acknowledge a fault when she happens to commit one. I have often admired Mme. la Duchesse de Bourgogne, who is the first princess in the land and over whom I, naturally, have no authority; you would scarcely believe with what docility, what good spirit, what gratitude she receives the advice I take the liberty to give her. But, more than that, I found her the other day sitting on the stairs outside the door of my room with Jeanne, a coarse village-woman of good sense whom I have in my household, who was telling her of her faults and what she heard said to her disadvantage in Paris; and that charming princess, instead of being offended by the frankness of the good woman, threw her arm round her neck and kissed her several times, saying: ‘I am very much obliged to you, Jeanne; I thank you for all that you have told me, for I know it is out of affection to me.’ And whenever she sees her now she is not only friendly but she kisses her heartily, though she is old and ugly and disgusting.”

On the taste for dress.

1708.

A mistress having said to Madame that some of the young ladies had shown publicly before their companions their delight in being well-dressed, and had said they could not conceive of a greater pleasure and that nuns withered with grief at seeing persons who were thus dressed, ... Madame said: “I cannot sufficiently tell you, my children, what pettiness there is in this desire for adornment, though it is natural in persons of our sex. It is, however, so humiliating that those who care for their reputation, even in the great world, should be careful not to show that weakness if they have it, for it makes them despised by all; the most worldly persons, on the contrary, esteem young ladies who despise their beauty and do not affect to improve it by dress.

“When I exhort you sometimes to endeavour to please, I mean that it shall be by good conduct, and not by fine clothes; sorrow to those who seek to distinguish themselves in that way! If they are not sensitive to the distress of offending God, a love of their own honour should put them above this foible; for the world turns to ridicule those in whom it sees the desire to appear beautiful, especially when they are not so really. Those who have beauty and seem to disregard it are, on the contrary, much esteemed. I wish,” added Madame, sighing, “I had done as much for God as I have for the world to preserve my reputation. In my youth I persisted, in the midst of the highest society, in wearing nothing but simple serge, at a period when no one wore it; I was more singular in my dress than a young lady of Saint-Cyr would be now in the midst of the Court.” Mme. de Champigny asked her if it was from fear of pleasing that she dressed so modestly. “I was not happy enough,” she replied, “to act in that way from piety; I did it from reason and for the sake of my reputation. I had not means enough to equal others in the magnificence of their clothing; so I preferred to throw myself into the other extreme and prove that I was above all desire to make a show by apparel and adornment, rather than let it be thought I snatched at what I could, and did my best to equal them. I could not tell you what esteem such conduct won me; people never tired of admiring a pretty young woman who had the courage, in the midst of society, to keep to such modest apparel; that is just what it was; but there was nothing vulgar or repulsive about it; if the stuff itself was simple, the gown was well-fitting and very ample, the linen was white and fine, nothing was shabby. I made more of an appearance in that

way than if I had worn a gown of faded silk, like most of the poor young ladies who try to be in the fashion and who have not the means to pay for it.

“I also maintained with inviolable firmness a disinterested determination to receive no presents; I was so well known for that characteristic that no man ever presumed to offer me any, except one, who was foolish. I do not know what made him do the thing I will now tell you: I had an amber fan, very pretty; I laid it for a moment on a table; and this man, whether as a joke or from design, took it up and broke it in two. I was surprised and angry; I liked my fan very much, and to lose it was a great regret to me. The next day the man sent me a dozen fans the equals of the one he had broken. I sent him word it was not worth while to break mine in order to send me a dozen others, for I should have liked thirteen fans better than twelve, which I returned to him, and remained without any fan at all. I turned the man to ridicule in company for having sent me a present, so that no one after that ever offered me one. You cannot think what a reputation this proceeding gave me; and I was so jealous of maintaining it that I would gladly have done without everything rather than act otherwise. Such love of reputation, though it may be mixed with pride and arrogance, and should consequently be corrected by piety, is nevertheless of great utility to young ladies; it is a supplement to piety, which protects them from many disorders.”

What pains and ennui there are in all states of life.

1710.

