

JEANNE LOUISE CAMPAN

MEMOIRS OF THE COURT
OF MARIE ANTOINETTE,
QUEEN OF FRANCE,
VOLUME 5

Jeanne Louise Henriette Campan

**Memoirs of the Court of
Marie Antoinette, Queen
of France, Volume 5**

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Mme. Campan
Memoirs of the Court of Marie Antoinette,
Queen of France, Volume 5 / Being the
Historic Memoirs of Madam Campan,
First Lady in Waiting to the Queen

BOOK 2

CHAPTER I

The ever-memorable oath of the States General, taken at the Tennis Court of Versailles, was followed by the royal sitting of the 23d of June. In this seance the King declared that the Orders must vote separately, and threatened, if further obstacles were met with, to himself act for the good of the people. The Queen looked on M. Necker's not accompanying the King as treachery or criminal cowardice: she said that he had converted a remedy into poison; that being in full popularity, his audacity, in openly disavowing the step taken by his sovereign, had emboldened the factious, and led away the whole Assembly; and that he was the more culpable inasmuch as he had the evening before given her his word to accompany the King. In vain did M. Necker endeavour to excuse himself by saying that his advice had not been followed.

Soon afterwards the insurrections of the 11th, 12th, and 14th of July—[The Bastille was taken on the 14th July, 1789.]—opened the disastrous drama with which France was threatened. The massacre of M. de Flesselles and M. de Launay drew bitter tears from the Queen, and the idea that the King had lost such devoted subjects wounded her to the heart.

The character of the movement was no longer merely that of a popular insurrection; cries of "Vive la Nation! Vive le Roi! Vive la Liberte!" threw the strongest light upon the views of the reformers. Still the people spoke of the King with affection, and appeared to think him favourable to the national desire for the reform of what were called abuses; but they imagined that he was restrained by the opinions and influence of the Comte d'Artois and the Queen; and those two august personages were therefore objects of hatred to the malcontents. The dangers incurred by the Comte d'Artois determined the King's first step with the States General. He attended their meeting on the morning of the 15th of July with his brothers, without pomp or escort; he spoke standing and uncovered, and pronounced these memorable words: "I trust myself to you; I only wish to be at one with my nation, and, counting on the affection and fidelity of my subjects, I have given orders to the troops to remove from Paris and Versailles." The King returned on foot from the chamber of the States General to his palace; the deputies crowded after him, and formed his escort, and that of the Princes who accompanied him. The rage of the populace was pointed against the Comte d'Artois, whose unfavourable opinion of the double representation was an odious crime in their eyes. They repeatedly cried out, "The King for ever, in spite of you and your opinions, Monseigneur!" One woman had the impudence to come up to the King and ask him whether what he had been doing was done sincerely, and whether he would not be forced to retract it.

The courtyards of the Chateau were thronged with an immense concourse of people; they demanded that the King and Queen, with their children, should make their appearance in the balcony. The Queen gave me the key of the inner doors, which led to the Dauphin's apartments, and desired

me to go to the Duchesse de Polignac to tell her that she wanted her son, and had directed me to bring him myself into her room, where she waited to show him to the people. The Duchess said this order indicated that she was not to accompany the Prince. I did not answer; she squeezed my hand, saying, "Ah! Madame Campan, what a blow I receive!" She embraced the child and me with tears. She knew how much I loved and valued the goodness and the noble simplicity of her disposition. I endeavoured to reassure her by saying that I should bring back the Prince to her; but she persisted, and said she understood the order, and knew what it meant. She then retired to her private room, holding her handkerchief to her eyes. One of the under-governesses asked me whether she might go with the Dauphin; I told her the Queen had given no order to the contrary, and we hastened to her Majesty, who was waiting to lead the Prince to the balcony.

