

DOVER GEORGE ELLIS

THE TRUE HISTORY OF
THE STATE PRISONER,
COMMONLY CALLED THE
IRON MASK

George Dover

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Baron George Agar Ellis Dover
The True History of the State Prisoner,
commonly called the Iron Mask / Extracted
from Documents in the French Archives

PREFACE

I was led to undertake the following Narrative by the perusal of a work, lately published at Paris, entitled “Histoire de L’Homme au Masque de Fer, par J. Delort;” in which the name of that state prisoner is most clearly and satisfactorily ascertained, by means of authentic documents.

Under these circumstances, it may be asked why I was not contented to leave the question, thus set at rest, in the hands of M. Delort, who had the original merit of the discovery: – to this I would answer, that M. Delort’s part of the book struck me as peculiarly ill arranged and confused; besides being unnecessarily filled with the most fulsome flattery of Lewis the Fourteenth, never, certainly, more inappropriately bestowed, than while in the act of recording one of the most cruel and oppressive acts of that Sovereign’s cruel and oppressive reign.

I have also thought, that the subject was one of sufficient historical curiosity to interest the English public.

For these reasons, I have been induced to throw together the following chain of evidence upon the subject, making use of the same documents as M. Delort, to which I have added some others previously published, and printing the whole series in an Appendix.

G. A. E.
April, 1826.

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HISTORY OF THE IRON MASK

The curiosity of the public has been now, for above a century, so much wrought upon by the, mystery which has enveloped the name of the Iron Mask, (or as the French more properly designate him, "*the Man of the Iron Mask*,"¹) that the eagerness for discovery has thus been carried much farther than the real importance of the subject deserved. Numerous have been the papers written, and the conjectures hazarded in favour of different theories; almost all presenting, at first view, some semblance of probability; but all, without exception, crumbling to nothing when exposed to the researches of accurate inquiry. Under these circumstances, it is certainly satisfactory, that the question should be finally set at rest.

It is singular, that among all the inquiries hitherto made respecting the Iron Mask, no one seems ever to have thought of recurring to the only source from whence true information could be derived – the archives of the French Government, during the reign of Lewis the Fourteenth. It was reserved for M. Delort to make these researches; which he did by the permission of the Count d'Hauterive, Keeper of the Archives of the office of Secretary of State for the Foreign department, and the result has been perfectly conclusive. In those archives, he found the continued correspondence of the French ministers, proving, beyond a doubt, that the Iron Mask was an Italian of the name of Matthioli; a personage who was first put on the list of candidates for that honour, in a pamphlet published in 1801, by M. Roux (Fazillac);² who, however, was then unable to support his opinion with sufficient authorities.

Hercules Anthony Matthioli³ was a Bolognese of ancient family, distinguished in the law. He was the son of Valerian Matthioli and Girolama Maggi, and was born on the 1st of December 1640. On the 13th of January, 1661, he married Camilla, daughter of Bernard Paleotti, and widow of Alexander Piatési. By her he had two sons, one of whom only had posterity, which has long since been extinct. Early in life he was public reader in the University of Bologna, but he soon quitted his native city to enter into the service of Charles the Third, Duke of Mantua, by whom he was much favoured, and towards the conclusion of whose reign he was made Secretary of State. His successor, Ferdinand, Charles the Fourth, the last sovereign of Mantua, of the house of Gonzaga, created Matthioli Supernumerary Senator of Mantua, an honour which had formerly been enjoyed by his great grandfather, and gave him the title of Count. When he ceased to be Secretary of State at Mantua does not appear; but he was clearly not in that office when he first, unhappily for himself, was involved in diplomatic relations with the agents of the French Government.

Towards the end of the year 1677, the Abbé d'Estrades,⁴ ambassador from France to the Republic of Venice, conceived the idea, which he was well aware would be highly acceptable to the insatiable ambition of his master, of inducing the Duke of Mantua⁵ to allow of the introduction of a French garrison into Casale,⁶ a strongly fortified town, the capital of the Montferrat, and in a great

¹ "L'homme au masque de fer."

² M. Roux (Fazillac) published several of the documents, since republished by M. Delort, but he does not appear to have seen the whole series; and therefore his reasoning upon the subject is inconclusive. M. Delort has, however, copied a great deal from him in his narrative – whole sentences sometimes, word for word, without any acknowledgment of the plagiarism.

³ Delort.

⁴ The Abbé d'Estrades, Ambassador for a considerable time from Lewis the Fourteenth, to the Republic of Venice, was son of Godfrey, Count d'Estrades, so long employed in negociations and embassies in Holland, and who was one of the eight Marshals of France made upon the death of Turenne. Madame Cornuel called them, "La Monnoie de M. de Turenne."

⁵ Ferdinand Charles IV., Duke of Mantua, a weak and unfortunate Prince. Died July the 5th, 1708, as it is said of poison, administered by a lady he was in love with.

⁶ Casale did not come into the possession of the French till 1681. In 1695, it was taken by the Allies, and its fortifications demolished. It was, however, retaken by the French, and fortified again. The King of Sardinia, (Victor Amadeus,) made himself master of it in 1706. His successor, Charles Emmanuel, lost it again to the French in 1745, but regained it the following year.

measure the key of Italy. The cession of the fortress of Pignerol⁷ to the French, by Victor Amadeus,⁸ Duke of Savoy, in 1632, had opened to them the entry of Piedmont, and the possession of Casale would enable them to invade the Milanese, whenever they were so inclined.

At this time the council of the Duke of Mantua, headed by his mother,⁹ an Austrian Archduchess, was entirely in the interests of the Court of Spain; while the young Duke, plunged in pleasures and excesses of every kind, took little apparent interest in politicks. The great difficulty, therefore, which Estrades had to encounter in the prosecution of this intrigue, was the establishment of a channel of communication with the Duke; who, as has been stated, was surrounded by persons in the Spanish interest. If he could once enter into secret relations with that Prince, he hoped to be able to bribe him into a concurrence in his designs; for Ferdinand Charles was both needy and unprincipled. He had, besides, discovered, as he writes word to Lewis, in his first letter¹⁰ to him, dated Venice, Dec. 18th, 1677, that the Duke was not so abandoned to his pleasures, but that he still had some ambition, and much chagrin at the state of subjection in which he was kept by his mother; joined to a great distrust of the Spaniards, who were supposed to foment the divisions of the Court of Mantua, with the view of, eventually, themselves obtaining possession of Casale and the rest of the Montferrat.

The desired channel of communication Estrades thought he had found in Matthioli, who was a complete master of Italian politicks, as well as much in the Duke's good graces. Before, however, he proceeded to enlist him in his service, he deemed it necessary to discover what was the bent of his inclinations. This he effected ingeniously enough, by sending a certain Giuliani, in whom he appears to have placed implicit confidence, to Verona, where Matthioli then was, to act as a spy upon him. The report of Giuliani, upon his return to Venice, was so favourable, both with regard to the discontent of Matthioli against the Spaniards, "who had always amused him with hopes, and afterwards abandoned him,"¹¹ and his wish to enter into the service of the French Monarch, that Estrades lost no time in sending him (Giuliani) back again for the purpose of conferring with Matthioli upon the subject of the proposed negotiation.

Giuliani was instructed by the Ambassador to enlarge to Matthioli upon the jeopardy which the sovereignty of the Duke of Mantua was in, in consequence of the different pretensions of various branches of his family to his territories, which were more or less countenanced by the Spaniards for the purposes of their own aggrandizement. These were, among others, those of the Empress Eleanor¹² to the Montferrat; and those of the Marquis of Laguna¹³ to the Duchy of Guastalla, to the prejudice of the Duke of Mantua, who was the rightful heir. Giuliani was also to lament the dependant state of the Duke of Mantua, the revenues of whose states, as well as all the powers of government, were entirely in the hands of his mother, and the Monk Bulgarini;¹⁴ and to explain the necessity which, on these accounts, existed for that Prince to seek, without delay, the alliance and protection of Lewis

⁷ The strong fort of Pignerol, acquired to the Crown of France by the negociations of Richelieu, continued in their possession for 68 years. In 1696, it was restored by treaty to Victor Amadeus II., Duke of Savoy; its fortifications having been previously dismantled.

⁸ Victor Amadeus I., Duke of Savoy, a prince of great bravery and considerable talent. He married Christina, daughter of Henry IV., King of France, by whom he had two sons, Francis Hyacinth and Charles Emmanuel II., successively Dukes of Savoy. Died October 7th, 1637. He was the first Duke of Savoy, who appropriated to himself the title of *Royal Highness*.

⁹ Isabella Clara, of Austria, daughter of the Archduke Leopold, who was grandson of the Emperor Ferdinand III. Married June 13th, 1649, to Charles III., Duke of Mantua.

¹⁰ Appendix, [No. 1.](#)

¹¹ Appendix, [No. 1.](#)

¹² The Empress Eleanor was daughter of Charles, Duke of Rhetelois, who died in the life-time of his father, Charles I. Duke of Mantua, in spite of which he is generally denominated by historians, Charles II., Duke of Mantua. She became, on the 30th of April, 1651, the third wife of Ferdinand III., Emperor of Germany, whom she survived many years, and died December 5th, 1686. She was the aunt of Ferdinand Charles IV., Duke of Mantua.

¹³ Thomas de la Cerda, Marquis of Laguna, in Spain, married April 22, 1672, to Maria Louisa, only daughter of Vespasian Gonzaga, only brother of Ferdinand III., the reigning Duke of Guastalla.

¹⁴ The Monk Bulgarini appears to have been the confessor and favourite of the Duchess-mother of Mantua; and to have been entirely devoted to the Spanish interests.

the Fourteenth. He was to assure him, in conclusion, that Estrades had no doubt of the readiness of Lewis to assist in freeing the Duke of Mantua from his embarrassments; but that, in order to enable him to do this effectually, it was absolutely necessary to garrison Casale with French troops.

Matthioli concurred entirely in these views of Giuliani, and offered to sound the Duke of Mantua upon the subject. A few days afterwards, he sent word to Estrades, that he had managed to have an interview with that Prince (having previously established himself secretly in the neighbourhood of Mantua), and had found him generally well-disposed to the plan. He also requested Estrades to send Giuliani again to him, in order that they might act in concert; the said Giuliani being also a person who might, without suspicion, carry intelligence backwards and forwards,¹⁵ which was not the case with Matthioli himself.

Giuliani was accordingly sent, and had an audience of the Duke of Mantua, who received him very favourably, and acquainted him with his willingness to enter into an alliance with France, and to deliver up Casale, upon the understanding that Estrades was to try to obtain for him any reasonable requests he might make; the principal of these, in addition to the grant of a sum of money, was the being made generalissimo of any French army that might be sent into Italy, “that being,” says Estrades, “what he wishes beyond all things; or rather, that being the only thing he is very anxious for, in order that he may have the same consideration in Italy the late Duke of Modena¹⁶ had, and the late Duke of Mantua,¹⁷ who at his age commanded in chief the Emperor’s army, with the title of Vicar General of the Empire.”¹⁸

The Duke of Mantua also announced in this conference, that he put himself, on this occasion, entirely into the hands of Matthioli, whom he promised to reinstate in his place of Secretary of State, and to appoint his first minister, as soon as he himself should have regained his authority, and that the treaty, he was now projecting with the King of France, had been duly executed.