Mme. de Maintenon, having had fever all night, and having it still, went up to class Blue and said to them: “I have dragged myself here to see you, my children, in order that you may tell me what you have remembered of the fine conference you had yesterday with M. l’Abbé Tiberge” [one of the confessors of Saint-Cyr]. The young ladies repeated it, and when they came to the part where he told them there were troubles in every state of life she took up the subject and enlarged upon it, saying: “That is true indeed, beginning first with the Court people, whom the world considers so fortunate. There is nothing more burdensome than the life they lead; it costs them infinite trouble, constraint, expense, and ennui to pay their court; and at the end of it all you will hear them say: ‘Ah! how vexed I am; I have stood about since morning and I think the king has not even seen me.’ And, in truth,” continued Mme. de Maintenon, “they get up very early in the morning, dress with care, and are on their feet all day, watching for a favourable moment to make themselves seen and be presented; and often they come back as they went, except that they are in despair at having wasted both time and trouble. But I wish you could see the state of the fortunate ones; that is to say, those who see the king and have the honour to be in his intimacy; there is nothing to equal the ennui that consumes them. We are now at Meudon, a magnificent palace. Well! every one must go to walk, without liking to do so, in a dreadful wind perhaps, out of respect to the king. They come back very tired, and you will see a number of women complaining and saying: ‘How weary I am! this place will kill us all.’ ‘I cannot bear it,’ says another; ‘if I could only walk with some one whom I like, but no! I find myself in file with some one who makes me die of weariness.’ For no one can choose her companion any more than you can here; she must go with whoever presents himself. The fact is,” said Mme. de Maintenon, “they do not really know what to do, and nothing gives them any pleasure. Fête-days are the most wearisome of all for those who are not pious; they do not know how to while away the time. A few ladies are fortunate enough to like to spend those days, as they should, in church; others who like to work are vexed not to dare to do so; others again, who like neither church nor work, find those days intolerably wearisome. You see, my dear girls, how it is with the greatest of the earth; for I am speaking now of princes and princesses, the very first persons of the Court, and those who are the envy of the rest of the world. They are usually not contented anywhere; they are bored by dint of seeking pleasure; they go from palace to palace, Meudon, Marly, Rambouillet, Fontainebleau, in hopes of amusing themselves. All these are delightful places, where you, my children, would be enchanted if you saw them; but these people are bored because they are used to it all. In the long run the finest things cease to give pleasure and become indifferent; besides, such things do not make us happy; happiness must come from within.... As for me, whose favour every one envies because I pass a part of my day with the king,—they think me the most fortunate person in the world; and they are right, so far as the goodness with which his Majesty honours me; and yet there is no one more restrained. When the king is in my room I often sit apart from him because he is writing; no one speaks, unless very low, in order not to disturb him. Before I came to Court, at thirty-two years of age, I can truly say that I never knew ennui; but I have known it enough since, and I believe that I could not bear it, in spite of my reason, if I did not feel that it is God who wills it. If you had to sit in my chamber and never say a word for a portion of your lives you would quiver with impatience, would you not? And yet, in spite of all I tell you, my post is envied. There is no true happiness my children, except in serving God; piety alone can sustain us and give us an equable behaviour, in the midst of pains and tedium as well as in the midst of prosperity, which is a state no less dangerous to

our salvation.”



X.

MME. DE MAINTENON'S DESCRIPTION OF HER LIFE AT COURT;^[21] WITH A FEW MISCELLANEOUS LETTERS.

"I am," Madame said to me [1705], "in great joy whenever I see the door closing behind me as I enter here; and I never go out of it without pain. Often, on returning to Versailles, I think: 'This is the world, and apparently the world for which Jesus Christ would not pray on the eve of his death. I know there are good souls at Court, and that God has saints in all conditions; but it is certain that what is called the world is centred here; it is here that all passions are in motion,—self-interest, ambition, envy, pleasure; this is the world so often cursed by God.' I own to you that these reflections give me a sense of sadness and horror for that place, where, nevertheless, I have to live."



Louis XIV at Marly.

After speaking with Madame of various afflicting things, I said to her that at least she would see none in this house, for all was going on so well it ought to be a place of rest to her, where she could take comfort for what she suffered elsewhere. "That is just so," replied Madame, "and what should I do without this house? I could not live. I think that God has given it to me, not for my salvation only, but for my rest; it does not serve me only to pray to God and gather myself together, but it diverts my mind; it makes me forget those other things. When I am here, and busy, when we hold counsel together or I talk with the young ladies, I do not even think there is a Court, and I breathe freely."

"I thought this morning," I said, "when I saw you taking the communion, that it may have been long since you had such a morning, when you could pray to God at your ease and collect yourself."

"That is true," replied Madame. "I have told you often that the only time I can take for my prayers and the mass is when other people sleep; without it, I could not go on; for when people once begin to enter my room I am not my own mistress; I have not an instant to myself." I replied, as to that, that I always imagined her room to be like the shop of a great merchant, which, once opened, is never empty and where the shopman must remain. "That is just how it is," said

Madame. "They begin to come in about half-past seven; first it is M. Maréchal [the king's surgeon]; he has no sooner gone than M. Fagon enters; he is followed by M. Bloin [the king's head valet] or some else sent to inquire how I am. Sometimes I have extremely pressing letters to write, which I must get in here. Next come persons of greater consequence: one day, M. Chamillart; another, the archbishop; to-day, a general of the army on the point of departure; to-morrow, an audience that I must give, having been demanded under such circumstances that I cannot defer it. M. le Duc du Maine waited the other day in my antechamber till M. Chamillart had finished. When M. Chamillart went out M. du Maine came in and kept me till the king arrived; for there is a little etiquette in this, that no one leaves me till some one of higher rank enters and sends them away. When the king comes, they all have to go. The king stays till he goes to mass. I do not know if you have observed that all this time I am not yet dressed; if I were I should not have been able to say my prayers. I still have my night-cap on; but my room by this time is like a church; a perpetual procession is going on, everybody passes through it; the comings and goings are endless.

