

JEANNE LOUISE CAMPAN

MEMOIRS OF THE COURT
OF MARIE ANTOINETTE,
QUEEN OF FRANCE,
VOLUME 3

Jeanne Louise Henriette Campan

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Marie Antoinette, Queen
of France, Volume 3**

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Mme. Campan

Memoirs of the Court of Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, Volume 3 / Being the Historic Memoirs of Madam Campan, First Lady in Waiting to the Queen

CHAPTER VI

During the first few months of his reign Louis XVI. dwelt at La Muette, Marly, and Compiègne. When settled at Versailles he occupied himself with a general examination of his grandfather's papers. He had promised the Queen to communicate to her all that he might discover relative to the history of the man with the iron mask, who, he thought, had become so inexhaustible a source of conjecture only in consequence of the interest which the pen of a celebrated writer had excited respecting the detention of a prisoner of State, who was merely a man of whimsical tastes and habits.

I was with the Queen when the King, having finished his researches, informed her that he had not found anything among the secret papers elucidating the existence of this prisoner; that he had conversed on the matter with M. de Maurepas, whose age made him contemporary with the epoch during which the story must have been known to the ministers; and that M. de Maurepas had assured him he was merely a prisoner of a very dangerous character, in consequence of his disposition for intrigue. He was a subject of the Duke of Mantua, and was enticed to the frontier, arrested there, and kept prisoner, first at Pignerol, and afterwards in the Bastille. This transfer took place in consequence of the appointment of the governor of the former place to the government of the latter. It was for fear the prisoner should profit by the inexperience of a new governor that he was sent with the Governor of Pignerol to the Bastille.

Such was, in fact, the truth about the man on whom people have been pleased to fix an iron mask. And thus was it related in writing, and published by M. — twenty years ago. He had searched the archives of the Foreign Office, and laid the real story before the public; but the public, prepossessed in favour of a marvellous version, would not acknowledge the authenticity of his account. Every man relied upon the authority of Voltaire; and it was believed that a natural or a twin brother of Louis XIV. lived many years in prison with a mask over his face. The story of this mask, perhaps, had its origin in the old custom, among both men and women in Italy, of wearing a velvet mask when they exposed themselves to the sun. It is possible that the Italian captive may have sometimes shown himself upon the terrace of his prison with his face thus covered. As to the silver plate which this celebrated prisoner is said to have thrown from his window, it is known that such a circumstance did happen, but it happened at Valzin, in the time of Cardinal Richelieu. This anecdote has been mixed up with the inventions respecting the Piedmontese prisoner.

In this survey of the papers of Louis XV. by his grandson some very curious particulars relative to his private treasury were found. Shares in various financial companies afforded him a revenue, and had in course of time produced him a capital of some amount, which he applied to his secret expenses. The King collected his vouchers of title to these shares, and made a present of them to M. Thierry de Ville d'Avray, his chief valet de chambre.

The Queen was desirous to secure the comfort of Mesdames, the daughters of Louis XV., who were held in the highest respect. About this period she contributed to furnish them with a revenue sufficient to provide them an easy, pleasant existence: The King gave them the Chateau of Bellevue;

and added to the produce of it, which was given up to them, the expenses of their table and equipage, and payment of all the charges of their household, the number of which was even increased. During the lifetime of Louis XV., who was a very selfish prince, his daughters, although they had attained forty years of age, had no other place of residence than their apartments in the Chateau of Versailles; no other walks than such as they could take in the large park of that palace; and no other means of gratifying their taste for the cultivation of plants but by having boxes and vases, filled with them, in their balconies or their closets. They had, therefore, reason to be much pleased with the conduct of Marie Antoinette, who had the greatest influence in the King's kindness towards his aunts.