To Matthioli were joined in the negociation the two counsellors of the Duke of Mantua, in whom he had the most confidence; the Marquis Cavriani and Joseph Varano; and these, together with Giuliani, Estrades, Pinchesne the French Secretary of Embassy at Venice, and the Duke himself, were the only persons in Italy acquainted with the business; so that the Ambassador had certainly very fair grounds for expressing his hopes “the secrecy, so necessary in this affair, would remain impenetrable.”¹⁹

This conference was followed by another, in which the Duke showed the greatest impatience to conclude the treaty; entreating that Lewis might be instantly made acquainted with the state it was at present in, and requesting, or rather imploring, for a French army; on the arrival of which he hinted much might be done against the Duchy of Milan. Finally, he promised to have a conference with Estrades, “as he was soon going to Venice, where they might see one another conveniently, and without being observed, on account of the Carnival, during which all the world, even the Doge and the oldest Senators were accustomed to go about in mask.”²⁰

¹⁵ The profession of Giuliani was, that of an editor of newspapers, in which capacity he was in the habit of travelling from town to town, to collect and convey news. See Appendix, [No. 98](#).

¹⁶ Alphonso IV., Duke of Modena, succeeded his father Francis I. in his territories, and in the command in chief of the French army in Italy, in 1658. Died in the 29th year of his age, July 16, 1662, having married, May 27, 1655, Laura Martinuzzi, niece of Cardinal Mazarin.

¹⁷ Charles III., Duke of Mantua, father of Ferdinand Charles IV., the reigning Duke, had the command of the Imperial Army in Italy, and took upon himself the office of Vicar General of the Empire in Italy, during the interregnum which followed the death of the Emperor Ferdinand III. in 1657, in virtue of a diploma, lately granted to him by that Prince. His right was contested by the Duke of Savoy, who, upon the ground of old usage, claimed the office for himself. The Electors of the Empire annulled the appointment of the Duke of Mantua.

¹⁸ Appendix, [No. 1](#).

¹⁹ Appendix, [No. 1](#).

²⁰ Appendix, [No. 1](#).

He also requested that the Cardinal d'Estrées²¹ might not be made a party to the negotiation; because he was so well known to be employed generally by Lewis to negotiate with the Italian Sovereigns, that his entering into it would naturally excite the suspicions of the Spaniards that something secret was going on; and that they would then ruin him, the Duke of Mantua, before he could receive the assistance of the French Monarch; and that thus the hopes of both the contracting parties, from the treaty at present under discussion, would be frustrated. To this proposition Estrades agreed, though unwillingly. We cannot but here remark how skilful a negociator he seems to have been; beginning as he does by making trial of his tools, and then of his arguments, and afterwards bringing both of them to bear very judiciously on the negotiation, in the way the most likely to lead to a favourable result.

When the affair was advanced thus far, Estrades lost no time in forwarding an account of it to Lewis, to whom, as he says himself, he had not before ventured to write upon the subject, because at first he despaired of being able to bring the intrigue to bear: but he now thought it in so good a train, that upon receiving the approval of his proceedings from Lewis, he could almost answer for its success. The letter of Estrades was accompanied by a schedule, containing the demands of the Duke of Mantua, and by a letter from Matthioli, also addressed to Lewis, in which he offers to devote himself to his service, to strive to detach his master, the Duke of Mantua, from the Austrian interest, and insinuates very plainly his wish and intention of selling him and his fortress of Casale to the French Monarch; whom, he says, he “regards and reveres as a *Demigod*.”²² To these protestations Lewis returned, as was natural, a very civil answer;²³ generally promising his protection and favour to Matthioli.

On the 24th of December of the same year, Estrades²⁴ writes to M. de Pomponne,²⁵ (then one of the Secretaries of State), to inform him of a discovery he has made from the Duke of Mantua himself, that the Austrian party have determined, in case any French troops should arrive in Italy, and that the Duke of Mantua should manifest any disposition of favouring them, to seize upon Casale and Mantua. He therefore adds that the Duke, though thoroughly well-disposed towards the French interests, cannot take any active part in their favour, unless Lewis will send into Italy a sufficient force to secure Casale and the rest of the Duke's territories from the attempts of the House of Austria. He subsequently seems to hint his fear that the life of the Duke of Mantua may be made away with by the Austrians, in order the more easily to possess themselves of his territories. “We must besides, Sir, consider that the Duke of Guastalla²⁶ being the nearest relation of the Duke of Mantua, as well as his heir, there would be danger that, if the Duchess,²⁷ his daughter, who is very ill and has no children, should die, some *misfortune* might happen to the Duke of Mantua, which would assure his territories

²¹ Cæsar Bishop of Laon and Cardinal d'Estrées, son of the first Marshal of France of that name, was employed in various negotiations with the Princes of Italy; but is now more remembered for his courtier-like reply to Lewis XIV. That Monarch one day at dinner complained of having lost all his teeth. “And who is there, Sire, that has any teeth?” said the Cardinal (Sire, et qui est-ce qui a des dents?) What made the flattery the more ludicrously gross was, that the Cardinal, though an old man, had remarkably fine teeth, and showed them very much whenever he opened his mouth.

²² Appendix, [No. 2](#).

²³ Appendix, [No. 8](#).

²⁴ 1677.

²⁵ Simon Arnaud de Pomponne, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1671 to 1679, when he was dismissed from his office, but retained the title of Minister of State, with permission to attend the Council. A man, like so many of his race, who united considerable talents to great excellence of character. Madame de Sévigné says, in speaking of the eminent station he had filled, that “Fortune had wished to make use of his virtues for the happiness of others.”

²⁶ Ferdinand III., Duke of Guastalla, descended from a younger branch of the House of Gonzaga; and the heir to the Duchy of Mantua, if he survived Ferdinand Charles; which however was not the case. He died of dropsy, January 11th, 1678.

²⁷ Anne Isabella, eldest daughter of Ferdinand III., Duke of Guastalla, married August 13th, 1671, to Ferdinand Charles IV., Duke of Mantua, by whom she had no offspring.

to the Spanish Nobleman, who has married the second daughter²⁸ of the Duke of Guastalla, and whose marriage the Spaniards, *doubtless with this view*, made up at Vienna by means of Don Vincent.”²⁹

To Estrades, Lewis returned a long and detailed statement of his views; in which he approves generally of the design of putting a French garrison into Casale; intimates upon what terms it may be done; rejects a request of the Duke of Mantua to procure for him the restoration of those parts of the Montferrat, which by former treaties had been ceded to the Duke of Savoy; objects to the largeness of his demand of 100,000 pistoles as the price of Casale; promises to bear him harmless and remunerate him for any injury that may be done to him by the Spaniards, in consequence of his siding with the French; and finally instructs Estrades, to entertain the notion that a French army is about to pass the Alps, and in the meanwhile to protract the negotiation, in order to allow him, Lewis, time to make his various preparations. Indeed this last point, the necessity for delay, was so strongly impressed upon Estrades, upon more than one occasion, that, in a subsequent despatch, he expresses his regret that the negotiation goes on so smoothly and prosperously, that he cannot find any difficulties³⁰ to enable him to protract it till the troops of Lewis are in readiness to march towards Italy.

The only point in dispute appears to have been, what the sum of money should be which was to be given by the French Monarch to the Duke of Mantua. The stipulation for 100,000 pistoles was decidedly rejected by Lewis; and at length, after some difficulty, Estrades reduced the demand of the other party to 100,000 crowns, and those not to be paid till after the signature of the treaty between the two sovereigns.³¹

The next event of importance in the negotiation was the interview, effected at Venice during the Carnival, between the Duke of Mantua and Estrades. It took place at midnight, on the 18th of March, 1678, in a small open space, equally distant from the residence of the Duke and the Ambassador, and lasted a full hour. In it the Duke dwelt³² much upon his impatience for the conclusion of the treaty with France; and for the speedy appearance of the troops of the latter in Italy, alleging as his reason, the constant and lively fear he was in of the Spaniards. He also announced his intention of sending Matthioli, in whom, says Estrades, “He has a blind confidence, and who governs him absolutely,” to the French court; thinking that his presence there might bring matters to a speedier issue.

Estrades, who had now ascertained that his master could not possibly spare an army for Italy that year (1678), and who therefore was more than ever anxious to prevent such a consummation, consented with considerable difficulty to the project; resolving, at the same time, to obstruct the departure of Matthioli for France as long as possible; and writing to M. de Pomponne to delay him and his business, when at length he arrived there, by every means in his power.³³

Subsequently the procrastinating intentions of Estrades were more easily put into execution than he expected; for Matthioli, of his own accord, deferred his journey from spring to autumn on

²⁸ This is evidently a mistake, and should be read *niece* instead of *second daughter*. It alludes to Maria Louisa, only daughter of Vespasian Gonzaga, only brother of Ferdinand III., Duke of Guastalla, married to a Spanish nobleman, Thomas de la Cerda, Marquis of Laguna. At this time neither of the daughters of Ferdinand had children, and *she*, consequently, after them, was the heiress of their claims upon the Duchies of Guastalla and Mantua. The second daughter of Ferdinand III., Maria Victoria, married June 30th, 1769, Vincent Gonzaga Count of St. Paul – the person who is here erroneously described as having been the means of marrying her to another person.

²⁹ Vincent Gonzaga, Count of St. Paul, afterwards Duke of Guastalla, was descended from a younger son of Ferrant II., first Duke of Guastalla. After contesting for many years his right to that Duchy with Ferdinand Charles IV., Duke of Mantua; during which they were both merely made use of, by turns, as the instruments of the French and Austrian domination; he was finally successful in establishing himself at Guastalla in 1706, where he died April 28th, 1714. By his wife, Maria Victoria, second daughter of Ferdinand III., Duke of Guastalla, he left two sons, who successively succeeded him in the sovereignty of that Duchy.

³⁰ Appendix, [No. 9](#).

³¹ Appendix, [No. 10](#).

³² Appendix, [No. 17](#).

³³ Appendix, [No. 18](#).

various pleas, of which the principal one was, his unwillingness to leave his master, exposed to the insinuations, and perhaps menaces, of the Spanish partizans, by whom he was surrounded.³⁴

Finally, after many delays, Matthioli, accompanied by Giuliani, set off for Paris in the beginning of November, 1678, and arrived there towards the end of the same month.³⁵ He found the Abbé d'Estrades, who had quitted his Venetian Embassy, arrived there before him, and had several interviews with him and M. de Pomponne; during which a treaty was agreed on to the following effect: —

1. That the Duke of Mantua should receive the French troops into Casale.
2. That if Lewis sent an army into Italy, the Duke of Mantua should have the command of it.
3. That immediately after the execution of the treaty, the sum of 100,000 crowns should be paid to the Duke of Mantua.³⁶

The treaty contained also some other articles of minor importance.

Matthioli himself had the honour of being received in a secret audience by Lewis,³⁷ who made him a present of a valuable ring.³⁷ He also received a sum of money for himself,³⁷ and a promise of a much larger gratification³⁸ after the ratification of the treaty. He was also promised that his son should be made one of the King's Pages; and that his brother, who was in the Church, should receive a good benefice.³⁹ He was then sent back to Italy, with a detailed instruction from Louvois,⁴⁰ upon the manner of executing the articles of the treaty.