"When the king has heard mass he returns to me; next comes the Duchesse de Bourgogne with a number of ladies, and there they stay while I eat my dinner. You would think that here at least was a time I could have to myself; but you shall see how it is. I fret lest the Duchesse de Bourgogne should do something unsuitable; I try to make her say a word to this one; I look to see if she treats that one properly, and whether she is behaving well to her husband. I must entertain the company, and do it in a way to unite them all. If some one commits an indiscretion I feel it; I am worried by the manner in which people take what is said to them; in short, it is a tumult of mind that nothing equals. Around me stand a circle of ladies, so that I cannot even ask for something to drink. I turn to them sometimes and say: 'This is a great honour for me, but I would like to have a footman.' On that, each of them wants to serve me and hastens to bring me what I want; but that is only another sort of embarrassment and annoyance to me. At last they go off to dine themselves, for my dinner is at twelve o'clock with Mme. d'Heudicourt and Mme. de Dangeau, who are invalids. Here I am at last alone with those two; every one else has gone. If there were a moment in the day when I might what is called amuse myself, this is it, either for talk or a game at backgammon. But usually Monseigneur takes this time to come and see me, because on some days he does not dine, on other days he has dined early, and so comes after the others. He is the hardest man in the world to talk with, for he never says a word. But I must try to entertain him because I am in my own apartment; if it were elsewhere I could lean back in a chair and say nothing if I chose. The ladies who are with me can do that if they like, but I must, as they say, labour it out, and manage to find something to say; and this is not very enlivening.

"After the king's dinner is over, he comes with all the princesses and the royal family into my room; and they cause it to be intolerably hot. They talk; the king stays about half an hour; then he goes away, but no one else; the rest remain, and as the king is no longer there they come nearer to me; they surround me, and I am forced to listen to the jokes of Mme. la Maréchale de Clérembault, the satire of this one, and the tales of that one. They have nothing to do, those good ladies; and they have done nothing all the morning. It is not so with me, who have much else to do than to sit there and talk, probably with a heart full of care, grief, and distress at bad news, like that from Verrue lately. I have everything on my mind; I am thinking how a thousand men may be perishing, and others in agony.... After they have all stayed some time they begin to go away, and then what do you suppose happens? One or other of these ladies invariably stays behind, wishing to speak to me in private. She takes me by the hand, leads me into my little room, and tells me frequently the most unpleasant and wearisome things, for, as you may well suppose, it is not my affairs that they talk about; they are those of their own family: one has had a quarrel with her husband; another wants to obtain something from the king; an ill turn has been done to this one; a false report has been spread about that one; domestic troubles have embroiled a third; and I am forced to listen to all this, and the one among them whom I like least does not restrain herself more than the others,—she tells me everything; I must be told all the circumstances and speak about them to the king. Often the Duchesse de Bourgogne wants to speak to me in private, like the rest.

"All this makes me think sometimes when I reflect upon it that my position is so singular it must be God who placed me in it. I behold myself in the midst of them all; this person, this old person of mine, the object of all their attention. It is to me they must address themselves, to me, through whom all passes! God has given me grace never to look at my position on its splendid side. I feel nothing but the pains of it; it seems to me that, thank God! I am not dazzled; He enables me to see it just as it is. I do not allow myself to be blinded by the grandeur and the favour that surround me; I regard myself as an instrument which God is using to do good, and I feel that all the influence He permits me to have should be employed in serving Him, in comforting whom I can, and in uniting these princes with one another, if possible. I think sometimes of the hatred that I have instinctively for the Court; it is nothing new; I have had it always. God, nevertheless, destined me to be there; why, then, has He given me this aversion to it? It must be because He wills that I should live in its midst and find my salvation there. Mme. de Montespan, on the contrary, loved the Court, not only for the ties that held her to it, but because she liked Court life. What does God do? He binds to it the one who hates it, He sends away from it the one who

loves it, apparently for the salvation of both. Ah! how good it is to let Him act, to abandon ourselves to Him, to live from day to day doing all the good we can. He knows better what we want than ourselves; and, assuredly, He is an excellent director; we need only to yield ourselves to His guidance. But let us go on.

“When the king returns from hunting he comes to me; then my door is closed and no one enters. Here I am, then, alone with him. I must bear his troubles, if he has any, his sadness, his nervous dejection; sometimes he bursts into tears which he cannot control, or else he complains of illness. He has no conversation. Then a minister comes, who often brings fatal news; the king works. If they wish me to be a third in their consultation, they call me; if they do not want me I retire to a little distance, and it is then that I sometimes make my afternoon prayers; I pray to God for about half an hour. If they wish me to hear what is said I cannot do this; I sit there, and hear perhaps that things are going ill; a courier has arrived with bad news; and all that wrings my heart and prevents me from sleeping at night.

“While the king continues to work I sup; but it is not once in two months that I can do so at my ease. I feel that the king is alone, or I have left him sad, or that M. Chamillart has almost finished with him; sometimes he sends and begs me to make haste. Another day he wants to show me something. So that I am always hurried, and the only thing I can do is to eat very fast. I have my fruit brought with the meat to hasten supper; and all this as fast as I can. I leave Mme. d’Heudicourt and Mme. de Dangeau at table, because they cannot eat as fast as I do, and often I am oppressed by it.