Paris did not cease, during the first years of the reign, to give proofs of pleasure whenever the Queen appeared at any of the plays of the capital. At the representation of "Iphigenia in Aulis," the actor who sang the words, "Let us sing, let us celebrate our Queen!" which were repeated by the chorus, directed by a respectful movement the eyes of the whole assembly upon her Majesty. Reiterated cries of 'Bis'! and clapping of hands, were followed by such a burst of enthusiasm that many of the audience added their voices to those of the actors in order to celebrate, it might too truly be said, another Iphigenia. The Queen, deeply affected, covered her eyes with her handkerchief; and this proof of sensibility raised the public enthusiasm to a still higher pitch.

The King gave Marie Antoinette Petit Trianon.

[The Chateau of Petit Trianon, which was built for Louis XV., was not remarkably handsome as a building. The luxuriance of the hothouses rendered the place agreeable to that Prince. He spent a few days there several times in the year. It was when he was setting off from Versailles for Petit Trianon that he was struck in the side by the knife of Damiens, and it was there that he was attacked by the smallpox, of which he died on the 10th of May, 1774.—MADAME CAMPAN.]

Henceforward she amused herself with improving the gardens, without allowing any addition to the building, or any change in the furniture, which was very shabby, and remained, in 1789, in the same state as during the reign of Louis XV. Everything there, without exception, was preserved; and the Queen slept in a faded bed, which had been used by the Comtesse du Barry. The charge of extravagance, generally made against the Queen, is the most unaccountable of all the popular errors respecting her character. She had exactly the contrary failing; and I could prove that she often carried her economy to a degree of parsimony actually blamable, especially in a sovereign. She took a great liking for Trianon, and used to go there alone, followed by a valet; but she found attendants ready to receive her,—a concierge and his wife, who served her as femme de chambre, women of the wardrobe, footmen, etc.

When she first took possession of Petit Trianon, it was reported that she changed the name of the seat which the King had given her, and called it Little Vienna, or Little Schoenbrunn. A person who belonged to the Court, and was silly enough to give this report credit, wishing to visit Petit Trianon with a party, wrote to M. Campan, requesting the Queen's permission to do so. In his note he called Trianon Little Vienna. Similar requests were usually laid before the Queen just as they were made: she chose to give the permissions to see her gardens herself, liking to grant these little favours. When she came to the words I have quoted she was very, much offended, and exclaimed, angrily, that there were too many, fools ready, to aid the malicious; that she had been told of the report circulated, which pretended that she had thought of nothing but her own country, and that she kept an Austrian heart, while the interests of France alone ought to engage her. She refused the request so awkwardly made, and desired M. Campan to reply, that Trianon was not to be seen for some time, and that the Queen was astonished that any man in good society should believe she would do so ill-judged a thing as to change the French names of her palaces to foreign ones.

Before the Emperor Joseph II's first visit to France the Queen received a visit from the Archduke Maximilian in 1775. A stupid act of the ambassador, seconded on the part of the Queen by the Abbe de Vermond, gave rise at that period to a discussion which offended the Princes of the

blood and the chief nobility of the kingdom. Travelling incognito, the young Prince claimed that the first visit was not due from him to the Princes of the blood; and the Queen supported his pretension.

From the time of the Regency, and on account of the residence of the family of Orleans in the bosom of the capital, Paris had preserved a remarkable degree of attachment and respect for that branch of the royal house; and although the crown was becoming more and more remote from the Princes of the House of Orleans, they had the advantage (a great one with the Parisians) of being the descendants of Henri IV. An affront to that popular family was a serious ground of dislike to the Queen. It was at this period that the circles of the city, and even of the Court, expressed themselves bitterly about her levity, and her partiality for the House of Austria. The Prince for whom the Queen had embarked in an important family quarrel—and a quarrel involving national prerogatives—was, besides, little calculated to inspire interest. Still young, uninformed, and deficient in natural talent, he was always making blunders.

He went to the Jardin du Roi; M. de Buffon, who received him there, offered him a copy of his works; the Prince declined accepting the book, saying to M. de Buffon, in the most polite manner possible, "I should be very sorry to deprive you of it."