The French Government was thus far so entirely satisfied of the sincerity and good faith of Matthioli, and so convinced of the speedy admission of the French troops into Casale, that they immediately upon his departure took decided measures in furtherance of their plan.⁴¹ Thus the Marquis de Boufflers,⁴² Colonel-General of the Dragoons, was sent to take the command of the forces, which were assembling near the frontier of Italy, at Briançon, in Dauphiny. Catinat,⁴³ Brigadier of Infantry, afterwards the celebrated Marshal of that name, who was to serve under the command of Boufflers, had orders to conceal himself in the fortress of Pignerol,⁴⁴ and to adopt a feigned name, that of Richemont;⁴⁵ while the Baron d'Asfeld,⁴⁶ Colonel of Dragoons, was despatched to Venice,

³⁴ Appendix, Nos. 24, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 39, 40.

³⁵ Appendix, No. 47.

³⁶ Delort, quoting from an Italian manuscript, in the records of the office of the French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, which appears to have been written by Giuliani.

³⁷ Delort, quoting from the same authority.

³⁸ M. Delort says the sum actually given to Matthioli, was 400 Doubles, and the sum promised him 400,000 Doubles, which, from its largeness, he conceives must be a mistake; but he adds that it is so written in the Italian manuscripts before referred to.

³⁹ Delort.

⁴⁰ Francis Michael Le Tellier, Marquis de Louvois, son of the Chancellor Le Tellier, Secretary of State for the War department, from 1666, to the time of his death, in 1691, which occurring suddenly, and just as he was on the point of being disgraced, gave occasion to a report that he was poisoned: for which, however, it appears there was no foundation. He was of a haughty and cruel disposition, and was the minister who planned and ordered the inhuman ravages of the Palatinate, which have so indelibly disgraced the reign of his master.

⁴¹ Delort.

⁴² Lewis Francis, Marquis and afterwards Duc de Boufflers, Marshal of France in 1693. Died in 1711. One of the best of Lewis the Fourteenth's generals.

⁴³ Nicholas de Catinat, Marshal of France in 1698. "He united," says Voltaire, "philosophy to great military talents. The last day he commanded in Italy, he gave for the watch-word, 'Paris and St. Gratien,' the name of his country house. He died there in the retirement of a real sage, (having refused the blue ribbon) in 1712."

⁴⁴ Upon reference to the Mémoires de Catinat, published in 1819, this event is found to be thus adverted to: — "In 1679, Catinat was charged with some negociations with the Duke of Mantua; but the affair failed of success, in consequence of the treachery of the Secretary of that prince. Catinat, according to the King's orders, was anxious to punish the traitor. He remained at Pignerol some days, and having engaged him in a hunting party, had him arrested." It also appears from these Memoirs, that both Catinat and Boufflers were again despatched to Italy on the same errand, in 1681, when Casale was really given up to Lewis; and on this occasion, Louvois, in his instruction to Boufflers, mentions Matthioli by name, as the person whose treachery had prevented the success of the former negociation.

⁴⁵ Appendix, Nos. 52, 62, 64, 73, 76, 77, 78.

upon a mission for exchanging the ratifications of the treaty; for which purpose he was to unite with M. de Pinchesne, the Chargé d’Affaires there, during the absence of an ambassador.⁴⁷

Though these measures were taken with the greatest secrecy, it was impossible but that the report of the assembling of the French forces so near the territories of the Duke of Savoy,⁴⁸ should reach the ears of the Spaniards, and excite their suspicions; as well as those of the Venetians, and of the other Italian states. Accordingly, we find that remonstrances were several times made by the ambassadors of the Emperor⁴⁹ and King of Spain⁵⁰ at Venice, to the Duke of Mantua, upon the rumour of his intention of delivering the capital of the Montferrat to Lewis. Ferdinand Charles denied that this was the case;⁵¹ but was not believed.

As, therefore, the ferment and discontent in the north of Italy increased, the agents of the French Government were naturally anxious that the treaty should be ratified and executed as soon as possible; for which purpose, the Duke of Mantua had promised to meet the Baron d’Asfeld at Casale, during the month of February, 1679. In proportion, however, as the French became more impatient for the conclusion of the affair, the Count Matthioli found fresh excuses for delaying it. At one moment his own ill health detained him at Padua, and prevented his coming to Venice to confer with Messrs. de Pinchesne and d’Asfeld; at another, the Duke of Mantua could not raise a sufficient sum of money to enable him to transport his court to Casale; at another, it was necessary to have time to persuade Don Vincent Gonzaga⁵² to accompany the Duke to Casale, as it was not considered safe to leave him at Mantua; and again, the Duke of Mantua was obliged to stay at Venice, having promised to hold a carrousel there.⁵³

In spite of all these difficulties, it was, however, finally arranged, that the Baron d’Asfeld and Matthioli should meet, on the 9th of March, at Incréa, a village ten miles from Casale, in order to make the exchange of the ratifications; that the Duke of Mantua himself, should go to Casale on the 15th of the same month; and should put the troops of Lewis into possession of the place on the 18th; on which day, being the ninth after the ratification, it was decided they could without fail be there.⁵⁴

The various excuses made by Matthioli, for the non-execution of his agreement, all more or less frivolous, appear first to have given to the French Government a suspicion of his fidelity. Whether the reception of Matthioli at the French court had not been such as he expected, though it would appear to have been most gracious; or whether, which is more probable, the sum of money there given to him did not content him; – or whether, which is also probable, the Spaniards having got some knowledge of the transaction, had offered him a still larger bribe, it is impossible for us, at this distance of time, exactly to decide; but it appears evident, that, from the time of his return from Paris, his conduct with regard to the negotiation became entirely changed; and he was as anxious to procrastinate, as he had formerly been to advance it. It was, therefore, natural for the French diplomatists to conclude, supported as this opinion also was by various circumstantial evidence, that he had been bought by the other side – a circumstance of no extraordinary occurrence in the career of a needy Italian adventurer.

⁴⁶ I am not sure whether I am correct in imagining that this was the Marshal d’Asfeld, who distinguished himself at the battle of Almanza, and died at great old age, in 1743.

⁴⁷ Appendix, [Nos. 52, 54, 55](#).

⁴⁸ Victor Amadeus II., at this time a minor, and under the Regency of his mother, Mary Jane de Nemours. In 1713, he became King of Sicily, which kingdom he was compelled to exchange for that of Sardinia, in 1720; abdicated the throne in favour of his son, in 1730; and died in 1732. This prince possessed in an eminent degree, the attributes of his race – valour and skill in military matters, and faithlessness in his treaties and engagements with his brother sovereigns.

⁴⁹ Leopold I. succeeded Ferdinand III. in 1657, died in 1705.

⁵⁰ Charles II. the last King of Spain of the House of Austria. – Died in 1700.

⁵¹ Appendix, [Nos. 68, 69, 89](#).

⁵² See ante, note, [page 18](#).

⁵³ Appendix, [No. 66](#).

⁵⁴ Appendix, [No. 68](#).

His weak and timid master followed implicitly his counsels; but appears to have been himself in the intention of acting fairly and faithfully by the French Government. The first intimation that is given in the correspondence of the suspicions, with regard to the conduct of Matthioli, occurs in a letter from Pomponne⁵⁵ to Matthioli himself, dated February 21st, 1679, in which he says that Lewis “is unwilling to doubt that the promise which has been so solemnly made⁵⁶ him will not be kept;” an expression which certainly seems to imply, that some doubt did exist in the mind of Lewis and of his ministers upon the subject.

The next is an elaborate and skilful letter of Estrades to Matthioli, written on the 24th of March, 1679,⁵⁷ from Turin, where he was then awaiting the execution of the treaty, in which he mingles promises and threats to encourage him to perform his stipulations; and shows sufficiently his suspicions to the object of them, to frighten him; at the same time leaving open the hope of forgiveness in case of future good conduct.

By the subsequent letters⁵⁸ of Pomponne to Pinchesne, it appears, that the treachery of Matthioli soon became more apparent. Indeed, Estrades, during his stay at Turin, obtained the most indubitable evidence of the fact; for the Duchess of Savoy⁵⁹ showed to him the copies of all the documents relative to the negociation respecting Casale, which Matthioli had given to the President Turki, one of her ministers who was in the interests of Spain, when he passed through Turin on his return from Paris.⁶⁰ From Turki, as it subsequently appeared, Matthioli had received a sum of money for his information.⁶¹

Meanwhile Asfeld was arrested by the orders of the Count de Melgar, the Spanish Governor of the Milanese, as he was on his way to the rendezvous at Ingréa; and Matthioli was the first person who acquainted the French agents with this misfortune,⁶² as well as with the fact that the Duke of Mantua had been obliged to conclude a treaty with the Venetians, in a directly contrary sense to the one he had first entered into with France;⁶³ “having probably been,” as Pomponne remarks, in a letter to Pinchesne,⁶⁴ “himself the sole author of the accidents and impediments he acquaints us with.”

Upon the arrival of the intelligence at Paris, of the arrest of Asfeld, the French ministers, though their suspicions of Matthioli were now changed into certainties, being still anxious, if possible, to get possession of Casale, empowered Catinat to supply his place, and to conclude the ratification of the treaty. Intelligence of this change was conveyed to Matthioli in a letter⁶⁵ from Pomponne, of the date of March 14th, 1679.

Catinat accordingly went, on the appointed day, from Pignerol to Ingréa, accompanied by St. Mara,⁶⁶ the Commandant of that part of the fortress of Pignerol, which was appropriated for a state prison, and by a person of confidence, belonging to the embassy of Estrades. But the appointed day passed over, without bringing Matthioli to Ingréa; and the next morning Catinat was informed that

⁵⁵ Appendix, [No. 67](#).

⁵⁶ Namely, of the delivery of Casale.

⁵⁷ Appendix, [No. 72](#).

⁵⁸ Appendix, [Nos. 75, 79, 81, 83, 88](#).

⁵⁹ Mary Jane Baptista of Savoy, daughter of Charles Amadeus, Duke of Nemours and Aumale, (who was killed in a duel by his brother-in-law, the Duke of Beaufort). Married May 11th, 1665, to Charles Emmanuel II., Duke of Savoy; Regent of the territories of her son during his minority. Died March 15th, 1724.

⁶⁰ Delort. Appendix, [Nos. 87, 92, 95](#).

⁶¹ Appendix, [No. 92](#).

⁶² Appendix, [No. 70](#).

⁶³ Delort.

⁶⁴ Appendix, [No. 75](#).

⁶⁵ Appendix, [No. 71](#).

⁶⁶ Benigne d’Auvergne de Saint-Mars, Seigneur of Dimon and Palteau; Bailli and Governor of Sens; successively Governor of Exiles, the Island of St. Marguerite, and the Bastille. At Pignerol he had only the command of the state prisoners, the Marquis d’Herleville being governor of the fortress. St. Mars came to Pignerol a short time before the arrival there of Fouquet, who was the first prisoner confided to his care.

his arrival there was discovered; that the peasants of the neighbourhood were in arms; and that a detachment of cavalry was on its way, for the purpose of seizing upon him and his companions. What became of the latter does not appear, except that they escaped the threatened danger; but he himself got away secretly, and in disguise, to Casale; where he gave himself out as an officer of the garrison of Pignerol. The Governor there, who was well-disposed to the French interest, received him with great civility; and, at a dinner he gave to him, joined in drinking the King of France's health with enthusiasm.⁶⁷ The next day Catinat was too happy to return undiscovered to Pignerol.