“After this it is, as you may suppose, getting late. I have been about since six in the morning; I have not breathed freely the whole day; I am overcome with weariness and yawning; more than that, I begin to feel what it is that makes old age; I find myself at last so weary that I can no more. Sometimes the king perceives it and says: ‘You are very tired, are you not? You ought to go to bed.’ So I go to bed; my women come and undress me; but I feel that the king wants to talk to me and is waiting till they go; or some minister still remains and he fears my women will hear what he says. That makes him uneasy, and me too. What can I do? I hurry; I hurry so that I almost faint; and you must know that all my life what I have hated most is to be hurried. At five years of age it had the same effect upon me; I was faint if I ran too fast, for being naturally very quick and consequently inclined to haste, I was also very delicate, so that to run, as I tell you, choked me. Well, at last I am in bed; I send away my women; the king approaches and sits down by my pillow. What can I do then? I am in bed, but I have need of many things; mine is not a glorified body without wants. There is no one there whom I can ask for what I need; not a single woman. It is not because I could not have them, for the king is full of kindness, and if he thought I wanted one woman he would endure ten; but it never comes into his mind that I am constraining myself. As he is master everywhere, and does exactly what he wishes, he cannot imagine that any one should do otherwise; he believes that if I show no wants, I have none. You know that my rule is to take everything on myself and think for others. Great people, as a rule, are not like that; they never constrain themselves, they never think that others are constrained by them, nor do they feel grateful for it, simply because they are so accustomed to see everything done in reference only to themselves that they are no longer struck by it and pay no heed. I have sometimes, during my severe colds, been on the point of choking with a cough I was unable to check. M. de Pontchartrain, who saw me one day all crimson with the effort, said to the king: ‘She cannot bear it; some one must be called.’

“The king stays with me till he goes to supper, and about a quarter of an hour before the supper is served M. le Dauphin, M. le Duc and Mme. la Duchesse de Bourgogne come to me. At ten o’clock or a quarter past ten everybody goes away. There is my day. I am now alone, and I take the relief of which I am in need; but often the anxieties and fatigues I have gone through keep me from sleeping.”

I expressed to Madame how trying all that seemed to me, and said I should not be surprised if some one should speak of her as the most unhappy person in the world. “And yet,” she added, “could they not also say, ‘She is the happiest. She is with the king from morning till night?’ But they do not remember, in saying that, that kings and princes are men like other men; they have their griefs and troubles which we must share with them. Moreover, there are a thousand things that our princes never think of which fall upon me. For example, Mme. la Princesse des Ursins is about to return to Spain; I must busy myself with her; I must repair as best I can by my attentions the coldness of the Duchesse de Bourgogne, the stiffness of the king, the indifference of others. I go to see her; I give her time with me; I listen to a thousand matters I do not care about; and all that merely that she may go away pleased with others, and say good of them, especially of the Duchesse de Bourgogne. I see they are all too negligent to do this for themselves; I must supply the want; and so with a thousand other things. I have always on my mind Spain nearly lost to us, peace receding farther than ever, miseries that I hear of on all sides, thousands of persons suffering before my very eyes and I not able to help them,—and then, besides these sorrows, the excesses that reign at Court, drunkenness, gluttony, excessive luxury, and, worst of all, the visible dangers to religion.”

I asked Madame if she were not sometimes impatient; she answered: “Ah! indeed yes, I am; I am often, as they say, up to my throat in it; but it must be borne; and besides, God has arranged it. When I reflect on my condition, and how burdened I am with cares and griefs, I think: ‘How would it be with my soul if this were not so? If, with this magnificence, wealth, and luxury, I had nothing to pain me, would anything on this earth be so likely to ruin me? A grandeur like this, if combined with ease of life, would soon lead me to forget God. I am lodged like the king; my furniture is magnificent; I am in luxury; but God shows his mercy throughout all that by mingling with it pains and distresses which serve as a counterpoise and make me turn to Him.’”

To M. le Duc de Noailles.

SAINT-CYR, September 5, 1706.

Our dear princess [Duchesse de Bourgogne] is fairly well; she is too anxious about the war for a person of her age. M. le Duc de Bourgogne is always pious, amorous, and scrupulous; but he is becoming every day more reasonable. I have no one to speak with, and I think that spares me many sins; for my confidences would be neither favourable nor honourable for my neighbours. The men are all on bad terms with me, and the women I pay no heed to. Adieu, my dear duke. It is not necessary to urge you to zeal for the king and State; you act from principles that cannot change; and if you do not meet with all the gratitude you deserve, you will receive a more solid reward hereafter.

To Mme. la Princesse des Ursins.

SAINT-CYR, October 17, 1706.

I can only add that our princess is taking great care to carry her child to the end. She is fairly well, but extremely sad. She has an affection for her father, but feels a great resentment to him; she loves her mother tenderly, and takes as great an interest in the affairs of Spain as in those of France. She loves the king, and never sees him more serious than usual without the tears coming into her eyes; and with her excessive kindness she interests herself also in my pains and woes. I should like to comfort her, but, on the contrary, I distress her. This is a terrible state for a person of her age, and one who has, I think, without speaking of it, much uneasiness about her approaching confinement, and many fears lest she should have a girl.

To Mme. de Glapion.

SAINT-CYR, February, 1707.