[Joseph II, on his visit to France, also went to see M. de Buffon, and said to that celebrated man, "I am come to fetch the copy of your works which my brother forgot."—NOTE BY THE EDITOR.]

It may be supposed that the Parisians were much entertained with this answer.

The Queen was exceedingly mortified at the mistakes made by her brother; but what hurt her most was being accused of preserving an Austrian heart. Marie Antoinette had more than once to endure that imputation during the long course of her misfortunes. Habit did not stop the tears such injustice caused; but the first time she was suspected of not loving France, she gave way to her indignation. All that she could say on the subject was useless; by seconding the pretensions of the Archduke she had put arms into her enemies' hands; they were labouring to deprive her of the love of the people, and endeavoured, by all possible means, to spread a belief that the Queen sighed for Germany, and preferred that country to France.

Marie Antoinette had none but herself to rely on for preserving the fickle smiles of the Court and the public. The King, too indifferent to serve her as a guide, as yet had conceived no love for her, notwithstanding the intimacy that grew between them at Choisy. In his closet Louis XVI. was immersed in deep study. At the Council he was busied with the welfare of his people; hunting and mechanical occupations engrossed his leisure moments, and he never thought on the subject of an heir.

The coronation took place at Rheims, with all the accustomed pomp. At this period the people's love for Louis XVI. burst forth in transports not to be mistaken for party demonstrations or idle curiosity. He replied to this enthusiasm by marks of confidence, worthy of a people happy in being governed by a good King; he took a pleasure in repeatedly walking without guards, in the midst of the crowd which pressed around him, and called down blessings on his head. I remarked the impression made at this time by an observation of Louis XVI. On the day of his coronation he put his hand up to his head, at the moment of the crown being placed upon it, and said, "It pinches me." Henri III. had exclaimed, "It pricks me." Those who were near the King were struck with the similarity between these two exclamations, though not of a class likely to be blinded by the superstitious fears of ignorance.

While the Queen, neglected as she was, could not even hope for the happiness of being a mother, she had the mortification of seeing the Comtesse d'Artois give birth to the Duc d'Angouleme.

Custom required that the royal family and the whole Court should be present at the accouchement of the Princesses; the Queen was therefore obliged to stay a whole day in her sister-in-law's chamber. The moment the Comtesse d'Artois was informed a prince was born, she put her hand to her forehead and exclaimed with energy, "My God, how happy I am!" The Queen felt very differently at this involuntary and natural exclamation. Nevertheless, her behaviour was perfect. She bestowed all possible marks of tenderness upon the young mother, and would not leave her until she

was again put into bed; she afterwards passed along the staircase, and through the hall of the guards, with a calm demeanour, in the midst of an immense crowd. The *poissardes*, who had assumed a right of speaking to sovereigns in their own vulgar language, followed her to the very doors of her apartments, calling out to her with gross expressions, that she ought to produce heirs. The Queen reached her inner room, hurried and agitated; he shut herself up to weep with me alone, not from jealousy of her sister-in-law's happiness,—of that he was incapable,—but from sorrow at her own situation.

Deprived of the happiness of giving an heir to the crown, the Queen endeavoured to interest herself in the children of the people of her household. She had long been desirous to bring up one of them herself, and to make it the constant object of her care. A little village boy, four or five years old, full of health, with a pleasing countenance, remarkably large blue eyes, and fine light hair, got under the feet of the Queen's horses, when she was taking an airing in a calash, through the hamlet of St. Michel, near Louveciennes. The coachman and postilions stopped the horses, and the child was rescued without the slightest injury. Its grandmother rushed out of the door of her cottage to take it; but the Queen, standing up in her calash and extending her arms, called out that the child was hers, and that destiny had given it to her, to console her, no doubt, until she should have the happiness of having one herself. "Is his mother alive?" asked the Queen. "No, Madame; my daughter died last winter, and left five small children upon my hands." "I will take this one, and provide for all the rest; do you consent?" "Ah, Madame, they are too fortunate," replied the cottager; "but Jacques is a bad boy. I hope he will stay with you!" The Queen, taking little Jacques upon her knee, said that she would make him used to her, and gave orders to proceed. It was necessary, however, to shorten the drive, so violently did Jacques scream, and kick the Queen and her ladies.