Matthioli, meanwhile, instead of keeping his engagement at Incréa, had returned to Venice, and had had several interviews with Pinchesne, the particulars of which we are unacquainted with, as the letters containing the accounts of them, though alluded to by M. de Pomponne⁶⁸ in his answers, have not been published.

Pinchesne was, at this time, convinced of the perfidy of Matthioli, having, in addition to various other suspicious circumstances, discovered that he had been secretly at Milan for some days. He, however, did not think it advisable entirely to break with him; but advised him to go and confer with Estrades, at Turin; representing to him the danger to which he exposed himself if this affair failed of success through his fault.⁶⁹ Matthioli followed the advice of Pinchesne to his own ruin, and going to Turin, presented himself forthwith to Estrades,⁷⁰ to whom he offered many insufficient excuses for his delay.

The vindictive Lewis had, meanwhile, determined to satisfy his wounded pride and frustrated ambition, by taking the most signal vengeance of Matthioli; as we find by the following note from Louvois to his creature, St. Mars, dated, St. Germain, April 27th, 1679. – “The King has sent orders to the Abbé d'Estrades, to try and arrest a man, with whose conduct his Majesty has reason to be dissatisfied; of which he has commanded me to acquaint you, in order that you may not object to receiving him when he shall be sent to you; and that you may guard him in a manner, that not only he may not have communication with any one, but that also he may have cause to repent of his bad conduct; and that it may not be discovered that you have a new prisoner.”⁷¹

Nothing therefore could be more opportune to Estrades, than the arrival of Matthioli at Turin, and accident soon enabled him to lay a successful plan for executing the wishes of the French monarch. The plan he is said to have communicated to the Duchess of Savoy, who consented to the arrest taking place, but objected to its happening on her territories.⁷²

Matthioli complained much of want of money, occasioned by the expenses of his journies, and the bribes he had been obliged to offer to the Duke's mistresses. Estrades took this opportunity of forwarding his scheme, by telling him that Catinat, who, under the name of Richemont, commanded the troops destined to take possession of Casale, had considerable sums at his disposal, which he would be happy to make so good a use of as in ministering to his wants; provided he, Matthioli, would give him a meeting on the frontier towards Pignerol, at which also Estrades would be present.⁷³ Of course, the reason assigned for naming the frontier as the place of rendezvous was, that Catinat could not leave the neighbourhood where his troops were stationed.

To this proposition Matthioli readily consented; and having first made a journey to Casale, he returned and met Estrades (who was accompanied on this expedition by his relation the Abbé de Montesquiou) by appointment, in a church half a mile from Turin, from whence they proceeded

⁶⁷ Roux (Fazillac.)

⁶⁸ Appendix, [Nos. 79, 81.](#)

⁶⁹ Delort.

⁷⁰ Appendix, [No. 88.](#)

⁷¹ Appendix, [No. 82.](#)

⁷² Delort.

⁷³ M. Roux (Fazillac) gives these particulars, upon the authority of a letter from Estrades to Pomponne, of May 7th, 1679; and of one from Catinat to Louvois of the same date; neither of which are published.

together to the frontier. At three miles from the place of rendezvous they were stopped by a river, of which the banks were overflowed, and the bridge broken. Matthioli himself assisted in repairing the bridge, which was to convey him to his captivity;⁷⁴ and they then proceeded on foot to the place where Catinat awaited them accompanied only by two officers, the Chevaliers de St. Martin and de Villebois, and by four soldiers of the garrison of Pignerol.⁷⁵

Before, however, Matthioli was arrested, Estrades held some conversation with him, and obliged him, in the presence of Catinat, to confess that he had in his possession all the original papers regarding the delivery of Casale, and that they were left in the custody of his wife at Bologna; who was living in the convent of the nuns of St. Thomas⁷⁶ in that city. This was necessary, because Matthioli had lately refused to give them up to the Duke his master,⁷⁷ alleging that he no longer knew where they were. His confession, upon this occasion, afterwards turned out to be false, and that the papers in question were concealed in a wall at Padua.⁷⁸

Immediately after this avowal had been extracted from him, he was arrested; and offered no resistance, though he always carried a sword and pistols about his person. He was conducted to Pignerol, where he arrived late at night.

Catinat, in his letter to Louvois, giving an account of this seizure, which took place on the 2d of May, 1679, dwells much upon the secrecy with which it was effected, so that, says he, “no one knows the name of the rascal, not even the officers who assisted in arresting him.”⁷⁹ And he concludes by mentioning, that in order to perpetuate the mystery in which his prisoner is enveloped, he has given him the name of “Lestang,” – “not a soul here knowing who he is.” In the subsequent correspondence of Louvois with Catinat and St. Mars, he is very generally designated by that name. At first, St. Mars carried his precaution so far as to serve Matthioli himself, and not allow any of the garrison to approach him; soon afterwards his valet, who had been arrested by the exertions of Estrades,⁸⁰ was allowed to attend upon him; and subsequently St. Mars appointed those of his officers, in whom he had the most confidence, to assist in guarding him. It may be remembered that Louvois, in his letter to St. Mars, which has been before quoted, orders that the prisoner, who was to be brought to Pignerol, “should have intercourse with no one;” and in the subsequent letters from the same Minister, difficulties are even made to his being permitted to see either a physician or a confessor.⁸¹

These extraordinary precautions against discovery, and the one which appears to have been afterwards resorted to, of obliging him to wear a mask, during his journeys, or when he saw any one, are not wonderful, when we reflect upon the violent breach of the law of nations, which had been committed by his imprisonment. Matthioli, at the time of his arrest, was actually the plenipotentiary⁸² of the Duke of Mantua, for concluding a treaty with the King of France; and for that very sovereign to kidnap him and confine him in a dungeon was certainly one of the most flagrant acts of violence that could be committed; one which, if known, would have had the most injurious effects upon the negotiations of Lewis with other sovereigns; nay, would probably have indisposed other sovereigns from treating at all with him. It is true the Duke of Mantua was a prince insignificant both in power and character, but, if in this way might was allowed to overcome right, who could possibly tell whose turn might be the next. Besides, it was important for Lewis that the Duke of Mantua should also be kept in good humour, the delivery of Casale not having been effected; nor is it to be supposed that

⁷⁴ Roux (Fazillac.)

⁷⁵ Appendix, [No. 84](#).

⁷⁶ [Ibid.](#)

⁷⁷ Delort.

⁷⁸ Appendix, [No. 85](#).

⁷⁹ Appendix, [No. 84](#).

⁸⁰ [Ibid. No. 85](#).

⁸¹ Appendix, [Nos. 96, 103, 104](#).

⁸² [Ibid. No. 48](#).

he would have consented to give it up to the French monarch within two years of this period, had he had a suspicion of the way his diplomatic agent and intended prime minister had been treated. The same reasons for concealment existed till the death of Matthioli, since that event happened while both Lewis XIV. and the Duke of Mantua were still alive, which accounts for his confinement continuing to be always solitary and always secret.

The arrest of Matthioli, certainly appears to have been the effect of a vindictive feeling against him in the breast of Lewis himself; for it is impossible to imagine that any minister would have ventured, of his own free-will, upon a step by which so much was to be hazarded, and nothing, in fact, was to be gained. The act is only to be explained in this manner; that the monarch insisted upon his revenge, which the ministers were obliged to gratify; and, at the same time, in order to prevent any ill consequences that might result from it, determined upon burying the whole transaction under the most impenetrable veil of mystery.

The confinement of Matthioli is decidedly one of the deadliest stains that blot the character of Lewis the Fourteenth: for, granting that Matthioli betrayed the trust reposed in him by that monarch, one single act of diplomatic treachery was surely not sufficient to warrant the infliction of the most horrible of all punishments, – of solitary confinement, for four and twenty years, in a dungeon! – It was, however, an act of cruel injustice that was to be expected from the man, who, when the unhappy Fouquet⁸³ was condemned by the tribunals of his country to exile, himself changed his sentence to that of perpetual imprisonment; – who, to please his mistress, confined his former favourite, Lauzun,⁸⁴ for nine years in the fortress of Pignerol, and only then released him in order, by that means, to swindle Mademoiselle de Montpensier⁸⁵ out of her fortune, in favour of his bastard, the Duke du Maine; – who shut up so many other persons, guilty only of imaginary crimes, in various prisons, where they died of misery and ill-treatment; – who revoked the Edict of Nantes; – ordered the burning of the Palatinate; – persecuted the saints of Port Royal; – and gloried in the Dragonades, and the war of the Cevennes; – who, in short, whether we regard him as a man or a sovereign, was one of the most hardened, cruel, and tyrannical characters transmitted to us in history. Providence doubtless made use of him as a scourge befitting the crimes of the age he lived in; and, in this point of view, his existence was most useful. Nor is his memory less so; which has been left to us and to all posterity, as a mighty warning of the effects, even in this world, of overweening ambition; and as a melancholy example of the perversion of a proud heart, which “gave not God the glory,” and was therefore abandoned by the Almighty to the effects of its own natural and irretrievable wickedness.

After the arrest of Matthioli, he underwent several interrogatories,⁸⁶ in which, in spite of his numerous prevarications, his treachery was still more amply discovered. The examinations were all sent to Louvois by Catinat, who, as soon as they were concluded, left Pignerol, and returned to the court.⁸⁷

At first, Matthioli was, by the direction of Estrades,⁸⁸ well-treated in his prison; but this was not by any means the intention of Lewis, and accordingly, we find Louvois writing thus to St. Mars.

⁸³ Nicholas Fouquet, “Surintendant des Finances,” in 1653. The most lavish, but the most amiable of financiers. – Disgraced in 1664, when he was condemned, by the commissioners appointed to inquire into his conduct, to banishment. The sentence was commuted by the King himself to perpetual imprisonment; and Fouquet died in the citadel of Pignerol, in 1680. On his trial he defended himself with great spirit and talent. See Madame de Sévigné’s interesting Letters to M. de Pomponne upon the subject.

⁸⁴ Anthony Nompars de Caumont, Marquis of Peguillhem, and afterwards Duke of Lauzun: whose adventures and eccentricities are too well known to require relation here. It is in speaking of him that La Bruyère says, “Il n’est pas permis aux autres hommes de rêver, comme il a vécu.”

⁸⁵ Anne Mary Louisa, of Orleans, Mademoiselle de Montpensier, commonly called the “Grande Mademoiselle.” – A woman of an unpleasant character, according to her own showing in her Memoirs; but who certainly did not deserve to be the victim, as she was, in different ways, of two such men as Lewis and Lauzun.

⁸⁶ Appendix, [Nos. 85, 87, 91, 92, 94, 95, 97](#).

⁸⁷ Ibid. [No. 97](#).

⁸⁸ Ibid. [Nos. 84, 85](#).

“It is not the intention of the King that the Sieur de Lestang should be *well-treated*; nor that, except the absolute necessities of life, you should give him any thing that may make him pass his time agreeably.”⁸⁹ Again, in the same strain: “I have nothing to add to what I have already commanded you respecting the severity with which the individual named Lestang must be treated.”⁹⁰ And again; “You must keep the individual named Lestang, in the severe confinement I enjoined in my preceding letters, without allowing him to see a physician, unless you know he is in absolute want of one.”⁹¹ These repeated injunctions to the same effect are a proof, how much importance the rancorous Lewis attached to his victim’s being compelled to drink the bitter cup of captivity to the very dregs.