I have just been witness of a conversation between the king and M. le Dauphin which has caused me great pain. I spend my life in trying to unite them and in warding off everything that is likely to cause misunderstandings between them, and yet here they are on the verge of quarrelling about a trifle. Monseigneur wanted to give a public ball to which society in general should be admitted; he was absolutely determined about it, and with him the Duchesse de Bourgogne. The king, with charming gentleness, opposed it, and told Monseigneur it was not proper, if he wished the Duchesse de Bourgogne to be present, that all sorts of men and women should be present also. The princess, on her side, could see no harm in it, for she is just as ready to dance with a comedian as with a prince of the blood. I cannot tell you how this little squabble has made me suffer, and what a night I have passed. I blame myself for my too great sensibility, and yet, on the other hand, it seems to me I am right to desire peace in the royal family and to dread, between a king of seventy and a dauphin of forty-six, whatever may set them against each other and add to our general war a civil one.

To Mme. la Princesse des Ursins.

SAINT-CYR, April 10, 1707.

Our king is tranquil, gentle, and equable in temper, such as you left him. His health is very good; his occupations the same as ever; it would really seem as though nothing had happened to give him pain [reference to disasters in war]. This is something surprising, which amazes me constantly.

Our princess makes great efforts to amuse herself, and only succeeds in making herself giddy with fatigue. She went yesterday to dine at Meudon followed by twenty-four ladies; after that they were to go to the fair and see some famous

rope-dancers, return to sup at Meudon, and play cards, no doubt, till daybreak. She must have come home this morning,—ill perhaps, certainly serious, for that is the usual result of all her pleasures.

VERSAILLES, later.

Mme. la Duchesse de Bourgogne has a severe headache. M. Fagon has fever and must be bled. Wherever I turn I find subjects for distress and anxiety. How can you, madame, wish for my letters?

To Mme. la Marquise de Dangeau.

SAINT-CYR, Saturday, July 16, 1707.

It is in order that I may speak to you, madame, of the Duchesse de Bourgogne, that I have asked you to put off your visit to Paris till to-morrow. The king said to me last evening that he had been much surprised to hear of the card-playing at Bretesch [a village between Marly and Versailles]. I saw by that that the Duchesse de Bourgogne had deceived me. She told me that Mme. la Duchesse had invited herself to supper, but I see now it was a prearranged party, for the king tells me that the princess herself invited Mme. la Duchesse, and that M. de Lorges was the first to arrive. I answered that it was quite natural that Mme. la Duchesse should sup at her brother's house, but that as for the cards, I was more sorry than any one.

The king said, "Is not a dinner, a cavalcade, a hunt, a collation enough for one day?" Then he added after a while, "I should do well to tell those gentlemen they are not paying their court well in gambling with the Duchesse de Bourgogne." I said that *lansquenets* had always troubled me, for fear she might make some trip that would do her harm and put her on a bad footing. We talked of other things and then the king returned to the subject and said to me, "Should I not do better to speak to those gentlemen?" I replied that I thought that manner of acting might be injurious to the Duchesse de Bourgogne, and that he had better speak to her herself, so that the matter might remain secret. He said he should do so to-day; and I have begged you to remain in order that you may warn her. We have now come sooner than I expected to the alienation I have all along apprehended. The king will think he has vexed her by stopping her *lansquenets* and will be more stiff with her; she will certainly be vexed and be cold with him; I shall feel the same and return to the formal respect I owe to her; but I am not yet detached enough from the esteem of the world to consent to let it think I approve such conduct. [We know already how the sweet temper of the princess took these rebukes and turned away wrath.]

The Duchesse de Bourgogne will be compassionated by Mme. la Duchesse; which makes me remember the traps that her mother [Mme. de Montespan] used to lay for the queen and Mme. de la Vallière, in order to make the king notice later what their behaviour had been. If after speaking to the princess you could come out to Saint-Cyr I should be glad; but I doubt whether, after so painful a conversation, you will be in a state to appear. If you find it possible to approach the Duchesse de Bourgogne you might give her this letter to prepare her for answering the king, and then you can speak to her in the evening more at length. You can imagine, madame, what a night I have passed. Let us pray God for our princess, who is drowning herself in a glass of water.

To Mme. la Princesse des Ursins.

FONTAINEBLEAU, July 23, 1708.

You know now, madame, that our happiness has not lasted long. The reduction of Ghent to the power of his Catholic Majesty had placed us in a situation of great advantage, which ought to have been maintained through the rest of the campaign; the enemy were on the retreat and quite disheartened. M. de Vendôme, who believes what he wishes, chose to give battle and lost it [Oudenarde], and we are worse off now than we were before, as much from fear of consequences and the air of superiority assumed by the enemy as from the loss of our troops.

In this condition we have felt the joy of the taking of Tortosa much less [taken by the Duc d'Orléans, July 11], though we see all the value of it. Madame is delighted, and with good reason; she sees M. le Duc d'Orléans covered with glory, and out of the danger to which he was exposed.