Having executed this sad commission, I went down into the courtyard, where I mingled with the crowd. I heard a thousand vociferations; it was easy to see, by the difference between the language and the dress of some persons among the mob, that they were in disguise. A woman, whose face was covered with a black lace veil, seized me by the arm with some violence, and said, calling me by my name, "I know you very well; tell your Queen not to meddle with government any longer; let her leave her husband and our good States General to effect the happiness of the people." At the same moment a man, dressed much in the style of a marketman, with his hat pulled down over his eyes, seized me by the other arm, and said, "Yes, yes; tell her over and over again that it will not be with these States as with the others, which produced no good to the people; that the nation is too enlightened in 1789 not to make something more of them; and that there will not now be seen a deputy of the 'Tiers Etat' making a speech with one knee on the ground; tell her this, do you hear?" I was struck with dread; the Queen then appeared in the balcony. "Ah!" said the woman in the veil, "the Duchess is not with her."—"No," replied the man, "but she is still at Versailles; she is working underground, molelike; but we shall know how to dig her out." The detestable pair moved away from me, and I reentered the palace, scarcely able to support myself. I thought it my duty to relate the dialogue of these two strangers to the Queen; she made me repeat the particulars to the King.

About four in the afternoon I went across the terrace to Madame Victoire's apartments; three men had stopped under the windows of the throne-chamber. "Here is that throne," said one of them aloud, "the vestiges of which will soon be sought for." He added a thousand invectives against their Majesties. I went in to the Princess, who was at work alone in her closet, behind a canvass blind, which prevented her from being seen by those without. The three men were still walking upon the terrace; I showed them to her, and told her what they had said. She rose to take a nearer view of them, and informed me that one of them was named Saint-Huruge; that he was sold to the Duc d'Orleans, and was furious against the Government, because he had been confined once under a 'lettre de cachet' as a bad character.

The King was not ignorant of these popular threats; he also knew the days on which money was scattered about Paris, and once or twice the Queen prevented my going there, saying there would certainly be a riot the next day, because she knew that a quantity of crown pieces had been distributed in the faubourgs.

[I have seen a six-franc crown piece, which certainly served to pay some wretch on the night of the 12th of July; the words "Midnight, 12th July, three pistols," were rather deeply engraven on it. They were, no doubt, a password for the first insurrection. —MADAME COMPAN]

On the evening of the 14th of July the King came to the Queen's apartments, where I was with her Majesty alone; he conversed with her respecting the scandalous report disseminated by the factious, that he had had the Chamber of the National Assembly undermined, in order to blow it up; but he added that it became him to treat such absurd assertions with contempt, as usual; I ventured to tell him that I had the evening before supped with M. Begouen, one of the deputies, who said that there were very respectable persons who thought that this horrible contrivance had been proposed without the King's knowledge. "Then," said his Majesty, "as the idea of such an atrocity was not

revolting to so worthy a man as M. Begouen, I will order the chamber to be examined early to-morrow morning." In fact, it will be seen by the King's, speech to the National Assembly, on the 15th of July, that the suspicions excited obtained his attention. "I know," said he in the speech in question, "that unworthy insinuations have been made; I know there are those who have dared to assert that your persons are not safe; can it be necessary to give you assurances upon the subject of reports so culpable, denied beforehand by my known character?"

The proceedings of the 15th of July produced no mitigation of the disturbances. Successive deputations of poissardes came to request the King to visit Paris, where his presence alone would put an end to the insurrection.

On the 16th a committee was held in the King's apartments, at which a most important question was discussed: whether his Majesty should quit Versailles and set off with the troops whom he had recently ordered to withdraw, or go to Paris to tranquillise the minds of the people. The Queen was for the departure. On the evening of the 16th she made me take all her jewels out of their cases, to collect them in one small box, which she might carry off in her own carriage. With my assistance she burnt a large quantity of papers; for Versailles was then threatened with an early visit of armed men from Paris.