The arrival of her Majesty at her apartments at Versailles, holding the little rustic by the hand, astonished the whole household; he cried out with intolerable shrillness that he wanted his grandmother, his brother Louis, and his sister Marianne; nothing could calm him. He was taken away by the wife of a servant, who was appointed to attend him as nurse. The other children were put to school. Little Jacques, whose family name was Armand, came back to the Queen two days afterwards; a white frock trimmed with lace, a rose-coloured sash with silver fringe, and a hat decorated with feathers, were now substituted for the woollen cap, the little red frock, and the wooden shoes. The child was really very beautiful. The Queen was enchanted with him; he was brought to her every morning at nine o'clock; he breakfasted and dined with her, and often even with the King. She liked to call him my child,

[This little unfortunate was nearly twenty in 1792; the fury of the people and the fear of being thought a favourite of the Queen's had made him the most sanguinary terrorist of Versailles. He was killed at the battle of Jemappes.]

and lavished caresses upon him, still maintaining a deep silence respecting the regrets which constantly occupied her heart.

This child remained with the Queen until the time when Madame was old enough to come home to her august mother, who had particularly taken upon herself the care of her education.

The Queen talked incessantly of the qualities which she admired in Louis XVI., and gladly attributed to herself the slightest favourable change in his manner; perhaps she displayed too unreservedly the joy she felt, and the share she appropriated in the improvement. One day Louis XVI. saluted her ladies with more kindness than usual, and the Queen laughingly said to them, "Now confess, ladies, that for one so badly taught as a child, the King has saluted you with very good grace!"

The Queen hated M. de La Vauguyon; she accused him alone of those points in the habits, and even the sentiments, of the King which hurt her. A former first woman of the bedchamber to Queen Maria Leczinska had continued in office near the young Queen. She was one of those people who are fortunate enough to spend their lives in the service of kings without knowing anything of what is passing at Court. She was a great devotee; the Abbe Grisel, an ex-Jesuit, was her director. Being

rich from her savings and an income of 50,000 livres, she kept a very good table; in her apartment, at the Grand Commun, the most distinguished persons who still adhered to the Order of Jesuits often assembled. The Duc de La Vauguyon was intimate with her; their chairs at the Eglise des Reollets were placed near each other; at high mass and at vespers they sang the "Gloria in Excelsis" and the "Magnificat" together; and the pious virgin, seeing in him only one of God's elect, little imagined him to be the declared enemy of a Princess whom she served and revered. On the day of his death she ran in tears to relate to the Queen the piety, humility, and repentance of the last moments of the Duc de La Vauguyon. He had called his people together, she said, to ask their pardon. "For what?" replied the Queen, sharply; "he has placed and pensioned off all his servants; it was of the King and his brothers that the holy man you bewail should have asked pardon, for having paid so little attention to the education of princes on whom the fate and happiness of twenty-five millions of men depend. Luckily," added she, "the King and his brothers, still young, have incessantly laboured to repair the errors of their preceptor."

The progress of time, and the confidence with which the King and the Princes, his brothers, were inspired by the change in their situation since the death of Louis XV., had developed their characters. I will endeavour to depict them.