The harshness and hopelessness of his prison seem to have affected the intellects of Matthioli,⁹² for after he had been nearly a year confined, St. Mars acquaints Louvois, that “The Sieur de Lestang complains, he is not treated as a man of his quality, and the minister of a great prince ought to be; notwithstanding which, I continue to follow your commands most exactly upon this subject, as well as on all others. I think he is deranged by the way he talks to me, telling me he converses every day with God and his angels; – that they have told him of the death of the Duke of Mantua, and of the Duke of Lorraine;⁹³ and as an additional proof of his madness, he says, that he has the honour of being the near relation of the King, to whom he wishes to write, to complain of the way in which I treat him. I have not thought it right to give him paper or ink for that purpose, perceiving him not to be in his right senses.”⁹⁴

The unhappy prisoner, in his phrensy and despair, sometimes used very violent language to his keepers, and wrote abusive sentences with charcoal on the walls of his prison; on which account St. Mars ordered his lieutenant, Blainvilliers, to threaten him with punishment, and even to show him a cudgel, with which he was to be beaten, if he did not behave better.

These menaces so far intimidated Matthioli, that a few days afterwards, while Blainvilliers was serving him at dinner, he, in order to propitiate him, took a valuable ring from his finger and offered it to him. Blainvilliers told him he could accept nothing from a prisoner, but that he would deliver it to St. Mars; which he accordingly did.⁹⁵ St. Mars estimates the ring at fifty or sixty pistoles: and M. Delort conjectures it to have been the one given to him by Lewis the Fourteenth, during his stay at Paris. St. Mars inquires from Louvois⁹⁶ what he is to do in consequence; and the latter returns for answer, that he “must keep the ring, which the Sieur Matthioli has given to the Sieur de Blainvilliers, in order to restore it to him, if it should ever happen that the King ordered him to be set at liberty.”⁹⁷

Matthioli apparently expressed a wish to confess to a priest; and Louvois desires that he may be only allowed to do so once in the year.⁹⁸ It appears that St. Mars had at this time in his custody a Jacobin monk, with whose crime, as well as name, we are unacquainted; but in the correspondence of St. Mars and Louvois, he is designated as “the Jacobin in the lower part of the tower.” This man was mad; very possibly had been made so, like Matthioli, by solitary confinement and ill-usage. St. Mars

⁸⁹ Appendix, [No. 90](#).

⁹⁰ Ibid. [No. 93](#).

⁹¹ Ibid. [No. 96](#).

⁹² Ibid. [No. 101](#).

⁹³ Charles IV. or V., for he is sometimes called one and sometimes the other, was the son of Nicholas Francis, Cardinal, and afterwards Duke of Lorraine. On the death of his uncle, Charles IV., he took the barren titles of Duke of Lorraine and Bar, but never obtained possession of his territories, (which were usurped by France,) “though his military, political, and Christian virtues and talents, made him worthy to occupy the first throne in the universe.” He commanded the armies of the Emperor for some years with the greatest distinction, married the Archduchess Eleanor, widow of Michael Wicnowiecki, King of Poland, and died in 1690. Lewis the Fourteenth, on hearing of his death, said of him, “that he was the greatest, wisest, and most generous of his enemies.”

⁹⁴ Appendix, [No. 102](#).

⁹⁵ Appendix, [No. 107](#).

⁹⁶ Appendix, [No. 106](#).

⁹⁷ Appendix, [No. 108](#).

⁹⁸ Appendix, [No. 103](#).

advised the putting Matthioli with him, in order to avoid the necessity of sending for a priest for each prisoner.⁹⁹ To this proposal Louvois returned the following answer: “I have been made acquainted, by your letter of the 7th of this month (August 1680), with the proposal you make, to put the Sieur de Lestang with the Jacobin, in order to avoid the necessity of having two priests. The King approves of your project, and you have only to execute it when you please.”¹⁰⁰

St. Mars, in a letter of the 7th of September, 1680, thus details the results of the execution of his plan: —

“Since you permitted me to put Matthioli with the Jacobin in the lower part of the tower, the aforesaid Matthioli was, for four or five days, in the belief that the Jacobin was a man that I had placed with him to watch his actions. Matthioli, who is almost as mad as the Jacobin, walked about with long strides, with his cloak over his nose, crying out that he was not a dupe, but that he knew more than he would say. The Jacobin, who was always seated on his truckle bed, with his elbows resting upon his knees, looked at him gravely, without listening to him. The Signior Matthioli remained always persuaded that it was a spy that had been placed with him, till he was one day disabused, by the Jacobin’s getting down from his bed, stark naked, and setting himself to preach, without rhyme or reason, till he was tired. I and my lieutenants saw all their manœuvres through a hole over the door.”¹⁰¹

It appears to have been very entertaining to St. Mars and his lieutenants, to witness the ravings of these two unhappy maniacs; and there are probably many gaolers who would experience the same feelings upon a similar occasion: what cannot, however, but strike us with horror, is the fact that there was found a minister, nay, a king, and that king one who piqued himself upon professing the Christian religion,¹⁰² to sanction such a proceeding. It is indeed most painful to think, that power should have been placed in the hands of men, who could abuse it by such needless acts of cruelty.

We have no farther particulars of the state of Matthioli’s mind: but, being more than half-mad at the time he was placed with the Jacobin, who was quite so, it is probable the company of the latter increased and perpetuated his phrensy. It is even not impossible that such may have been the intention of St. Mars, as, while Matthioli continued insane, it was of course more reasonable and plausible to continue the extraordinary rigour of his confinement.

Nor were mental sufferings the only ones which the barbarity of Lewis and his minister obliged Matthioli to undergo. We have before seen, from the letters of Louvois to St. Mars, that the latter was desired generally to treat Matthioli with great severity; afterwards he writes to him upon the subject of his clothing, “You must make the clothes of such sort of people as he is last three or four years.”¹⁰³ Some idea may also be formed of the kind of furniture of his dungeon, from the circumstance, mentioned by St. Mars, that, upon the removal of his prisoner from the fort of Exiles to the Island of St. Margaret in 1687, his bed had been sold, because it was so old and broken as not to be worth the carriage; and that all his furniture and linen being added to it, the sum produced by the sale was only thirteen crowns.¹⁰⁴

It may be worth remarking here that the letter of Louvois, respecting Matthioli’s clothes, is a sufficient answer to the absurd stories with regard to the richness of the lace, &c. worn by the

⁹⁹ Appendix, [No. 104](#).

¹⁰⁰ [Ibid.](#)

¹⁰¹ Appendix, [No. 105](#).

¹⁰² If we were to judge of the Christian religion by the manner in which it was professed by Lewis the Fourteenth, we should indeed have a most perverted idea of its precepts. It seems as if the pseudo-christianity of that monarch, only incited him to acts of narrow-minded bigotry and cruelty, allowing, at the same time, full latitude to every kind of licentious excess; while it debarred him from the exercise of humanity and toleration. A good measure of the nature and extent of his religious knowledge and feelings is acquired, by the anecdote respecting Fontpertuis and the Duke of Orleans. When the latter was going into Spain, Lewis objected to his taking the former with him, because he was a Jansenist; but withdrew the objection when assured by the duke that he was only an atheist!

¹⁰³ M. Roux (Fazillac), quoting from an unpublished letter of Louvois to St. Mars, dated December 14th, 1681.

¹⁰⁴ About 1*l.* 12*s.* 0*d.* Appendix, [No. 126](#).

Iron Mask; and the relations from St. Mars himself of his threats to his prisoner, of even corporal punishment, no less disprove the erroneous accounts of the extraordinary respect shown to him.

In the year 1681, St. Mars was offered the government of the citadel of Pignerol, which he declined accepting, for what reasons we are not told: Lewis, who was anxious to recompense his services as a gaoler of State prisoners, then gave him the government of Exiles,¹⁰⁵ a strong fortress and pass near Susa, on the frontier of Piedmont and the Briançonnois, which was vacant by the death of the Duke de Lesdiguières; at the same time augmenting the salary attached to that situation, so as to make it equal to that of the towns in Flanders.¹⁰⁶ Louvois, in a letter dated May 12th, 1681, acquaints St. Mars with his appointment; and informs him that “the two prisoners in the lower part of the tower” are the only ones of those under his care at Pignerol, whom the King wishes to accompany him to Exiles.¹⁰⁷ “The two prisoners in the lower part of the tower,” signify, as we have before seen, Matthioli and the monk.

An additional proof indeed, if any were wanted, that Matthioli was one of the two prisoners conveyed to Exiles, is given in the following extract from a letter of Louvois, dated June 9th, 1681: – “With regard to the effects belonging to the Sieur Matthioli which are in your possession, you will have them taken to Exiles, in order to be given back to him, if ever his Majesty should order him to be set at liberty.”¹⁰⁸

It is to be remarked, that this is the last time Matthioli is mentioned by name in the correspondence between Louvois and St. Mars – in consequence, it appears, of what is said by the former in his letter before quoted of the 12th of May, where he desires a list of the names of all the prisoners then under the guard of St. Mars to be sent to him, and adds – “with regard to the two who are in the lower part of the tower, you need only designate them in that manner, without adding any thing else.”¹⁰⁹ This precaution was evidently enjoined lest the list should fall into other hands, while it also shows that the necessity for concealment was still considered as strong as ever.

This is also proved by the precautions ordered to be taken during the journey of the two prisoners, lest they should be seen or spoken to by any one; and by the repeated orders for their strict confinement. – “The intention of his Majesty is, that, as soon as the room at Exiles, which you shall judge the most proper for the secure keeping of the two prisoners in the lower part of the tower, shall be in a state to receive them, you should send them out of the citadel of Pignerol in a litter, and conduct them there under the escort of your troop.”¹¹⁰ “His Majesty expects that you will guard the two before-mentioned prisoners, with the same exactitude you have made use of hitherto.”¹¹¹ To these instructions St. Mars returned an answer in the same strain, dated from Pignerol, as he was on the point of setting off for Exiles. – “In order that the prisoners may not be seen (at Exiles), they will not leave their chamber when they hear mass; and in order that they may be kept the more securely, one of my lieutenants will sleep above them, and there will be two sentinels night and day, who will watch the whole round of the tower, without its being possible for them and the prisoners to see and to speak to one another, or even to hear any thing of one another. They will be the soldiers of my company, who will be always the sentinels over the prisoners. There is only a confessor, about whom I have my doubts; but if you do not disapprove, I will give them the curate of Exiles instead, who is a good man, and very old; whom I will forbid, on the part of his Majesty, to inquire who these

¹⁰⁵ Exiles was taken from the French in 1708, by the Duke of Savoy, but restored to them by the treaty of Utrecht.

¹⁰⁶ Appendix, [No. 111](#).

¹⁰⁷ Appendix, [No. 111](#).

¹⁰⁸ Appendix, [No. 112](#).

¹⁰⁹ Appendix, [No. 111](#).

¹¹⁰ Appendix, [No. 112](#).