The Queen, on the morning of the 16th, before attending another committee at the King's, having got her jewels ready, and looked over all her papers, gave me one folded up but not sealed, and desired me not to read it until she should give me an order to do so from the King's room, and that then I was to execute its contents; but she returned herself about ten in the morning; the affair was decided; the army was to go away without the King; all those who were in imminent danger were to go at the same time. "The King will go to the Hotel de Ville to-morrow," said the Queen to me; "he did not choose this course for himself; there were long debates on the question; at last the King put an end to them by rising and saying, 'Well, gentlemen, we must decide; am I to go or to stay? I am ready to do either.' The majority were for the King staying; time will show whether the right choice has been made." I returned the Queen the paper she had given me, which was now useless; she read it to me; it contained her orders for the departure; I was to go with her, as well on account of my office about her person as to serve as a teacher to Madame. The Queen tore the paper, and said, with tears in her eyes, "When I wrote this I thought it would be useful, but fate has ordered otherwise, to the misfortune of us all, as I much fear."

After the departure of the troops the new administration received thanks; M. Necker was recalled. The artillery soldiers were undoubtedly corrupted. "Wherefore all these guns?" exclaimed the crowds of women who filled the streets. "Will you kill your mothers, your wives, your children?"—"Don't be afraid," answered the soldiers; "these guns shall rather be levelled against the tyrant's palace than against you!"

The Comte d'Artois, the Prince de Conde, and their children set off at the same time with the troops. The Duc and Duchesse de Polignac, their daughter, the Duchesse de Guiche, the Comtesse Diane de Polignac, sister of the Duke, and the Abbe de Baliviere, also emigrated on the same night. Nothing could be more affecting than the parting of the Queen and her friend; extreme misfortune had banished from their minds the recollection of differences to which political opinions alone had given rise. The Queen several times wished to go and embrace her once more after their sorrowful adieu, but she was too closely watched. She desired M. Campan to be present at the departure of the Duchess, and gave him a purse of five hundred Louis, desiring him to insist upon her allowing the Queen to lend her that sum to defray her expenses on the road. The Queen added that she knew her situation; that she had often calculated her income, and the expenses occasioned by her place at Court; that both husband and wife having no other fortune than their official salaries, could not possibly have saved anything, however differently people might think at Paris.

M. Campan remained till midnight with the Duchess to see her enter her carriage. She was disguised as a femme de chambre, and got up in front of the Berlin; she requested M. Campan to

remember her frequently to the Queen, and then quitted for ever that palace, that favour, and that influence which had raised her up such cruel enemies. On their arrival at Sens the travellers found the people in a state of insurrection; they asked all those who came from Paris whether the Polignacs were still with the Queen. A group of inquisitive persons put that question to the Abbe de Baliviere, who answered them in the firmest tone, and with the most cavalier air, that they were far enough from Versailles, and that we had got rid of all such bad people. At the following stage the postilion got on the doorstep and said to the Duchess, "Madame, there are some good people left in the world: I recognised you all at Sens." They gave the worthy fellow a handful of gold.

On the breaking out of these disturbances an old man above seventy years of age gave the Queen an extraordinary proof of attachment and fidelity. M. Peraque, a rich inhabitant of the colonies, father of M. d'Oudenarde, was coming from Brussels to Paris; while changing horses he was met by a young man who was leaving France, and who recommended him if he carried any letters from foreign countries to burn them immediately, especially if he had any for the Queen. M. Peraque had one from the Archduchess, the Gouvernante of the Low Countries, for her Majesty. He thanked the stranger, and carefully concealed his packet; but as he approached Paris the insurrection appeared to him so general and so violent, that he thought no means could be relied on for securing this letter from seizure. He took upon him to unseal it, and learned it by heart, which was a wonderful effort for a man at his time of life, as it contained four pages of writing. On his arrival at Paris he wrote it down, and then presented it to the Queen, telling her that the heart of an old and faithful subject had given him courage to form and execute such a resolution. The Queen received M. Peraque in her closet, and expressed her gratitude in an affecting manner most honourable to the worthy old man. Her Majesty thought the young stranger who had apprised him of the state of Paris was Prince George of Hesse-Darmstadt, who was very devoted to her, and who left Paris at that time.