The features of Louis XVI. were noble enough, though somewhat melancholy in expression; his walk was heavy and unmajestic; his person greatly neglected; his hair, whatever might be the skill of his hairdresser, was soon in disorder. His voice, without being harsh, was not agreeable; if he grew animated in speaking he often got above his natural pitch, and became shrill. The Abbe de Radonvilliers, his preceptor, one of the Forty of the French Academy, a learned and amiable man, had given him and Monsieur a taste for study. The King had continued to instruct himself; he knew the English language perfectly; I have often heard him translate some of the most difficult passages in Milton's poems. He was a skilful geographer, and was fond of drawing and colouring maps; he was well versed in history, but had not perhaps sufficiently studied the spirit of it. He appreciated dramatic beauties, and judged them accurately. At Choisy, one day, several ladies expressed their dissatisfaction because the French actors were going to perform one of Moliere's pieces. The King inquired why they disapproved of the choice. One of them answered that everybody must admit that Moliere had very bad taste; the King replied that many things might be found in Moliere contrary to fashion, but that it appeared to him difficult to point out any in bad taste?

[The King, having purchased the Chateau of Rambouillet from the Duc de Penthièvre, amused himself with embellishing it. I have seen a register entirely in his own handwriting, which proves that he possessed a great variety of information on the minutiae of various branches of knowledge. In his accounts he would not omit an outlay of a franc. His figures and letters, when he wished to write legibly, were small and very neat, but in general he wrote very ill. He was so sparing of paper that he divided a sheet into eight, six, or four pieces, according to the length of what he had to write. Towards the close of the page he compressed the letters, and avoided interlineations. The last words were close to the edge of the paper; he seemed to regret being obliged to begin another page. He was methodical and analytical; he divided what he wrote into chapters and sections. He had extracted from the works of Nicole and Fenelon, his favourite authors, three or four hundred concise and sententious phrases; these he had classed according to subject, and formed a work of them in the style of Montesquieu. To this treatise he had given the following general title: "Of Moderate Monarchy" (*De la Monarchie temperee*), with chapters entitled, "Of the Person of the Prince;" "Of the Authority of Bodies in the State;" "Of the Character of the Executive Functions of the Monarchy." Had he been able to carry into effect all the grand precepts he had observed in Fenelon, Louis XVI. would have been an accomplished monarch, and France a powerful kingdom. The King used to accept the speeches his ministers presented to him to deliver on important occasions; but he corrected and modified them; struck out some parts, and added others; and sometimes consulted the Queen on the subject. The phrase of the minister erased by the King was frequently unsuitable, and dictated by the minister's

private feelings; but the King's was always the natural expression. He himself composed, three times or oftener, his famous answers to the Parliament which he banished. But in his letters he was negligent, and always incorrect. Simplicity was the characteristic of the King's style; the figurative style of M. Necker did not please him; the sarcasms of Maurepas were disagreeable to him. Unfortunate Prince! he would predict, in his observations, that if such a calamity should happen, the monarchy would be ruined; and the next day he would consent in Council to the very measure which he had condemned the day before, and which brought him nearer the brink of the precipice.—SOULAVIE, "Historical and Political Memoirs of the Reign of Louis XVI.," vol. ii.]

This Prince combined with his attainments the attributes of a good husband, a tender father, and an indulgent master.

Unfortunately he showed too much predilection for the mechanical arts; masonry and lock-making so delighted him that he admitted into his private apartment a common locksmith, with whom he made keys and locks; and his hands, blackened by that sort of work, were often, in my presence, the subject of remonstrances and even sharp reproaches from the Queen, who would have chosen other amusements for her husband.

[Louis XVI. saw that the art of lock-making was capable of application to a higher study, He was an excellent geographer. The most valuable and complete instrument for the study of that science was begun by his orders and under his direction. It was an immense globe of copper, which was long preserved, though unfinished, in the Mazarine library. Louis XVI. invented and had executed under his own eyes the ingenious mechanism required for this globe.—NOTE BY THE EDITOR.]