You know, madame, the levity of Frenchmen, and it seems to me that their talk is reaching you. Ghent, they are now saying, put us in a condition to make peace on any terms we chose; now all is lost, and we have to ask it with a cord round our necks. And yet, madame, neither statement is true. The enemy had great resources though we had Ghent; we

should have had more if M. de Vendôme had chosen to act with more precaution. Our army is still very fine and very good, the troops have done their duty, they are in nowise discouraged, and are now asking only to redeem themselves; but that they must not be allowed to attempt except with the order and caution to be observed on such occasions. The Duc de Bourgogne has held the wisest opinions, but he was ordered to yield to M. de Vendôme as being more experienced. Our princes have been in a position to be captured; imagine, madame, where we should then have been. That is a comfort I try to give to the Duchesse de Bourgogne in the extreme distress she feels. She shows throughout these sad events the feelings of a true Frenchwoman, such as I have always known her to feel; but I own I did not think that she loved M. le Duc de Bourgogne to the point we now see. Her tenderness goes even to delicate sentiment; she keenly feels that his first battle has proved disastrous; she would like him to have been as much exposed as a grenadier, and then to have come back to her without a scratch. She feels, too, *his* pain for the troubles that have happened; she shares the uneasiness that his present position must give him; she would like a battle, in order to have him win, and yet she fears it. Nothing escapes her; she is worse than I. This affliction which, in one aspect, gives me some pleasure because it proves her merit, gives me also great uneasiness about her health, which seems to have changed. Milk had done her some good and her fine colour was returning; but all these troubles distress her; and she is capable of prolonged grief; we saw after the death of Monsieur how long she felt it; and she is still feeling it.

To M. le Duc de Noailles.

SAINT-CYR, June 13, 1710.

We are awaiting the dispensation from Rome to marry the Duc de Berry; there would be many things to write you about that if prudence did not restrain me; but it is time to have a little of that virtue. There will be no fêtes, rejoicings, or expense; all will be done with regard to the present condition of affairs....

Our tall Princesse de Conti is greatly afflicted by the death of the Duchesse de la Vallière. She is hurt that the king has not been to see her; but he thought he ought not to renew a matter of which he repents daily. The princess no longer conceals her piety, and she sets a great example to the Court with much sense and courage. We shall go to Marly immediately after the wedding; I have some impatience to see two little rooms next the chapel, which the king has given me that I may go and rest sometimes, and get away from the annoyance of visitors in the morning.

The Duchesse de Bourgogne becomes more sensible every day. She is to be trusted with the feeding and education of the Duchesse de Berry, who for some time to come is not to have an establishment of her own. People are beginning to say, however, that a contract of marriage cannot be made without giving an appanage; and the king may give them that which Mme. de Guise once had. No one has ever seen a better household than that of the Duc and Duchesse d'Orléans; they are never apart, and they take all their pleasures together. It is thought that Mme. de Saint-Simon will be lady of honour.

The whole talk now is of the new chapel [the present chapel at Versailles]; every one is rushing from all parts to see it; it is magnificent; I have not enough good taste to judge as to the rest.

In addition to my other woes I have a toothache, which does not make me gay. Let us all take courage and hope in the vicissitudes of this world. Adieu, Monsieur le Duc.

To Mme. la Princesse des Ursins.

VERSAILLES, December 15, 1710.

I consulted M. Fagon this morning to know if he approved of your taking back with you to Madrid the waters of Barège; he tells me that he has written in favour of it to your physicians, and told them of the experiments made by Gervais in that matter.

Though I know that your queen is above all other women, I cannot help feeling for what disfigures her. [The Queen of Spain, Louise de Savoie, had glandular swellings, which increased terribly and finally killed her February, 1714, just two years after her sister's death.] I entreat you, madame, to send me news of her condition.

You must allow me, madame, to pour out to you my feelings about the Duchesse de Bourgogne. After having borne with much discussion as to the bad system I had pursued in her education; after being blamed by all the world for the liberties she has taken in running about from morning till night; after seeing her hated by some for never saying a word, and accused of horrible dissimulation in the attachment she has shown to the king and the goodness with which she honoured

me, I see her to-day with all the world chanting her praises, believing in her good heart, also in her great mind, and agreeing that she knows well how to hold a large Court to respect; I see her adored by the Duc de Bourgogne, tenderly beloved by the king, who has just placed her household in her own hands to manage as she likes, saying publicly that she is capable of governing much greater things. I tell you of my joy about all this, madame, convinced that you will be glad of it, for you were the first to discover, sooner than others, the merits of our princess.

Mme. la Duchesse de Berry is still a child; her husband loves her passionately. M. le Dauphin said last night that he himself was the man in the world who had made the most good husbands. May God preserve them all.

To Mme. la Princesse des Ursins.

SAINT-CYR, November 30, 1711.

We have no courier to-day, madame; perhaps he is delayed by the floods that surround us on all sides. For a month it has rained every day and all night too; but no matter, we are soon apparently to have peace. The passports have been sent; the Dutch are beginning to change their ideas; Philippe V. and his amiable descendants will reign securely on the throne of Spain; I have always hoped for a miracle in his favour: and *we* shall profit by what is now to happen to him—which he has deserved far more than we. I still hope, old as I am, to see the King of England return to his kingdom.

What glory for our king, madame, to have sustained a ten years' war against all Europe, endured the misfortunes which arose, experienced famine and a species of pestilence that carried off millions of souls, and now to see it end in a peace which places the monarchy of Spain in his family, and re-establishes a Catholic king in his kingdom—for I will not doubt that that will follow upon peace. The king is blest with a health which makes me hope he will long enjoy the rest he is now to have. I think you sufficiently a Frenchwoman (in spite of all my insults) to rejoice with us.