The Marquise de Tourzel replaced the Duchess de Polignac. She was selected by the Queen as being the mother of a family and a woman of irreproachable conduct, who had superintended the education of her own daughters with the greatest success.

The King went to Paris on the 17th of July, accompanied by the Marechal de Beauvau, the Duc de Villeroi, and the Duc de Villequier; he also took the Comte d'Estaing, and the Marquis de Nesle, who were then very popular, in his carriage. Twelve Body Guards, and the town guard of Versailles, escorted him to the Pont du Jour, near Sevres, where the Parisian guard was waiting for him. His departure caused equal grief and alarm to his friends, notwithstanding the calmness he exhibited. The Queen restrained her tears, and shut herself up in her private rooms with her family. She sent for several persons belonging to her Court; their doors were locked. Terror had driven them away. The silence of death reigned throughout the palace; they hardly dared hope that the King would return? The Queen had a robe prepared for her, and sent orders to her stables to have all her equipages ready. She wrote an address of a few lines for the Assembly, determining to go there with her family, the officers of her palace, and her servants, if the King should be detained prisoner at Paris. She got this address by heart; it began with these words: "Gentlemen, I come to place in your hands the wife and family of your sovereign; do not suffer those who have been united in heaven to be put asunder on earth." While she was repeating this address she was often interrupted by tears, and sorrowfully exclaimed: "They will not let him return!"

It was past four when the King, who had left Versailles at ten in the morning, entered the Hotel de Ville. At length, at six in the evening, M. de Lastours, the King's first page, arrived; he was not half an hour in coming from the Barriere de la Conference to Versailles. Everybody knows that the moment of calm in Paris was that in which the unfortunate sovereign received the tricoloured cockade from M. Bailly, and placed it in his hat. A shout of "Vive le Roi!" arose on all sides; it had not been once uttered before. The King breathed again, and with tears in his eyes exclaimed that his heart stood in need of such greetings from the people. One of his equerries (M. de Cubieres) told

him the people loved him, and that he could never have doubted it. The King replied in accents of profound sensibility:

"Cubieres, the French loved Henri IV., and what king ever better deserved to be beloved?"

[Louis XVI. cherished the memory of Henri IV.: at that moment he thought of his deplorable end; but he long before regarded him as a model. Soulavie says on the subject: "A tablet with the inscription 'Resurrexit' placed upon the pedestal of Henri IV.'s statue on the accession of Louis XVI. flattered him exceedingly. 'What a fine compliment,' said he, 'if it were true! Tacitus himself never wrote anything so concise or so happy.' Louis XVI. wished to take the reign of that Prince for a model. In the following year the party that raised a commotion among the people on account of the dearness of corn removed the tablet inscribed Resurrexit from the statue of Henri IV., and placed it under that of Louis XV., whose memory was then detested, as he was believed to have traded on the scarcity of food. Louis XVI., who was informed of it, withdrew into his private apartments, where he was found in a fever shedding tears; and during the whole of that day he could not be prevailed upon either to dine, walk out, or sup. From this circumstance we may judge what he endured at the commencement of the Revolution, when he was accused of not loving the French people."—NOTE BY THE EDITOR.]

His return to Versailles filled his family with inexpressible joy; in the arms of the Queen, his sister, and his children, he congratulated himself that no accident had happened; and he repeated several times, "Happily no blood has been shed, and I swear that never shall a drop of French blood be shed by my order,"—a determination full of humanity, but too openly avowed in such factious times!

The King's last measure raised a hope in many that general tranquillity would soon enable the Assembly to resume its labours, and promptly bring its session to a close. The Queen never flattered herself so far; M. Bailly's speech to the King had equally wounded her pride and hurt her feelings. "Henri IV. conquered his people, and here are the people conquering their King." The word "conquest" offended her; she never forgave M. Bailly for this fine academical phrase.