Austere and rigid with regard to himself alone, the King observed the laws of the Church with scrupulous exactness. He fasted and abstained throughout the whole of Lent. He thought it right that the queen should not observe these customs with the same strictness. Though sincerely pious, the spirit of the age had disposed his mind to toleration. Turgot, Malesherbes, and Necker judged that this Prince, modest and simple in his habits, would willingly sacrifice the royal prerogative to the solid greatness of his people. His heart, in truth, disposed him towards reforms; but his prejudices and fears, and the clamours of pious and privileged persons, intimidated him, and made him abandon plans which his love for the people had suggested.

Monsieur—

[During his stay at Avignon, Monsieur, afterwards Louis XVIII, lodged with the Duc de Crillon; he refused the town-guard which was offered him, saying, "A son of France, under the roof of a Crillon, needs no guard."—NOTE BY THE EDITOR.]

had more dignity of demeanour than the King; but his corpulence rendered his gait inelegant. He was fond of pageantry and magnificence. He cultivated the belles lettres, and under assumed names often contributed verses to the Mercury and other papers.

His wonderful memory was the handmaid of his wit, furnishing him with the happiest quotations. He knew by heart a varied repertoire, from the finest passages of the Latin classics to the Latin of all the prayers, from the works of Racine to the vaudeville of "Rose et Colas."

The Comte d'Artoisi had an agreeable countenance, was well made, skilful in bodily exercises, lively, impetuous, fond of pleasure, and very particular in his dress. Some happy observations made by him were repeated with approval, and gave a favourable idea of his heart. The Parisians liked the open and frank character of this Prince, which they considered national, and showed real affection for him.

The dominion that the Queen gained over the King's mind, the charms of a society in which Monsieur displayed his wit, and to which the Comte d'Artois—[Afterwards Charles X.]—gave life by the vivacity of youth, gradually softened that ruggedness of manner in Louis XVI. which a better-conducted education might have prevented. Still, this defect often showed itself, and, in spite of his extreme simplicity, the King inspired those who had occasion to speak to him with diffidence. Courtiers, submissive in the presence of their sovereign, are only the more ready to caricature him;

with little good breeding, they called those answers they so much dreaded, *Les coups de boutoir du Roi*.—[The literal meaning of the phrase "*coup de boutoir*," is a thrust from the snout of a boar.]

Methodical in all his habits, the King always went to bed at eleven precisely. One evening the Queen was going with her usual circle to a party, either at the Duc de Duras's or the Princesse de Glumenee's. The hand of the clock was slyly put forward to hasten the King's departure by a few minutes; he thought bed-time was come, retired, and found none of his attendants ready to wait on him. This joke became known in all the drawing-rooms of Versailles, and was disapproved of there. Kings have no privacy. Queens have no boudoirs. If those who are in immediate attendance upon sovereigns be not themselves disposed to transmit their private habits to posterity, the meanest valet will relate what he has seen or heard; his gossip circulates rapidly, and forms public opinion, which at length ascribes to the most august persons characters which, however untrue they may be, are almost always indelible.

NOTE. The only passion ever shown by Louis XVI. was for hunting. He was so much occupied by it that when I went up into his private closets at Versailles, after the 10th of August, I saw upon the staircase six frames, in which were seen statements of all his hunts, when Dauphin and when King. In them was detailed the number, kind, and quality of the game he had killed at each hunting party during every month, every season, and every year of his reign.