Mme. la Dauphine takes eagerly to this subject of joy; she revels in it to its fullest extent; she imagines the happiness of her mother, and often talks to me of that of your queen. She intends to do something on the day peace is concluded that she has never done before in her life and never will do again; but she has not yet found out what it shall be. Meantime she is going to the Te Deum at Notre-Dame, to dinner with the Duchesse du Lude in a beautiful new house, after that to the opera, and to sup with the Prince de Rohan in that magnificent hôtel de Guise, then cards and a ball all night, and as the hour of her return will be that of my waking, she will probably come and ask me for some breakfast on arriving. I think, madame, that you would find such a day rather long in spite of its pleasures.

M. le Comte de Toulouse was extremely well until the twenty-first day after the operation, when the king went to see him, and the whole Court, with French indiscretion, went also, which threw him into a fever.

To Mme. la Princesse des Ursins.

VERSAILLES, January 11, 1712.

I do not know, madame, if the courier of to-day will bring me letters from you; but I have one by M. de Torcy's courier and another by the last courier to answer.

It is true, madame, that Madame la Dauphine does greatly regret her youth; there is, however, ground to hope that she will always amuse herself, for she has within her a fund of inexhaustible joy; and if we are fortunate enough to have peace, it is probable that she will always be very happy. Her great gayety does not prevent great sympathy in trouble; she has keenly felt the uncertainty which the King and Queen of Spain have borne; she suffers much on account of her father; but there is no Frenchwoman more attached to the welfare of this country than she; so that I think she never can be held in when all these subjects of distress are lifted from her. She has reason to be happy; she is well married, much beloved by the king and dauphin, and she truly makes the enjoyment of the whole Court. There are days when she has attacks of fever, and then the courtiers are in consternation, and cry out about the irreparable loss she would be to them. The people love her much because she lets herself be seen very readily; she has the most pleasing children she could possibly desire, less handsome than yours, but very vigorous, and perfect pictures,—graceful like herself, and showing already much intelligence.

If we may judge of the king's life by the present state of his health we may hope that it will last as long as that of the Marquis de Mancera, for their *régime* is about the same; there is no retrenchment in the meals that you know of; no diminution in the fine appearance, the habit of walking, in fact the whole figure, which you know, madame, is superior to

that of all others. M. le Grand, who eats as much as the king and is much younger, is broken down with rheumatism, and can hardly drag himself about. M. de Villeroy always looks finely, but his sobriety does not save him from gout; M. le Duc de Grammont never has a day's health. These are the contemporaries and the strongest men of his time.

You will probably hear of a little scene with the Duchesse de Berry, who gives much anxiety to Madame, and to the Duchesse d'Orléans. We must hope for some change in a young person only sixteen years old. Why, madame, do you speak to me of respectful attachment? Are you not, as it were, making game of me? You owe me, madame, merely a little friendship in return for the sentiments I have for you. I beg you to place me at the feet of the king and queen; and to believe that I shall esteem and love you all my life; I do not think that in saying that I am wanting in respect.

To Mme. la Princesse des Ursins.

February 7, 1712.

I do not know, madame, how I shall have strength to write you of the horrors that surround us. Measles are making great ravages in Paris. M. de Gondrin was buried yesterday; his wife has measles and continued fever with a dead child in her body; she wants to rise at every moment and go to her husband, who they dare not tell her is dead. Mme. la Dauphine has an inflammation in the head, which gives her a fixed pain between the ear and the upper end of the jaw; the place of the pain is so small that it could be covered by a thumb-nail. She has convulsions and screams like a woman in childbirth, and with the same intervals. She was bled twice yesterday and has taken opium three times, and seems a little more quiet at this moment. I am now going to her; and will close this at the last moment to give you the latest news.

Seven o'clock at night.

Mme. la Dauphine, having taken a fourth dose of opium and chewed and smoked tobacco, feels a little easier. They have just come to tell me that she has slept an hour, and hopes to sleep a long time.

[The dauphine died February 12, the dauphin February 18; and their eldest son, the Duc de Bretagne, March 8, leaving the infant Duc d'Anjou (Louis XV.) as the sole direct descendant of Louis XIV.]

To Mme. la Princesse des Ursins.

VERSAILLES, February 22, 1712.

You will have heard the unhappy news; it is such that I cannot tell it to you in detail. The grief of the king is too great. All France is in consternation. My own state must not hinder me from thinking often of their Catholic Majesties; I beg you, madame, to assure them of this. The King of Spain loses a saint in losing his brother; the queen is fortunate in never having known our dauphine [she was a little child when Marie-Adélaïde left Savoie]. Adieu, madame; I am quite unable to write you any details.

To M. le Duc de Beauvilliers.

SAINT-CYR, March 15, 1712.

To put your mind at ease, monsieur, I have taken copies of all your writings [found among the dauphin's papers], and I send them all to you, without exception. Secrecy would have been kept, but circumstances might arise to reveal everything. We have just passed through a sad experience. I should have liked to return to you all the letters from yourself, and from M. de Cambrai [Fénelon], but the king desired to burn them himself. I own to you that I regret this much, for nothing was ever written so beautiful and so good. If the prince we mourn had a few defects it was not because the counsel given him was too timid, nor yet that he was too much flattered. It may be said that those who walk straight can never be confounded.

To Mme. la Princesse des Ursins.

SAINT-CYR, September 11, 1715.