Five days after the King's visit to Paris, the departure of the troops, and the removal of the Princes and some of the nobility whose influence seemed to alarm the people, a horrible deed committed by hired assassins proved that the King had descended the steps of his throne without having effected a reconciliation with his people.

M. Foulon, adjoint to the administration while M. de Broglie was commanding the army assembled at Versailles, had concealed himself at Viry. He was there recognised, and the peasants seized him, and dragged him to the Hotel de Ville. The cry for death was heard; the electors, the members of committee, and M. de La Fayette, at that time the idol of Paris, in vain endeavoured to save the unfortunate man. After tormenting him in a manner which makes humanity shudder, his body was dragged about the streets, and to the Palais Royal, and his heart was carried by women in the midst of a bunch of white carnations! M. Berthier, M. Foulon's son-in-law, intendant of Paris, was seized at Compiègne, at the same time that his father-in-law was seized at Viry, and treated with still more relentless cruelty.

The Queen was always persuaded that this horrible deed was occasioned by some indiscretion; and she informed me that M. Foulon had drawn up two memorials for the direction of the King's conduct at the time of his being called to Court on the removal of M. Necker; and that these memorials contained two schemes of totally different nature for extricating the King from the dreadful situation in which he was placed. In the first of these projects M. Foulon expressed himself without reserve respecting the criminal views of the Duc d'Orleans; said that he ought to be put under arrest, and that no time should be lost in commencing a prosecution against him, while the criminal tribunals were still in existence; he likewise pointed out such deputies as should be apprehended, and advised the King not to separate himself from his army until order was restored.

His other plan was that the King should make himself master of the revolution before its complete explosion; he advised his Majesty to go to the Assembly, and there, in person, to demand the cahiers,

[Cahiers, the memorials or lists of complaints, grievances, and requirements of the electors drawn up by the primary assemblies and sent with the deputies.]

and to make the greatest sacrifices to satisfy the legitimate wishes of the people, and not to give the factious time to enlist them in aid of their criminal designs. Madame Adelaide had M. Foulon's two memorials read to her in the presence of four or five persons. One of them, Comte Louis de Narbonne, was very intimate with Madame de Stael, and that intimacy gave the Queen reason to believe that the opposite party had gained information of M. Foulon's schemes.

It is known that young Barnave, during an aberration of mind, since expiated by sincere repentance, and even by death, uttered these atrocious words: "Is then the blood now, flowing so pure?" when M. Berthier's son came to the Assembly to implore the eloquence of M. de Lally to entreat that body to save his father's life. I have since been informed that a son of M. Foulon, having returned to France after these first ebullitions of the Revolution, saw Barnave, and gave him one of those memorials in which M. Foulon advised Louis XVI. to prevent the revolutionary explosion by voluntarily granting all that the Assembly required before the 14th of July. "Read this memorial," said he; "I have brought it to increase your remorse: it is the only revenge I wish to inflict on you." Barnave burst into tears, and said to him all that the profoundest grief could dictate.

CHAPTER II

After the 14th of July, by a manoeuvre for which the most skilful factions of any age might have envied the Assembly, the whole population of France was armed and organised into a National Guard. A report was spread throughout France on the same day, and almost at the same hour, that four thousand brigands were marching towards such towns or villages as it was wished to induce to take arms. Never was any plan better laid; terror spread at the same moment all over the kingdom. In 1791 a peasant showed me a steep rock in the mountains of the Mont d'Or on which his wife concealed herself on the day when the four thousand brigands were to attack their village, and told me they had been obliged to make use of ropes to let her down from the height which fear alone had enabled her to climb.

Versailles was certainly the place where the national military uniform appeared most offensive. All the King's valets, even of the lowest class, were metamorphosed into lieutenants or captains; almost all the musicians of the chapel ventured one day to make their appearance at the King's mass in a military costume; and an Italian soprano adopted the uniform of a grenadier captain. The King was very much offended at this conduct, and forbade his servants to appear in his presence in so unsuitable a dress.