The interior of his private apartments was thus arranged: a salon, ornamented with gilded mouldings, displayed the engravings which had been dedicated to him, drawings of the canals he had dug, with the model of that of Burgundy, and the plan of the cones and works of Cherbourg. The upper hall contained his collection of geographical charts, spheres, globes, and also his geographical cabinet. There were to be seen drawings of maps which he had begun, and some that he had finished. He had a clever method of washing them in. His geographical memory was prodigious. Over the hall was the turning and joining room, furnished with ingenious instruments for working in wood. He inherited some from Louis XV., and he often busied himself, with Duret's assistance, in keeping them clean and bright. Above was the library of books published during his reign. The prayer books and manuscript books of Anne of Brittany, Francois I, the later Valois, Louis XIV., Louis XV., and the Dauphin formed the great hereditary library of the Chateau. Louis XVI. placed separately, in two apartments communicating with each other, the works of his own time, including a complete collection of Didot's editions, in vellum, every volume enclosed in a morocco case. There were several English works, among the rest the debates of the British Parliament, in a great number of volumes in folio (this is the *Moniteur of England*, a complete collection of which is so valuable and so scarce). By the side of this collection was to be seen a manuscript history of all the schemes for a descent upon that island, particularly that of Comte de Broglie. One of the presses of this cabinet was full of cardboard boxes, containing papers relative to the House of Austria, inscribed in the King's own hand: "*Secret papers of my family respecting the House of Austria; papers of my family respecting the Houses of Stuart and Hanover.*" In an adjoining press were kept papers relative to Russia. Satirical works against Catherine II. and against Paul I. were sold in France under the name of histories; Louis XVIII. collected and sealed up with his small seal the scandalous anecdotes against Catherine II., as well as the works of Rhulieres, of which he had a copy, to be certain that the secret life of that Princess, which attracted the curiosity of her contemporaries, should not be made public by his means.

Above the King's private library were a forge, two anvils, and a vast number of iron tools; various common locks, well made and perfect; some secret locks, and locks ornamented with gilt copper. It was there that the infamous Gamin, who afterwards accused the King of having tried to poison him, and was rewarded for his calumny with a pension of twelve thousand livres, taught him the art of lock-making. This Gamin, who became our guide, by order of the department and municipality of Versailles, did not, however, denounce the King on the 20th December, 1792. He had been made the confidant of that Prince in an immense number of important commissions; the King had sent him the "*Red Book*," from Paris, in a parcel; and the part which was concealed during the Constituent

Assembly still remained so in 1793. Gamin hid it in a part of the Chateau inaccessible to everybody, and took it from under the shelves of a secret press before our eyes. This is a convincing proof that Louis XVI. hoped to return to his Chateau. When teaching Louis XVI. his trade Gamin took upon himself the tone and authority of a master. "The King was good, forbearing, timid, inquisitive, and addicted to sleep," said Gamin to me; "he was fond to excess of lock-making, and he concealed himself from the Queen and the Court to file and forge with me. In order to convey his anvil and my own backwards and forwards we were obliged to use a thousand stratagems, the history of which would: never end." Above the King's and Gamin's forges and anvils was an, observatory, erected upon a platform covered with lead. There, seated on an armchair, and assisted by a telescope, the King observed all that was passing in the courtyards of Versailles, the avenue of Paris, and the neighbouring gardens. He had taken a liking to Duret, one of the indoor servants of the palace, who sharpened his tools, cleaned his anvils, pasted his maps, and adjusted eyeglasses to the King's sight, who was short-sighted. This good Duret, and indeed all the indoor servants, spoke of their master with regret and affection, and with tears in their eyes.

The King was born weak and delicate; but from the age of twenty-four he possessed a robust constitution, inherited from his mother, who was of the House of Saxe, celebrated for generations for its robustness. There were two men in Louis XVI., the man of knowledge and the man of will. The King knew the history of his own family and of the first houses of France perfectly. He composed the instructions for M. de la Peyrouse's voyage round the world, which the minister thought were drawn up by several members of the Academy of Sciences. His memory retained an infinite number of names and situations. He remembered quantities and numbers wonderfully. One day an account was presented to him in which the minister had ranked among the expenses an item inserted in the account of the preceding year. "There is a double charge," said the King; "bring me last year's account, and I will show it yet there." When the King was perfectly master of the details of any matter, and saw injustice, he was obdurate even to harshness. Then he would be obeyed instantly, in order to be sure that he was obeyed.