¹¹¹ [Ibid.](#)

prisoners are, or their names, or what they have been, or to speak of them in any way, or to receive from them by word of mouth, or by writing, either communications or notes.”¹¹²

Before St. Mars removed finally to Exiles, he went there to inspect the fortress, leaving his prisoners under the guard of one of his lieutenants; which is here mentioned to show the falseness of the idea that he never quitted his mysterious prisoner. Louvois enjoined him before he left them, to arrange the guarding of his prisoners in such a manner, that no accident might happen to them during his short absence; and “that they might have no intercourse with any one, any more than they had had during the time they had been under his charge.”¹¹³ Subsequently Louvois desired him not to be more than one night at a time absent from Pignerol.¹¹⁴

St. Mars found certain repairs to be necessary to that part of the fortress of Exiles, which he deemed the most proper residence for “the two prisoners in the lower part of the tower.” He demanded money for this purpose, and Louvois returned for answer that the King accorded him a thousand crowns, on condition he kept the grant a profound secret, and gave out that the repairs he was making, were at his own expense.¹¹⁵ This again was evidently for the purpose of concealing from the neighbourhood, that any prisoners of importance were to be removed from Pignerol to Exiles.

The repairs of the tower at Exiles first delayed the removal of St. Mars, and afterwards he was ordered to stay some time longer at Pignerol, in order to receive Catinat, who was again sent there secretly, again under the assumed name of Richemont, and again for the purpose of taking possession of Casale.¹¹⁶ This time the King of France was more fortunate than he had been in 1679, as Casale was actually sold to him by the Duke of Mantua, in the autumn of this year, 1681.

Finally, it appears that St. Mars and his prisoners did not move to Exiles till late in the autumn of 1681. About this time, St. Mars apparently requested permission to see and converse with Matthioli occasionally, for Louvois writes, “this word is only to acknowledge the receipt of your letter. The King does not disapprove of your visiting from time to time the last prisoner who has been placed in your charge, after he shall have been established in his new prison, and shall have left that where he is at present confined.”¹¹⁷ It is rather curious to observe, from this document, that St. Mars was permitted to visit his prisoner at Exiles, but not while he continued at Pignerol.

The first communication of St. Mars to Louvois after his arrival at Exiles, which has been published, is dated December the 4th, 1681,¹¹⁸ and relates to the sickness of his prisoners: and the next is a letter, dated March 11th, 1682, containing a similar detail to those already alluded to, of the precautions he took for the security and solitary confinement of his two prisoners. He begins, by intimating that he has again received a charge from Louvois to that effect, and that he continues to guard his two prisoners as severely and exactly as he has ever done, and as he did formerly “Messrs. Fouquet and Lauzun, who could not boast that they had either sent or received any news, while they were in confinement.” He adds, that the two prisoners can hear the people who pass along the road at the foot of their prison, but that they cannot be heard by any one; that, in the same way, they can see the people who are on the hill opposite their windows, but cannot themselves be seen, on account of the bars placed across their room; that there are two sentinels always watching them, and who have also orders to prevent the passengers stopping under their windows – and that his own room, being joined to the tower, and commanding a view of the sentinels, the latter are by this means always kept alert. That, in the inside of the tower, he has made a partition, which prevents the priest, who says mass, from seeing the prisoners, as well as the servants who bring their food – which is afterwards

¹¹² Appendix, [No. 115](#).

¹¹³ Appendix, [No. 111](#).

¹¹⁴ Appendix, [No. 117](#).

¹¹⁵ Appendix, [No. 113](#).

¹¹⁶ Appendix, [Nos. 114, 115](#).

¹¹⁷ Appendix, [No. 120](#).

¹¹⁸ Appendix, [No. 121](#).

carried in to them by his lieutenant; who, together with himself, the confessor, and a physician from Pragelas, a town six leagues distant, are the only persons who speak to them; the physician only being allowed to do so in the presence of St. Mars himself. He adds, that equal precautions are taken with regard to their linen, and other necessaries.¹¹⁹

From this period, we hear no more of St. Mars and his prisoners in the published documents, for above three years; his next communication to Louvois being dated Dec. 23d, 1685; in which he informs him that his prisoners are still ill, and in a course of medicine. By the expression *still* being here used, it would seem as if their malady had been of considerable duration. He continues, “they are, however, perfectly tranquil.”¹²⁰ The mention of their present tranquillity is certainly an indication that their insanity had continued, at least at intervals.

Shortly after this, the Jacobin¹²¹ died. Matthioli continued ill; and St. Mars, also finding his own health failing him, he¹²² became convinced that the air of Exiles was unwholesome, and petitioned in consequence for a change of government.¹²³ Lewis upon this appointed him, in 1687, to that of the Islands of St. Margaret and St. Honorat, on the coast of Provence, near Antibes, and ordered him, as before, to take Matthioli with him.

As in the case of his removal to Exiles, so, upon the present occasion, St. Mars went first to look at and prepare the prison at St. Margaret, before he conveyed his prisoner there.¹²⁴ Previously, however, to leaving him for that purpose, he writes to Louvois, to assure him once more of the secrecy and security with which he is confined – “I have given such good orders for the guarding of my prisoner, that I can answer for his entire security; as well as for his not now, nor ever, holding any intercourse with my Lieutenant, whom I have forbidden to speak to him, which is punctually obeyed.”¹²⁵

He afterwards writes again to the same Minister, from the Island of St. Margaret, “I promise to conduct my prisoner here in all security, without any one’s seeing or speaking to him. He shall not hear mass after he leaves Exiles, till he is lodged in the prison which is preparing for him here, to which a chapel is attached. I pledge my honour to you for the entire security of my prisoner.”¹²⁶

St. Mars accordingly returned for Matthioli, and conveyed him to his new abode, in the manner he had proposed doing, in his letter to Louvois, of January 20th, 1687 – “In a chair, covered with oil-cloth, into which there would enter a sufficiency of air, without its being possible for any one to see or speak to him during the journey, not even the soldiers, whom I shall select to be near the chair.”¹²⁷

In spite of the expectations of St. Mars that, in this mode of conveyance, his prisoner would have air enough, it appears that he complained of the want of it, and soon fell ill in consequence. This is mentioned in a letter of St. Mars, dated May 3d, 1687, giving an account of their arrival at the Island of St. Margaret, and is the last of the correspondence between Louvois and St. Mars respecting Matthioli: “I arrived here the 30th of last month. I was only twelve days on the journey, in consequence of the illness of my prisoner, occasioned, as he said, by not having as much air as he wished. I can assure you that no one has seen him, and that the manner in which I have guarded and conducted him during all the journey, makes every body try to conjecture who my prisoner is.”¹²⁸

¹¹⁹ Appendix, [No. 121](#).

¹²⁰ Appendix, [No. 123](#).

¹²¹ Roux (Fazillac).

¹²² [Ibid.](#)

¹²³ [Ibid.](#)

¹²⁴ Appendix, [Nos. 124, 125](#).

¹²⁵ Appendix, [No. 124](#).

¹²⁶ Appendix, [No. 125](#).

¹²⁷ Appendix, [No. 124](#).

¹²⁸ Appendix, [No. 126](#).

It was probably, during this journey, that St. Mars first made use of a mask to hide the features of Matthioli.¹²⁹ Not as has been erroneously supposed a mask made of iron, which it will be evident, upon the slightest reflection, could not have been borne upon the face for any long continuance of time, but one of black velvet,¹³⁰ strengthened with whalebone, and fastened behind the head with a padlock, which did not prevent the prisoner from eating and drinking, or impede his respiration.¹³¹

The identity of Matthioli with the prisoner known by the name of “the Iron Mask,” is here very satisfactorily confirmed by circumstantial evidence. We have seen that Matthioli and the Jacobin were placed together at Pignerol; we have seen that they were designated as “the two prisoners in the lower part of the tower;” we have seen that “the two prisoners in the lower part of the tower” were the only ones who accompanied St. Mars when his government was transferred to Exiles; we have seen the death of the Jacobin at the latter place; and now we find St. Mars conveying a single prisoner, designated as “*the prisoner*,” with him to St. Margaret, with a repetition of the same precautions and of the same secrecy as on former occasions, to which are added the celebrated Mask. Who could this prisoner be but Matthioli? It is also observable, that in all the various accounts of the Iron Mask, though the dates are made to vary, he is always said to have been originally confined at Pignerol, subsequently at the island of St. Margaret, and finally to have accompanied St. Mars to the Bastille.

The prison of Matthioli, at the Island of St. Margaret, was a room lighted by a single window to the north, pierced in a very thick wall, guarded by bars of iron, and looking upon the sea.¹³² During his residence in this place, his valet, who, as may be remembered, had been arrested by Estrades, and who had served his master ever since his confinement, died, and was buried at midnight, and with great secrecy. To supply his place, a woman of the neighbourhood was asked if she would undertake to wait upon the prisoner. At first she consented to accept of the place, imagining it might be a means of benefiting her family; but afterwards declined it, upon learning that she was to be cut off from all further intercourse with the world, and never even to see her family again.¹³³ Whether any one was eventually found to undertake the office, does not appear.

Among the erroneous anecdotes that have obtained credence with regard to the Iron Mask, there are two, or rather apparently two versions of one event, which is said to have taken place while he was at the island of St. Margaret, but which is proved to be incorrect, by a letter published by M. Roux (Fazillac).

One version of the story states, that the mysterious prisoner wrote his name and qualities with the point of a knife upon a silver plate, and threw it out of his window; that it was picked up by a fisherman, who could not read, but brought it to St. Mars; and that the latter, having ascertained that the man could not read, released him.¹³⁴ The other version is, that the prisoner covered one of his shirts with writing, and then threw it out of window; a Monk found it, brought it to the Governor, and assured him he had not read it; but was himself found dead in his bed two days afterwards, and was supposed to have been assassinated.¹³⁵ The origin of these stories, is evidently to be found in a letter from St. Mars to the Minister,¹³⁶ dated June 4th, 1692; in which he informs him that he has been obliged to inflict corporal punishment upon a Protestant minister, named Salves, who was a prisoner under his care, because *he would write things upon his pewter vessels, and on his linen, in*

¹²⁹ Delort.

¹³⁰ Extract of Dujonca’s journal, in Mr. Craufurd’s article upon “L’Homme au Masque de fer.”

¹³¹ Delort.

¹³² Papon in his “Histoire générale de Provence” informs us that he went to see the room.

¹³³ “Histoire générale de Provence, du Père Papon.”

¹³⁴ See “Mélanges d’Histoire et de Littérature,” by Mr. Quintin Craufurd.

¹³⁵ See the same work of Mr. Quintin Craufurd.

¹³⁶ This must have been Lewis Francis Le Tellier, Marquis de Barbezieux, who, in the preceding year, had succeeded his father, Louvois, in the post of Secretary of State for the War Department. He was an indolent but intelligent Minister. – Died in 1701, aged 33.

*order to make known that he was imprisoned unjustly, on account of the purity of his faith.*¹³⁷ Thus we see that this anecdote, which has been twisted into the history of the Iron Mask, had, in fact, no relation to him. And this circumstance should put us on our guard with respect to the many other marvellous stories, which have probably been pressed in the same way into the service. It is also worthy of remark that the public having determined that the Iron Mask was a great Prince, every thing was related in a manner to favour this opinion – and thus the pewter of the obscure Salves was turned, in the anecdote, into silver plate.

After eleven years' tedious confinement at the Island of St. Margaret, Matthioli accompanied St. Mars to the Bastille, to the government of which the latter was appointed, upon the death of M. de Bezemaux, which occurred in the last days of 1697.¹³⁸

Before his departure from St. Margaret, St. Mars wrote to the Minister to request that secure lodgings might be provided for him and his prisoner during the journey; to which he received for answer, "It will be sufficient that you should lodge as conveniently and securely as you can, by means of payment."¹³⁹

St. Mars accordingly set forth on his journey to the Bastille, early in the autumn of 1698, and in the course of it lodged at his own estate of Palteau, which he probably considered a securer resting place for his prisoner than any inn could have been. An account of his visit to Palteau has been given by one of his descendants, of whose accuracy no reasonable doubt can be entertained.