The departure of the Duchesse de Polignac naturally left the Abbe de Vermond exposed to all the dangers of favouritism. He was already talked of as an adviser dangerous to the nation. The Queen was alarmed at it, and recommended him to remove to Valenciennes, where Count Esterhazy was in command. He was obliged to leave that place in a few days and set off for Vienna, where he remained.

On the night of the 17th of July the Queen, being unable to sleep, made me watch by her until three in the morning. I was extremely surprised to hear her say that it would be a very long time before the Abbe de Vermond would make his appearance at Court again, even if the existing ferment should subside, because he would not readily be forgiven for his attachment to the Archbishop of Sens; and that she had lost in him a very devoted servant. Then she suddenly remarked to me, that although he was not much prejudiced against me I could not have much regard for him, because he could not bear my father-in-law to hold the place of secretary of the closet. She went on to say that I must have studied the Abbe's character, and, as I had sometimes drawn her portraits of living characters, in imitation of those which were fashionable in the time of Louis XIV., she desired me to sketch that of the Abbe, without any reserve. My astonishment was extreme; the Queen spoke of the man who, the day before, had been in the greatest intimacy with her with the utmost coolness, and as a person whom, perhaps, she might never see again! I remained petrified; the Queen persisted, and told me that he had been the enemy of my family for more than twelve years, without having been able to injure it in her opinion; so that I had no occasion to dread his return, however severely I might depict him. I promptly summarised my ideas about the favourite; but I only remember that the portrait was drawn with sincerity, except that everything which could denote antipathy was kept out of it. I shall make but one extract from it: I said that he had been born talkative and indiscreet, and had assumed a character of singularity and abruptness in order to conceal those two failings. The Queen interrupted me by saying, "Ah! how true that is!" I have since discovered that, notwithstanding the high favour which the Abbe de Vermond enjoyed, the Queen took precautions to guard herself against an ascendancy the consequences of which she could not calculate.

On the death of my father-in-law his executors placed in my hands a box containing a few jewels deposited by the Queen with M. Campan on the departure from Versailles of the 6th of October, and two sealed packets, each inscribed, "Campan will take care of these papers for me." I took the two packets to her Majesty, who kept the jewels and the larger packet, and, returning me the smaller, said, "Take care of that for me as your father-in-law did."

After the fatal 10th of August, 1792,—[The day of the attack on the Tuileries, slaughter of the Swiss guard, and suspension of the King from his functions.]—when my house was about to be surrounded, I determined to burn the most interesting papers of which I was the depositary; I thought it my duty, however, to open this packet, which it might perhaps be necessary for me to preserve at all hazards. I saw that it contained a letter from the Abbe de Vermond to the Queen. I have already related that in the earlier days of Madame de Polignac's favour he determined to remove from Versailles, and that the Queen recalled him by means of the Comte de Mercy. This letter contained nothing but certain conditions for his return; it was the most whimsical of treaties; I confess I greatly regretted being under the necessity of destroying it. He reproached the Queen for her infatuation for the Comtesse Jules, her family, and society; and told her several truths about the possible consequences of a friendship which ranked that lady among the favourites of the Queens of France, a title always disliked by the nation. He complained that his advice was neglected, and then came to the conditions of his return to Versailles; after strong assurances that he would never, in all his life, aim at the higher church dignities, he said that he delighted in an unbounded confidence; and that he asked but two things of her Majesty as essential: the first was, not to give him her orders through any third person, and to write to him herself; he complained much that he had had no letter in her own hand since he had left Vienna; then he demanded of her an income of eighty thousand livres, in ecclesiastical benefices; and concluded by saying that, if she condescended to assure him herself that she would set about procuring him what he wished, her letter would be sufficient in itself to show him that her Majesty had accepted the two conditions he ventured to make respecting his return. No doubt the letter was written; at least it is very certain that the benefices were granted, and that his absence from Versailles lasted only a single week.

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