You are very good, madame, to think of me in the great event that has just happened [death of Louis XIV., September 1,

1715]. We can but bow our heads beneath the hand that strikes us.

I would with all my heart, madame, that your condition were as happy as mine. I have seen the king die like a saint and a hero; I am in the most pleasing retreat I could desire; and wherever I am, madame, I shall be, all my life, your very humble and very obedient servant.

To Mme. la Princesse des Ursins.

SAINT-CYR, December 27, 1715.

It is true, madame, that I have withdrawn from the world as much as possible, and that if my friends were a little less kind to me, I should henceforth see no one. But it is true also that I do not forget those I have esteemed, loved, and honoured, and that I think very often of you, wishing for you that which I believe to be the best of all things. I supposed, madame, that you would go to Rome, and I am very glad that you have done so for the sake of your eyes. Mine have had a different fate. I have left off the spectacles I began thirty-five years ago to wear, and I now work tapestry day and night—for I sleep but little. My retreat is peaceful and most complete. As for society, one can have none with persons who have no knowledge of all that I have seen and who have been brought up in this house and know absolutely nothing but its rules.

There is no state on earth, madame, that does not have its troubles; your good mind, your courage, and your blood have always diminished yours. Our Maréchal de Villeroy scarcely ever sees me now; but he does me kindnesses every day of his life. He is the refuge of the miserable. You would be satisfied with the public opinion of his merit; I know men who do not like him who, nevertheless, cannot help admitting that he makes a noble personage.

Believe me, madame, that I can never forget the marks of your goodness to me, and that I shall die with the same attachment as ever to you.

[Mme. de Maintenon died at Saint-Cyr, April 15, 1719, in the eighty-fifth year of her age.]

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FOOTNOTES:

This portrait is the frontispiece of the present translated edition.—TR.

Correspondance Complète de Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans, née Princesse Palatine, Mère du Régent; traduction entièrement nouvelle, par M. G. Brunet. Paris: Charpentier, 1891.

Madame's own spelling could hardly be worse; she always spells Saint-Cloud "*Saint-Clou*."—TR.

Monsieur had died on the 9th of June, and the scene between Madame and Mme. de Maintenon had taken place in the interim.—TR.

Curious details as to these satirical medals will be found in a work by Klotz: *Historia numorum Contumeliosorum*, Attenbury, 1765. (French editor.)

Madame here refers to the Lorraines, whose scandalous relations to Monsieur are matters of history.—TR.

We remember Saint-Simon's account of Madame who "arrived howling, in full-dress." Madame will tell us herself that she never owned a dressing-gown; and as she had nothing but "full-dress" or a riding habit, her costume on this occasion seems the best she could choose.—TR.

This appears to be the only letter contemporaneous with the deaths of the Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne (to which it alludes) that has been preserved.—TR.

As to this tale see the "Memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon, which gives Mme des Ursins own account of the affair."—TR.

She was married in 1722 to Luis, Prince of the Asturias. See the "Memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon."—TR.

So-called from her height; she was his half-sister, the daughter of Mme. de la Vallière. Mme. la Duchesse was the daughter of Mme. de Montespan.—TR.

Charles-Louis Baudelot de Dairval devoted his life to the study of antiquity; was a member of the Académie des Inscriptions, and wrote a book on "The Utility of Travelling." (French editor.)

Boudins. Littré defines them as guts filled with blood and pork fat.—TR.

Louise-Élisabeth, born 1709, married January 20, 1722, to Louis, Prince of the Asturias; see Saint-Simon's account of the marriage, and her behaviour. Philippe V. abdicated in favour of Louis in 1724, but the latter dying within six months, Philippe resumed the crown. The young queen then returned to France, where she lived unnoticed and died in 1742. In Spain she had shown "the sulky, sullen temper of a dull and silly child," and continued to do so after her return to Paris.—TR.

Daughter of Philippe V., brought to France to be educated and married to Louis XV.; see "Saint-Simon." The marriage never took place, and the infanta was sent back to Spain, April 5, 1725, when the treaty of alliance between Spain and Austria was signed, and France, England, and Prussia formed a counter treaty.—TR.

Sainte-Beuve does not mention that this letter was written by Mme. de Maintenon to the Comte d'Ayen to soothe him for the part of Josabeth being taken from his wife. Mme. de Maintenon's diplomacy is visible.—TR.

Sainte-Beuve has selected the harshest terms in which Madame has mentioned the dauphine's change of conduct. The reader will have read, earlier in this volume, Madame's other and much fuller comments, which are kind and evidently just.—TR.

Saturday, September 13th, was the day of the assault of the town and of the singular scene with Mme. de Maintenon, described by Saint-Simon. See vol. i. of translated edition.—TR.

This was the miscarriage which caused the memorable scene at the carp basin.—TR.

"Esther," and "Athalie," of Racine; "Absalon" and "Jonathas," by Duché; "Jephté," by the Abbé Boyer.

This is a confidence made at Saint-Cyr to Mme. de Glapion, one of the Dames de Saint-Cyr, whose zeal, modesty, tenderness of soul, intelligence and devotion to duty had won for her the friendship of the foundress. She narrates the conversation. (French editor.)

[The end of *Correspondence of Madame, Princess Palatine, etc.* by Katharine Prescott Wormeley (tr.)]