It is there stated, that the masked prisoner arrived at Palteau in a litter, which preceded the one in which St. Mars himself travelled. They were accompanied by many men on horseback, and by the peasants who had gone to meet their landlord. St. Mars always ate with his prisoner, and the latter sat with his back to the windows of the dining-room, so that the peasants, who were in the court, could not see whether he kept his mask on while at meals; but they observed that St. Mars, who sat opposite to him, had two pistols placed by the side of his plate. They were served by a single servant, who brought all the dishes from the anti-room, where they were placed, and always when he came in or went out shut the door very carefully after him. When the prisoner crossed the court, he always had his black mask over his face. The peasants also observed, that his teeth and lips were seen, that he was tall of stature, and had grey hair. St. Mars slept in a bed, which had been put up close to that of his prisoner.¹⁴⁰

St. Mars and Matthioli arrived at the Bastille on the 18th of September, 1698, and the former immediately went to the Minister to apprise him of their arrival.¹⁴¹ This event is thus commemorated in the journal of M. Dujonca,¹⁴² who was for many years the Lieutenant of the King, at the Bastille: – "Thursday, 18th September, 1698, at three o'clock in the afternoon, M. de St. Mars, Governor of the Bastille, arrived to take possession of his office, coming from the Islands of St. Margaret and St. Honorat, bringing with him in his litter an old prisoner, whom he had under his care at Pignerol, of whom the name is not mentioned; who is always kept masked, and who was first placed, till night, in

¹³⁷ Appendix, [No. 127](#).

¹³⁸ Delort.

¹³⁹ Delort, quoting from an unpublished letter (probably from Barbezieux), dated August 4th, 1698. – It may be as well to mention here that M. Delort frequently quotes portions of letters from the French Archives, but does not publish them in his appendix. When in the course of this narrative the name of M. Delort is given as an authority, it is, for the most part, under these circumstances.

¹⁴⁰ Such is the account given by M. de Palteau, the direct descendant of St. Mars, in a letter to Freron, dated Palteau, June 19th, 1768. It was published in the "Année Littéraire" for that year, and has since been republished by Mr. Craufurd, in his paper on the Iron Mask.

¹⁴¹ Delort.

¹⁴² The place of "Lieutenant de Roi," at the Bastille, was created by Lewis the Fourteenth, for M. Dujonca, who had been "Exempt" of one of the regiments of the King's Body-guards. He acquired great credit by his endeavours to procure the release of the prisoners under his care, whom, upon inquiry, he found to be unjustly detained. Some one represented to him that he would deprive himself of a great portion of his profits by thus diminishing the number of prisoners – to which he replied, "*I can only lose my money, but these unhappy people are deprived of what is more valuable to them than even life itself.*"

the tower of the Basiniere,¹⁴³ and whom I conducted afterwards myself, at nine o'clock at night, to the third chamber of the tower of the Bertaudière;¹⁴³ which chamber I had taken care to furnish with all things necessary before his arrival, having received orders to that effect from M. de St. Mars. When I conducted him to the before-mentioned chamber, I was accompanied by the Sieur Rosarges,¹⁴⁴ whom M. de St. Mars also brought with him, and who is charged to wait upon and take care of the aforesaid prisoner, who is fed by the Governor."¹⁴⁵

Dujonca's account is confirmed by the extracts of the Register of the Bastille, published in the work entitled "La Bastille dévoilée."¹⁴⁶

The placing of the prisoner, on his first arrival, temporarily in one part of the Bastille, and afterwards removing him by night to another, appears to have been done for the sake of greater secrecy; and we see by this, as well as by the account of his visit to Palteau, that the precautions against the possibility of discovery of his name and character were in no way diminished.

He certainly continued, from all accounts, to wear his mask from the time of his arrival at the Bastille till his death. We learn from the persons who saw him at Palteau that he was tall of stature; and an old physician, who had attended him at the Bastille when he was ill, described him (if we may credit Voltaire) as well made, of a brown complexion, and possessing an agreeable voice. He attended mass occasionally, and was forbid in his way there to speak to any one. The invalids were ordered to fire upon him if he disobeyed.¹⁴⁷ He is also said to have occupied himself a good deal during his confinement with playing on the guitar.¹⁴⁸

These are all the particulars, worthy of credit, to be collected respecting Matthioli during his confinement at the Bastille, which lasted rather more than five years. He died there after a few hours' illness, November 19th, 1703. Dujonca's journal gives the following account of his decease and interment.

"Monday, 19th November, 1708. The unknown prisoner, who was always masked with a mask of black velvet, whom M. de St. Mars brought with him, when he came from the Islands of St Margaret, and whom he had had the care of for a long time, having found himself rather more unwell when he came out from mass, died to-day, about ten o'clock in the evening, without having had any considerable illness. M. Girault, our chaplain, confessed him yesterday. Death having come suddenly on, he was not able to receive his sacraments, and our chaplain only had time to exhort him for a moment before he died. He was interred on Tuesday the 20th November, at four in the afternoon, in the church-yard of St. Paul, which is our parish. His interment cost forty livres."

This extract is confirmed in its facts by the register of the Bastille,¹⁴⁹ as well as by the register of burials of the church of St. Paul, at Paris. The former document also informs us that he was wrapped in "a winding-sheet of new linen,"¹⁵⁰— and the latter, that he was buried in the presence of Rosarges, Major of the Bastille, and of Reilh, Surgeon-Major of the same prison.

In the register of the church he is designated by the name of Marchialy, and his age is entered as forty-five; assertions which are both of them evidently incorrect, and probably only made in order to mislead the curious. At the time of his death, Matthioli was sixty-three years of age, as appears from the date of his birth before given. Shortly before he died, he told the Apothecary of the Bastille that he believed he was sixty years¹⁵¹ old — a degree of inaccuracy as to his own age, which is easily

¹⁴³ These towers are supposed to have been so called from the names of the architects who built them.

¹⁴⁴ Rosarges was made Major of the Bastille by St. Mars.

¹⁴⁵ Extract from the Journal of Dujonca, first published by Griffet, then by St. Foix, and subsequently by Mr. Craufurd.

¹⁴⁶ Appendix, [No. 128](#).

¹⁴⁷ Mr. Craufurd, on the authority of Linguet.

¹⁴⁸ Delort and Craufurd.

¹⁴⁹ Appendix, [No. 129](#).

¹⁵⁰ Appendix, [No. 129](#).

¹⁵¹ Delort.

to be conceived in a man who had been so long and so rigorously imprisoned. His confinement had lasted above twenty-four years.

After the decease of Matthioli, every thing was done to endeavour to destroy all trace even of his former existence. His clothes were burnt, as was all the furniture of his room; the silver plate, the copper, and the pewter, which had been used by him, were melted down; the walls of his chamber were first scraped, and then fresh white-washed; the floor was new paved; the old ceiling was taken away and renewed; the doors and windows were burnt; and every corner was searched in which it was thought any paper, linen, or other memorial of him might be concealed.¹⁵²

Thus were continued, to the very last, the same extraordinary precautions against discovery, which marked the whole imprisonment of the mysterious prisoner: a circumstance, which of itself certainly affords a strong confirmation of the fact, that the *Iron Mask of the Bastille*, was one and the same person with the *Count Matthioli*, who had been so secretly introduced into Pignerol, and so mysteriously conveyed from place to place by St. Mars. But the actual proof of this is only to be found in the documents which form the groundwork of the preceding narrative; and which, undoubtedly, do present a most convincing and satisfactory chain of evidence upon the subject.

An important corroboration of this evidence is also derived from the well-attested fact, that Lewis the Fifteenth, who is allowed, on all hands, to have known the history of the Iron Mask, affirmed, more than once, that *he was the minister of an Italian sovereign*. He told the Duke de Choiseul,¹⁵³ on one occasion, that he knew who the Iron Mask was; and, upon the Duke's questioning him further, would only add, *that all the conjectures hitherto made upon the subject were erroneous*.¹⁵⁴ The Duke then begged Madame de Pompadour¹⁵⁵ to ask the King who it was; she did so, and his reply was, "*The minister of an Italian prince!*"¹⁵⁶ The Duke de Choiseul, unsatisfied by this reply, which he considered to be only an evasion, took another opportunity of again applying to the King upon the subject, who again answered, "*He believed that the prisoner was a minister of one of the courts of Italy!*"¹⁵⁷

Thus has the ill-fated Matthioli been identified with the Iron Mask, and traced through his long and dreary prison to his grave. It is probable that much of the illusion and interest, which accompanied the mysterious appellation of *the Iron Mask*, will be destroyed by the certainty of who he really was; as well as by the comparative insignificance of the personage who has successfully laid claim to the

¹⁵² Mr. Craufurd, on the authority of M. Delaunay, Governor of the Bastille. Also Register of the Bastille; for which see Appendix, [No. 129](#).

¹⁵³ Stephen Francis, Duke de Choiseul, Prime Minister under Lewis the Fifteenth, for above twelve years. A man of some talent, but an unskilful and extravagant minister; in spite of which, on his disgrace, (through the means of Madame du Barri, in 1770) he was turned into a martyr, by the influence of the ladies of the court, who were angry with the King for choosing his mistresses from the lower orders, instead of among them. To do him honour snuff-boxes were made, bearing the head of Sully on one side, and that of the Duke de Choiseul on the other. One of them being shown to *Sophie Arnould*, the actress, celebrated for her repartees, she looked at the two sides, and said, "*C'est la recette – et la dépense.*"

¹⁵⁴ This first answer of the king ought not to be entirely overlooked; as, it will be remembered, that at the time it was made, the minister of the Duke of Mantua had not been mentioned by any one as the Iron Mask. He was first suggested to have been that prisoner, by the Baron de Heiss, in a letter to the authors of the "*Journal Encyclopédique*," dated Phalsbourg, June 28th, 1770; in which he grounded his opinion upon a letter, published in a work entitled "*L'Histoire Abregée de l'Europe*;" published at Leyden in 1687; giving a detailed account of the arrest, by French agents, of a secretary of the Duke of Mantua. ¹⁵⁵ M. Dutens, in his "*Correspondance Interceptée*," published in 1789, held the same opinion, grounded upon the same authority. He afterwards repeated the same opinion in his "*Mémoires d'un Voyageur, qui se repose.*" Finally, M. Roux, (Fazillac) in 1801, published his work upon the Iron Mask; in which he supported the same opinion; and attached to the Secretary the name of Matthioli.

¹⁵⁵ Jane Antoinette Poisson, married to a financier named Le Normand d'Etioles; created Marquise de Pompadour by Lewis the Fifteenth, of whom she was first the mistress, and afterwards the minister of his disgraceful debauches. At her death, in 1765, the King showed no signs of grief; and on seeing her funeral go by his windows on a rainy day, his only remark was, "*La Marquise aura aujourd'hui un mauvais temps pour son voyage!*"

¹⁵⁶ Appendix, [No. 131](#).