But in important affairs of state the man of will was not to be found. Louis XVI. was upon the throne exactly what those weak temperaments whom nature has rendered incapable of an opinion are in society. In his pusillanimity, he gave his confidence to a minister; and although amidst various counsels he often knew which was the best, he never had the resolution to say, "I prefer the opinion of such a one." Herein originated the misfortunes of the State.—SOULAVIE'S "Historical and Political Memoirs Of the Reign Of LOUIS XVI.," VOL ii.

CHAPTER VII

The winter following the confinement of the Comtesse d'Artois was very severe; the recollections of the pleasure which sleighing-parties had given the Queen in her childhood made her wish to introduce similar ones in France. This amusement had already been known in that Court, as was proved by sleighs being found in the stables which had been used by the Dauphin, the father of Louis XVI. Some were constructed for the Queen in a more modern style. The Princes also ordered several; and in a few days there was a tolerable number of these vehicles. They were driven by the princes and noblemen of the Court. The noise of the bells and balls with which the harness of the horses was furnished, the elegance and whiteness of their plumes, the varied forms of the carriages, the gold with which they were all ornamented, rendered these parties delightful to the eye. The winter was very favourable to them, the snow remaining on the ground nearly six weeks; the drives in the park afforded a pleasure shared by the spectators.

[Louis XVI., touched with the wretched condition of the poor of Versailles during the winter of 1776, had several cart-loads of wood distributed among them. Seeing one day a file of those vehicles passing by, while several noblemen were preparing to be drawn swiftly over the ice, he uttered these memorable words: "Gentlemen, here are my sleighs!"—NOTE BY THE EDITOR.]

No one imagined that any blame could attach to so innocent an amusement. But the party were tempted to extend their drives as far as the Champs Elysees; a few sleighs even crossed the boulevards; the ladies being masked, the Queen's enemies took the opportunity of saying that she had traversed the streets of Paris in a sleigh.

This became a matter of moment. The public discovered in it a predilection for the habits of Vienna; but all that Marie Antoinette did was criticised.

Sleigh-driving, savouring of the Northern Courts, had no favour among the Parisians. The Queen was informed of this; and although all the sleighs were preserved, and several subsequent winters lent themselves to the amusement, she would not resume it.

It was at the time of the sleighing-parties that the Queen became intimately acquainted with the Princesse de Lamballe, who made her appearance in them wrapped in fur, with all the brilliancy and freshness of the age of twenty,—the emblem of spring, peeping from under sable and ermine. Her situation, moreover, rendered her peculiarly interesting; married, when she was scarcely past childhood, to a young prince, who ruined himself by the contagious example of the Duc d'Orleans, she had had nothing to do from the time of her arrival in France but to weep. A widow at eighteen, and childless, she lived with the Duc de Penthièvre as an adopted daughter. She had the tenderest respect and attachment for that venerable Prince; but the Queen, though doing justice to his virtues, saw that the Duc de Penthièvre's way of life, whether at Paris or at his country-seat, could neither afford his young daughter-in-law the amusements suited to her time of life, nor ensure her in the future an establishment such as she was deprived of by her widowhood. She determined, therefore, to establish her at Versailles; and for her sake revived the office of superintendent, which had been discontinued at Court since the death of Mademoiselle de Clermont. It is said that Maria Leczinska had decided that this place should continue vacant, the superintendent having so extensive a power in the houses of queens as to be frequently a restraint upon their inclinations. Differences which soon took place between Marie Antoinette and the Princesse de Lamballe respecting the official prerogatives of the latter, proved that the wife of Louis XV. had acted judiciously in abolishing the office; but a kind of treaty made between the Queen and the Princess smoothed all difficulties. The blame for too strong an assertion of claims fell upon a secretary of the superintendent, who had been her adviser; and everything was so arranged that a firm friendship existed between these two Princesses down to the disastrous period which terminated their career.

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