¹⁵⁷ Appendix, [Nos. 131, 132](#). Madame Campan mentions having heard Lewis the Sixteenth tell his wife, that the Count de Maurepas (who, both from his age and situation, was very likely to know the truth,) had informed him that the *Iron Mask* was "a prisoner dangerous from his intriguing disposition, and a subject of the Duke of Mantua."

title. Still it is surely satisfactory that truth, after being so long overwhelmed by error, should be at length triumphant.

The lovers of romance, who still wish to know more of the magnificent conjectures of former days; or who desire to be made acquainted with the reasons that induced a belief, that the Iron Mask was either the Duke de Beaufort; or the Count de Vermandois; or the Duke of Monmouth; or an elder or a twin-brother of Lewis the Fourteenth; or a son of Oliver Cromwell; or Arwediks, the Armenian Patriarch; are referred to Voltaire, Dutens, St. Foix, La Grange Chancel, Gibbon, the Père Papon, the Père Griffet, the Chevalier de Taulés, and Mr. Quintin Craufurd. Of these accounts, perhaps Voltaire's is the least curious, find Mr. Craufurd's the most so; because the first did not seek for truth, but only wished to invent a moving tale; while the latter was most anxious to arrive at the truth, and had all the advantage in his researches of the former writers upon the same subject.

APPENDIX

No. 1

ESTRADES TO LEWIS THE FOURTEENTH

Commencement of the Negociation. – State of the Court of Mantua. –
Influence of the Spaniards there.
Venice, Dec 18th, 1677.

Sire,

As the grief I felt at having displeased your Majesty was extreme, so my joy is not less to learn from M. de Pomponne, that your Majesty has had the goodness to pardon me my too great facility; and that you have been graciously pleased to listen to the reasons, which I took the liberty to offer to you, in justification of the innocence of my intentions; however, Sire, this misfortune will oblige me, in future, to act in all things with so great a circumspection, that your Majesty will, I hope, never have cause to be dissatisfied with my conduct.

I have thus far deferred informing your Majesty of a project, which my anxiety for your service has suggested to me, because the success of it appeared so difficult that I did not venture to propose it, till I saw some chance of being able to accomplish it; but, as the affair is at present in a favourable state, I can almost assure your Majesty, that the conclusion of it will depend upon yourself. I shall now give you an exact account of it, in order that I may receive the orders it shall please you to send me; which I will take care to execute punctually. About four months ago, having become more particularly acquainted with the divisions at the Court at Mantua than before was the case, and having heard that the Duke of Mantua was not so abandoned to his pleasures, but that he still had some ambition, and much chagrin at the state to which he was reduced by his mother, and his suspicions of the Spaniards; I hoped that it would not be impossible, to detach him entirely from them, to induce him to enter into the views of your Majesty, and to persuade him really to treat respecting Casale. I have thought that I could not employ any one in this affair more proper to conduct it, than a certain Count Matthioli, who is entirely devoted to that prince; I had already known him for some time, and he had testified a great desire of rendering himself agreeable to your Majesty by some service. I knew that he had been Secretary of State to the late Duke of Mantua, that the present one had preserved much affection for him, and that he was well-informed of the different interests of the Princes of Italy; but as he had been much in the Milanese, and had had a good deal of access to the Spanish ministers, I would not put any confidence in him, till I had first tried him. I therefore charged the individual, named Giuliani, to whom your Majesty had the goodness to make six months ago a gratification, and who has a zeal for your service which prevents my having any doubt of his fidelity, to observe Matthioli attentively and secretly; and after I had been sufficiently informed that he was much discontented with the Spaniards, who had always amused him with hopes, and afterwards abandoned him, I sent Giuliani, in the month of last October, to Verona, where he went under pretext of his private affairs; but in fact, to put Matthioli, who was there, upon the subject of the Duke of Mantua, according to the instruction I had given him, and to represent to him that those who had an attachment for their prince, could not but be much afflicted to see him, at his age, still under the guidance of his mother; without money, without authority, always in a state of suspicion against those who are habitually about him; and what is worse, in so insensible a state, that he only thought of passing his life with actresses and women of the town; which had made him lose the esteem of every body, and the consideration which his rank ought to have given him: that so strange a way of life, as well as the opinion that was prevalent that he would never have children by his wife, though she was as young as himself, induced

the Spaniards to foment the divisions that existed in this Court, in order to profit by them, and to try and obtain possession of Casale and of all the Montferrat; that the said Giuliani had heard me say, that I was well-informed that the Empress Eleanor had already declared her pretensions to put herself in possession of that part of the territories of Mantua; that the king of Spain supported strongly those of a Spanish nobleman, who, in virtue of his marriage with the niece of the Duke of Guastalla, by whom he has children, maintains that he is the sole heir of that duke, to the prejudice of the Duke of Mantua, who has married his daughter, and who is besides his nearest relation; that, on the other hand, the absolute control over all the territories of this prince, and all the revenues, were in the hands of his mother and of the monk Bulgarini; that, of all those who serve him as ministers, some are gained by the Spaniards, others by the Empress Eleanor, and the rest by the Duke of Guastalla; that his mother has also a part of them on her side, but that these are the smallest number, and in short, that it is a sort of miracle that he has not been already deprived of his territories, but that he runs the risk of it every day, and that the misfortune may happen to him when he is the least prepared for it; that he has no choice of the means to be made use of to guarantee himself against it, but that it is the protection of your Majesty which is alone able to give him complete security. Matthioli replied to him, that all he had been saying to him was quite true, and that he had long, with grief, seen the truth of it; but that there was still a remedy for so great an evil; that he was sufficiently acquainted with the Duke of Mantua to know that he had more talent and ambition than he was thought to have; that, if I approved of it, he would discover his real sentiments, and that he would charge himself with whatever negotiation I wished. That, meanwhile, he would go to —¹⁵⁸, in order to be nearer to Mantua, where he could not go without making himself suspected by the different parties who governed there, and that there he would wait till I made known to him my intentions. Some days afterwards, he sent me word that he had found means to have a secret interview with the Duke of Mantua; and that he wished me, in order that we might act in concert, to send him Giuliani, whom I have always made use of in the different journeys that were to be made, because his employment of sending the news through the different parts of Italy, gave him occasion to go from one town to another, and prevented any suspicion of him, as there would have infallibly been, if I had sent any one of my household. I despatched him, therefore, with a new instruction, and not only had he an audience of the Duke of Mantua, to whom he spoke as I had desired him, but this prince even approved very much of the proposition that was made him, to deliver him from the continual inquietudes caused him by the Spaniards, and that, for this purpose, Casale should be put into your Majesty's hands, with the understanding that I should try to obtain from you in his favour all that he could reasonably ask for. Finally, he declared that his resolution was taken upon this subject, but, that things might be better adjusted, he wished to communicate it to two of his counsellors, in whom he had the most confidence, and that he gave the selection of them to Matthioli, in order that he might be quite secure of them. Matthioli named the Marquis Cavriani and Joseph Varano, in whom he has confidence. Meanwhile the Duke of Mantua sent Giuliani to me, to acquaint me with what had passed, and recommended him to return as soon as possible, in order to receive the draft of the plan, which would then be prepared – and to convey it to me. I was much pleased, Sire, to see the affair in so good a train. I sent Giuliani back quickly, and ordered him to tell the Duke of Mantua that I entreated him to allow me to have a conference with him; that your Majesty had not as yet any knowledge of the proposed treaty, because I could not venture to go so far as that, without being certain first that he would not disavow me in what I should have the honour of writing to your Majesty, and also that he would have sufficient power to execute what had been arranged.

Giuliani returned here yesterday, bringing me as favourable answers as I could possibly desire. He told me that the two counsellors of the Duke of Mantua had, with every sort of precaution, commenced their negotiation with Matthioli; that they had approved of the resolution of their master,

¹⁵⁸ The name of the place is not stated in the letter.

and that they had put down in the schedule, with which they had charged him, and which I join to this letter, what the Duke requests your Majesty to grant to him; that afterwards the Duke of Mantua called him to him; that he ordered him to beg me to assure your Majesty of his respect and of his attachment to your interests, and to acquaint me that he had entirely put himself into the hands of the Count Matthioli; that he would soon go to Venice, where we might see one another conveniently and without being observed, on account of the Carnival, during which, all the world, even the Doge, and the oldest senators, go about in mask; that he wished me not to lose any time in acquainting your Majesty with this affair, because he feared some surprise from the Spaniards; but that if I wished him to keep his word with me, I must not, on any account, communicate the project to the Cardinal d'Estrées, because there was so strong a report in Italy, that he had your Majesty's orders to negotiate with the Princes there, of which the Spaniards had so great a jealousy, that, upon the least suspicion they should have of him (the Duke,) they would ruin him before he could receive assistance from your Majesty, who would, at the same time, lose all hope of getting possession of Casale; that he would take measures to tranquillize them, and to prevent their having any suspicions of his conduct; and that if the Cardinal d'Estrées made him any propositions, he would only receive them in full council, and give general answers, which would not render him suspected by any body. I thus find myself precluded from the confidence which I intended to make of this business to the Cardinal d'Estrées, who I believe will soon be here, and am obliged to keep the secret scrupulously, till I have received the orders of your Majesty. The Duke of Mantua also offers to raise a regiment, provided it be at your Majesty's expense, and he represents, that by recruiting at Mantua and Casale he shall do much injury to the Spaniards, who are raising troops there daily; that Joseph Varano, who is one of the two before-mentioned counsellors, promises to get a good many soldiers from the Ferrarese, where he possesses interest, being Lord of Camerigo. He also implores your Majesty to make an effort to send a sufficiently strong army into Italy, to be able to undertake something considerable; and he assures me, that, in this case, he will not content himself with having delivered Casale into the hands of your Majesty, but will obtain for your Majesty other great advantages, through the means of his intimate connexions with the other states of Italy; that the Duchy of Milan was never so feeble, nor so devoid of all means of defence, as at present; but that, in order to obtain more particular intelligence upon this head, he has given orders to Matthioli to go to Milan, to observe every thing there with attention, and especially to discover the intention of the Genoese, with regard to the report which has now been for some time afloat in Italy, that your Majesty intends sending an army there next Spring, at the latest. As some accident might happen to the packets, I have not ventured to put into mine the letter that the Count Matthioli, who has certainly served your Majesty well upon this occasion, does himself the honour to write to you, but have had it turned into cypher, as well as the memoir of the demands of the Duke of Mantua; and I keep the originals, together with the plan of Casale, which I do not send to your Majesty for the same reason. I can assure your Majesty, that I have never told either Giuliani or Matthioli that you intend to march troops towards the Milanese; but the latter speaks of it in his letter, because he has taken for granted the report which was purposely spread abroad in order to lead the Duke of Mantua to the determination I wished him to take; knowing that he desired to be generalissimo above all things, or rather that it was the only thing he was very anxious for, in order to be considered in Italy like the late Duke of Modena, and like the late Duke of Mantua, who at his age commanded in chief the Emperor's army, with the title of Vicar-general of the Empire. When this Prince is here, there will only be at the conference we are to hold together, himself, Matthioli, (whom he has promised to re-establish in his post of Secretary of State, and to appoint his first minister, as soon as he shall see himself restored to his authority, and that the treaty he intends making with your Majesty shall have been executed,) the Sieur Giuliani, the Sieur de Pinchesne, (who is secretary of the embassy, and of whom M. de Pomponne, who placed him with me, can answer to your Majesty for the fidelity and secrecy,) and myself. So the secrecy, so necessary in this affair, will certainly remain impenetrable.

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